THE MODERN MUSLIM WORLD

REGIONAL POWERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

New Constellations after the Arab Revolts

Edited by
Henner Fürtig

Regional Powers in the Middle East

The Modern Muslim World

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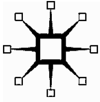

REGIONAL POWERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST
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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2014

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First published in 2014 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN: 978–1–137–48474–1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Regional powers in the Middle East : new constellations after the Arab revolts / edited by Henner Fürtig.
pages cm
ISBN 978–1–137–48474–1 (hardback : alk. paper)
1. Middle East—Foreign relations—21st century. 2. Middle East—Politics and government—21st century. 3. Regionalism—Middle East. 4. Middle powers. 5. Arab Spring, 2010– I. Fürtig, Henner, editor of compilation.

DS63.18.R44 2014
956.05′4—dc23 2014026562

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Knowledge Works (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: December 2014

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978-1-349-50355-1 ISBN 978-1-137-48475-8 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137484758

Contents

List of Tables vii

1 The Concept of Regional Power as Applied to the Middle East 1
Martin Beck

Part I Iran and Its "Revolutionary Mission"

2 Iran: Winner or Loser of the "Arab Spring"? 23
Henner Fürtig

3 Global Grandeur and the Meaning of Iran: From the Shah to the Islamic Republic 43
Arshin Adib-Moghaddam

Part II Egypt: Past and Future Glory?

4 The Failure of the Muslim Brotherhood: Implications for Egypt's Regional Status 61
Elizabeth Monier and Annette Ranko

5 Egypt: A "Regional Reference" in the Middle East 81
Mustafa El-Labbad

Part III Turkey and the Ottoman Past

6 Before the Arab Revolts and After: Turkey's Transformed Regional Power Status in the Middle East 103
André Bank and Roy Karadag

7 Turkey's "Return" to the Middle East 123
Meliha Benli Altunışık

Part IV Israel—Hidden Opportunities

8 Israel: The Partial Regional Power in the Middle East 145
Robert Kappel

9 Israel as a Regional Power: Prospects and Problems 163
Mark A. Heller

Part V Saudi Arabia—More than Petrodollars

10 Saudi Arabia: A Conservative P(l)ayer on the Retreat? 177
Thomas Richter

11 Saudi Arabia and the Arab Spring: Opportunities and Challenges of Security 191
Saud Mousaed Al Tamamy

12 Prospects for New Regional Powers in the Middle East 209
Henner Fürtig

List of Contributors 221

Index 223

Tables

7.1 Military expenditure in constant (1988–2011) USD million 126
7.2 Main indicators—2011 133
8.1 Israel's power related to other countries of the Middle East 153

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CHAPTER 1

The Concept of Regional Power as Applied to the Middle East

Martin Beck

1 Introduction

Three tasks are tackled in the present contribution. First, it is shown that the regional power concept is innovative because it sheds new light on regional affairs, particularly, but not only, after the end of the Cold War. In the period following World War II, regional affairs have very often been shaped by the global rivalry of two superpowers. Thereby, the significance of regional actors has frequently been neglected. Only in the early twenty-first century when it became apparent that US capabilities are limited, a scholarly movement came into being that developed alternative approaches, among them being the concept of regional power that looks thoroughly at the momentum of regions and actors within it. Second, the Middle East features for not having produced a regional power. Yet, this by no means implies that the concept of regional power is not useful in analyzing regional affairs of the Middle East. Rather, the application of the concept sharpens the view for the actual structures and particularities of Middle Eastern regional affairs. Moreover, by analyzing failed attempts of potential regional powers in the Middle East, the concept proves to be very fruitful in better comprehending regional politics. Moreover, analyses of the Middle East on the basis of the regional power concept allow theoretical conclusions that can enrich the concept itself. Third, the chapter discusses whether and how the Arab Spring has changed the fundaments of regional affairs. It is remarkable that the Arab Spring has been committed by movements that strongly focus on domestic affairs, particularly since the two major revolutions that took place in the Middle East after World War II—namely, the Egyptian Revolution

of 1952 and the Iranian Revolution of 1979—had a strong transnational component, that is, pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism, respectively. At the same time, by possibly challenging the 1967 Khartoum consensus that established a modus vivendi between republics and monarchies, the Arab Spring bears the potentials for a new round of conflicts on regional leadership.

2 No Regional Power in the Middle East

The regional power approach is a major offspring of theoretical concepts of regionalism that have recently been enjoying a renaissance. The East-West conflict had its effect on scholarly approaches of international relations that focused on regional politics primarily through the lenses of global affairs, thereby often neglecting the momentum of genuine regional relations. After the end of the Cold War, a scholarly movement came into being that developed alternative approaches, among them the concept of regional power that looks thoroughly at the momentum of regions and actors within it: With the end of bipolarity, a higher degree of regional autonomy (Hurrell 2007), particularly in security-related issues (Buzan and Wæver 2003), seemed to be an inevitable trend—although there were also early warnings that global unipolarity could also have opposing effects (Rosecrance 1991). A quarter century after the Cold War, we are safe to say that in some regions, some issue areas and some periods' regional affairs have been shaped to a higher degree than before by regional actors. Yet, it is equally safe to claim that developments on a global scale have been much too complex and even contradictory to overgeneralize: though regional politics do matter, yet, not all world regions today enjoy a higher degree of relative autonomy vis-à-vis global structures and actors in all policies than in the period of the Cold War. At the same time, the concept of regionalism also helped to rediscover the role of regional actors whose relative autonomy had sometimes been neglected when studying regional affairs only through the lenses of the Cold War (see Acharya 2007: 640).

2.1 Defining the Middle East

Most social scientists working on the Middle East would agree that it is a region composed of the Arab states plus Iran, Israel, and Turkey. Yet, if this convention is scrutinized, it turns out to be a rather demanding task to present intersubjectively comprehensible arguments in favor of this definition. When definitions of regions are based on commonalities, the Middle East appears as a rather complicated case, since it covers areas of three different continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe, which is why "objective" geographic factors are not easily applicable. There are some criteria

beyond geography that, if applied, produce more promising results such as a shared history, language, and religion. However, none of the criteria is truly selective: not all Middle Eastern countries have been part of the Ottoman Empire (while some that are not considered part of the Middle East, such as Greece, were once its part), non-Semitic languages play an important role in the region (and Malta is rarely considered part of the Middle East although Maltese is a Semitic language), and not all Middle Eastern countries are predominantly Muslim (and the biggest Muslim country—Indonesia—is located beyond the Middle East). However, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1958: §§ 66–67) argued that sometimes terms should be defined on the basis of family resemblances: as Wittgenstein argues, not all things we call games have *one distinct* feature in common; rather, they are connected through a complicated network of overlapping and crisscrossing similarities. This is also the case with the (members of the) Middle East. Then, we have to accept that the definition of the Middle East does not have clear borders and its exact meaning may vary according to the research issue we are focusing on.

When the definition of the Middle East is based on the density of social interactions, the Middle East easily qualifies as a "regional security complex" (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 187), which, however, is highly penetrated by external actors, above all the United States. Yet, if other issue areas are highlighted, the Middle East does not always easily meet the criteria of a region. In particular, many countries of the region have much closer economic ties with countries beyond the Middle East than within the region. Thus, from this perspective, the definition of the Middle East—and its meaning—depends on the issue area under consideration. Although the oil-producing countries of the Middle East have been part of a truly globalized industry with comparatively few regional economic ties, it is remarkable that the Western perspective on energy security very often reinforces (the perception of) the Middle East as a region.

The latter aspect substantiates that our definitions of regions are (often) based on social constructions. Edward Said (1995) shows that in the case of the Middle East, Orientalism contributed to an artificial dichotomization of "us" and "them" that created an ideological basis for asymmetrical political, economic, and cultural relations. It is, for example, telling how the major European powers arrogated to exclude the Ottoman Empire (and its modernizing members, particularly Egypt) when establishing a concert of modern nation-states in the nineteenth century (Rogan 2013). Apparently "objective" factors such as the Mediterranean sea were—and are still—used to draw regional borders, although the Roman Empire despite its much lower technological level in terms of transportation and communication had no problems in defining the Mediterranean as "our sea" (*mare nostrum*). At the same time, it must be emphasized that the Middle East is not just an ascription from outside. The term "Middle East"—*sharq*

al-awsat in Arabic—is frequently used in the region although it literally denotes a very British worldview. The Arab Spring has been just the latest proof that the Middle East shapes social reality (and therefore, does exist): what started in a rather small country on the far West of the Middle East very soon gained momentum in the whole of the Arab Middle East, be it as a catalyst for regime change or as the major topic of political debates that were focusing on developments in Tunisia and Egypt as quasi-domestic issues. Although Turkey, Iran, and Israel were not directly affected, the meaning and impact of the Arab Spring on the non-Arab states of the Middle East became a top aspect of their respective national agendas.

2.2 Attempting to Identify Regional Powers

A regional power is an actor—normally a state—whose power capabilities in a region significantly outweigh those of other actors within the same region and whose power is, to a high degree, based on its leadership role within the region. As has been conceptualized by Detlef Nolte (2010), regional powers heavily rely on soft-power skills since, as he argues, their power capabilities are not sufficient to dominate regional affairs by unilateral measures. Thus, regional powers exert their influence on the basis of cooperation (which is not always symmetrical yet never purely imperialist) rather than measures of hard-power politics.

According to Nolte's (2010: 893) presentation of the state of the art of the regional power concept, a regional power is characterized as a state that fulfills not less than 11 criteria. Although these criteria are formulated in a way that leaves the issue of operationalization rather unspecified, it appears evident that only few of the criteria are met by states of the Middle East. There are indeed some Middle Eastern actors that articulate "the pretension (self-conception) of a leading position" in the Middle East: Iran (particularly since 1979), Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt (particularly between 1952 and 1967 but also thereafter), Israel (particularly in the 1990s), and Iraq (particularly in the 1980s). One could further agree that some countries—mainly Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran—influence "the geopolitical delimitation and the political-ideational construction of the region." However, it is questionable whether any (single) country in the Middle East "displays the material (military, economic, demographic), organizational and ideological resources for regional power projection"; "truly has great influence in regional affairs"; "is economically, politically and culturally interconnected with the region"; "provides a collective good for the region"; and "defines the regional security agenda in a significant way." Moreover, no single Middle Eastern state exerts its influence "by means of regional governance structures" and "defines and articulates a common regional identity or project." There also appears to be no Middle Eastern state that enjoys a "leading position

in the region [that] is recognized or at least respected by other states inside and outside the region" and "which is integrated in international and global forums and institutions where it articulates not only its own interests but acts as well, at least in a rudimentary way, as a representative of regional interests."

Whether or not regional powers shape regional affairs to a high degree in other world areas appears to be debatable. Particularly with reference to Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, it can be doubted whether regional actors exist that match the criteria of an "ideal-type" regional power (see Beck 2010: 146–147). Not all empirical findings point in the same direction and not all conceptual problems are solved, particularly in terms of the relationship between regional and global politics, particularly in the case of Asia. Therefore, one who claims that there are strong regional powers in major world areas is on much shakier ground than one who asserts that there is no regional power in the Middle East. Thus, we enjoy solid empirical foundation when we apply the regional power approach to the Middle East—which makes much sense, if we deal with the fact that there is no regional power in the Middle East in a productive way; we must identify those features of the Middle East that unveil this very fact. By doing so, we have a fair chance to reach a better understanding the structures that actually shape the Middle East. There appear to be four major features that set the Middle East apart from an ideal-type region shaped by a regional power: high power dispersion; preponderance of competitive rather than cooperative behavior and hard-power rather than soft-power use; the command of only low global-power capabilities and the lack of usage of resources for regional development by regional actors; and the distinct role of the United States as a quasi-regional power.

There are several Middle Eastern states that have more or less outspoken ambitions to act as a regional power: Egypt, Iraq (in the 1980s), Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. All of these states have significantly higher power capabilities than other states of the Middle East such as Tunisia, Lebanon, or Kuwait, and therefore qualify as *potential* regional powers. Yet, none of them enjoys sufficient material and ideational resources to actually prevail against the others, at least against all of the other potential regional powers at the same time. As in other regions, particularly Asia (China, India, and Japan), the Middle East does not have one uncontested regional power. Yet, in the Middle East, regional power dispersion is extremely high.

2.3 Contracert rather than Concert of Power in the Middle East

The Middle East constitutes a multipolar system whose actors have failed to create a concert of power—it is rather a "contracert." In crucial moments in recent history, major potential regional powers have competed against

each other, thereby very often using hard power. Egypt and Israel fought several wars between the 1940s and the 1970s, thereafter, concluding a peace that not only always remained cold but also destroyed Egypt's credibility as a (potential) regional power. Egypt attempted to export nationalist republicanism to Saudi Arabia. The proxy war in Yemen only ended after Egypt's defeat in the 1967 June War. The 1980s witnessed a major war between Iran and Iraq (1980–1988) followed by Iraq's attempt to forcefully control the Gulf by annexing Kuwait, which was only reversed by direct US intervention. Since the end of the Cold War, Israel's attempts to normalize relations have been stopped by a failed peace process with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), tensions between Israel (as well as Saudi Arabia) and Iran have increased, and until recently Turkey has projected its power ambitions more toward Europe and the Caucasus than to the Middle East. Moreover, the high dispersion of power in the Middle East is also indicated by two more regional features: first, regional institutions and their impact on regional affairs are underdeveloped in comparison not only to Europe but also to the Americas and Asia (Mercado Común del Sur/Mercado Comum do Sul [Mercosur/Mercosul], North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA], and Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN] inter alia). As a result of the Middle Eastern contracert, potential regional powers do not agree upon strengthening regional institutions and since they are so weak, (potential) regional powers are incapable of developing their potentials through regional governance institutions. Second, Qatar, which, due to its very small size, does not qualify as a potential regional power has in recent times been among the most successful brokers of regional agreements, which underscores the weakness of Middle Eastern potential regional powers.

2.4 Limited Power Capabilities of Middle Eastern Actors on a Global Scale

Most potential regional powers in the Middle East command rather limited power capabilities on a global scale. Contrary to Asia (China, India, and Japan) and Latin America (Brazil), no state of the Middle East has made it to the global top ten in terms of Gross National Product (GNP). There are two Middle Eastern countries, though, that enjoy high capabilities in special niches: Israel and Saudi Arabia. Israel, which became of full member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2010, is politically, economically, and culturally very well connected with the centers of Western power, particularly the United States and, furthermore, the European Union (particularly Germany). Yet, Israel rarely uses its special access to global resources for regional policies based on cooperation and soft power (Beck 2010). Saudi Arabia's power

capabilities are solely based on its command of major energy resources. In the immediate years after the oil revolution in the 1970s, some observers expected that a new paradigm in regional development could emerge by reallocating globally earned resources into regional development. Yet, as will be elaborated further below, this did not happen.

It is not any genuine regional actor but the United States that *directly* controls the most advanced military capabilities deployable to and even deployed in the Middle East. On the ideological basis of the Carter Doctrine (1979), US president Ronald Reagan activated the Central Command over the Middle East (CENTCOM) in 1983, one of whose major components is the US navy's Fifth Fleet (Naval Forces Central Command), which is headquartered in the Bahraini capital Manama. In several wars, particularly with Iraq in 1991 and 2003, the United States proved that it is the strongest regional actor not only by sea routes but also by air and land means. Moreover, the United States also used soft power when it brokered the very few successful peace processes of the Middle East. Particularly Camp David I in 1978 was a major breakthrough since the former major ally of the Soviet Union switched camps, which is why the Cold War in the Middle East was basically over ten years before the implosion of the Soviet Union terminated it on a global scale.

3 How to Explain That There Is No Regional Power in the Middle East

3.1 Theoretical Embedment of the Regional Power Concept

From an *explanatory* perspective, the question arises what are the causes that prevented a regional power from emerging in the Middle East. The regional power approach itself does not give an answer to this crucial question because it is inspired by "Institutionalist" thinking—without seriously taking into account that critical "Institutionalism" is well aware that institutions in international relations only develop under favorable conditions (Keohane 1984). Institutionalism was developed by critically challenging Realism, yet both schools of thought shared some basic assumptions, particularly the notion that the international system is shaped by anarchy. Therefore, a fruitful way to approach the issue why there is no regional power in the Middle East is to utilize structural Realism (Waltz 1979). The reason is that Realism considers the emergence of multipolar systems as a regular case. Moreover, Realism does not expect the emergence of *autonomous regional* powers. As long as there are regional powers, they are expected to be rather dependent on (one of the) global powers. At the same time, global powers may be challenged by actors from a certain region. If so, these challenging powers often act as global rather than as regional powers (as in the case of China).

Yet, Realism also has its limits (in the present case). Realism is ahistorical in the sense that it takes it as a given that since the Westphalian peace of 1648 the international system is composed of independent states whose relations among each other are shaped by anarchy rather than hierarchy. However, in the Middle East, modern states have been created by non–Middle Eastern actors, mainly by colonialism and imperialism as organized by the United Kingdom and France only in the twentieth century. Moreover, albeit in a comparatively more civilized way, the United States has contributed to state-building processes in the Middle East at the end of and immediately after World War II. In some cases that are of relevance here—mainly Saudi Arabia and Egypt—the externally induced creation of modern states was tied with the dependent integration of the respective countries in the international political economy. To cover these aspects of an externally designed Middle Eastern state system, insights of "Globalism" are useful (see Viotti and Kauppi 2014: Chap. 4). Globalism shares the idea with Realism that international relations are driven by systemic rather than subsystemic variables, that is, international/global rather than domestic factors. However, Globalism believes that economics, that is, capitalist development, rather than security is the driving force of the international system. In terms of the Middle East, Globalism highlights the asymmetric integration of this world region into the capitalist world system, which, at latest since the mid-twentieth century, has been based on Middle Eastern oil.

As shown elsewhere (Beck 2002), in many respects, regional relations in the Middle East are actually compatible with the assumptions that representatives of Realism believe are applicable to the world in general. The Middle East with its high degree of power dispersion is a multipolar system, which, according to Realism, is the rule rather than the exception. Thereby, at least four of the five Middle Eastern states with recent potentials to become regional powers—Egypt, Israel, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia—have had very strong ties with the United States over the last few decades and Iran was part of this pattern until the Iranian Revolution of 1979. In all the cases mentioned, it is rather questionable whether these countries could have played the role they held or still hold without American support.

Given the high US involvement and interest in the Middle East, potential regional powers occasionally find themselves in situations in which they have to choose whether to bandwagon with the United States or with another potential regional power. If potential regional powers cooperated among each other, a regional concert could emerge that could act as a substitute for a regional power or contribute to its emergence if power gaps between the cooperating potential regional powers were significant. However, when Middle Eastern actors are exposed to the situation as described, they act rational in bandwagoning with the United

States rather than with potential regional partners. The reason is that states are not only concerned about absolute but also relative gains: cooperation with a regional actor leads to the concern that the regional actor could use the benefits against oneself. Moreover, if one's own power capabilities are lower than that of the potential regional partner, cooperating with the United States is the only chance to surpass the regional actor. Shibley Telhami (1990: Chap. 6) analyzed the negotiations in Camp David (1978) on the basis of these theoretical insights derived from Realism: for Egypt, concluding peace with Israel was mainly a tool for the ambition to acquire the position of the most important Arab ally of the United States and for Israel, the major aim was to maintain what the Carter administration had labeled in May 1977 a "special relationship" with the United States, thereby setting itself apart from all neighboring countries as the major ally of the United States. After its defeat in June 1967, Egypt had no choice in the short run than to ally with Saudi Arabia. However, the long-term costs of such an alliance—Egyptian subordination to Saudi petrodollars—were unacceptable to Cairo, whereas dependence on the United States appeared to be tolerable due to Washington's uncontested superiority vis-à-vis Egypt in terms of relative power capabilities. When Egypt attempted to become a regional power after Gamal Abdel Nasser's Revolution in 1952, from the very beginning the US strategy was to attract Egypt into the Western camp. However, until the mid-1960s, Egypt was able to take advantage of the Cold War and managed to play off the United States and the Soviet Union against each other. By doing so, Egypt essentially proved capable of maintaining its relative independence. However, after the disastrous defeat in the 1967 June war against Israel, Egypt abandoned its resistance toward US courtship and signed peace accord with Israel in 1979. By doing so, Egypt was rewarded a long-lasting albeit highly asymmetric alliance with the United States at the expense of its role as an autonomous regional power.

The United States attempted to establish good relations with all potential regional powers in the Middle East. Until the end of the Cold War, the United States rarely interfered directly to promote pro-American regional powers, such as the forthright intervention in 1953 to reinstall the shah regime. However, the United States frequently took advantage of power rivalries between potential regional powers in order to avoid any one of them attaining the position to challenge the United States as the most powerful actor in the Middle East. Thus, the United States has heavily supported Israel since the 1970s; at the same time, it gave sufficient support to Israel's rivals, particularly Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to keep the balance. When Iraq attacked Iran in 1979, it received US support to balance Iranian ambitions. Yet, when Saddam Hussein's Iraq attempted to become a regional power by invading Kuwait in 1990,

thereby endangering the regional position of Saudi Arabia, the US ally, the United States massively contained Iraq.

3.2 Attempts at Acquiring Regional Power in Contemporary History

In contemporary Middle Eastern history, all major attempts of potential regional powers to become regional powers have been accompanied by if not based on the exposure of hard-power capabilities and violence. This holds true of the two major Egyptian attempts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when Muhammad Ali waged war among other places in the Gulf and Sudan and Nasser fought a proxy war with Saudi Arabia in Yemen (1962–1967), respectively. Also Iraq's attempts to become a regional power were based on warfare, first against Iran (1980–1988) and then against Kuwait (1990). According to the regional power concept, the use of hard power is deviant for a regional power. However, Ian Lustick (1997) shows that major powers in Europe—which very often serves as a model for concepts of regionalism—were the outcome of warfare. Even if it appears to be disputable whether the use of hard power is a necessary condition for the emergence of regional powers, the projection of hard power should be considered more systematically in the regional power concept. Moreover, the concept should also no longer overlook what appears to be a well-proven fact in the Middle East: the nonexistence of a Middle Eastern regional power is not, in the least, the result of direct, sometimes indirect external interference from Europe and the United States to avoid such an outcome. It actually appears to be a pattern that Western hegemons—in the nineteenth century, the United Kingdom and since World War II, the United States—do not tolerate the use of hard power of actors attempting to acquire a regional leadership role (in the Middle East).

Lustick's analysis may also serve as a link between the insights derived from Realism and Globalism. Lustick's approach is insofar indebted to Realism as the issue of regional powers is presented as a problem of relative power distribution on the international and regional level. At the same time, Lustick also refers to the Western interest in integrating the Middle East in the international political economy and maintaining its position, which has been characterized by its central role for the global energy system since World War II. The US administration indeed "discovered" the Middle East as crucial for the supply of a basic strategic commodity for Western capitalism since the mid-twentieth century: oil.

3.3 Role of Western Oil Interests

Institutions of modern statehood were virtually nonexistent before the era of oil had its start-up in the Gulf monarchies at the end of World War II. Thereby, both the United States and the United Kingdom took

care that the monarchies in the Gulf could maintain their independence. Contrary to Iraq and Iran, which enjoy comparatively big populations, the monarchies in the Gulf had no resources beyond oil and needed constant external support for securing their borders. Therefore, not only their welfare systems became dependent on oil exports but also their security—and thereby their very existence—was designed in a way that made sure that they had limited room for maneuvering. In other words, without constant support of the United Kingdom and, since World War II, increasingly the United States, the Gulf monarchies would not have been able to survive when potential regional powers such as Egypt (in the 1950s and 1960s) and Iraq (in the 1980s until 1990) attempted to become full-fledged regional powers by promoting pan-Arabism (Egypt vs. the Gulf monarchies) or simply swallowing them (Iraq vs. Kuwait).

It is important to note that there are strong indicators that the Western protection of the Gulf monarchies from potential regional powers was based on a deliberate policy. In the case of the United Kingdom's policy in the interwar period, this appears hardly deniable since the United Kingdom dominated foreign affairs through protectorates, for example, in Kuwait and Bahrain. Though the US administration refrained from any colonial rule, it established a highly sophisticated international energy regime after World War II whose stability relied on the independence of the Gulf monarchies, in particular Saudi Arabia. In exchange for high rent payments (in relative terms both to their population and to their bargaining power vis-à-vis the major oil companies), the Gulf monarchies accepted the prolonged dominance of the Anglo-Saxon major oil companies, which—through a sophisticated system of consortia—decided on production figures in the different oil countries. In December 1950, when American oil companies granted the 50–50 formula of sharing oil revenues to Saudi Arabia, thereby privileging—the Wahhabi kingdom vis-à-vis Iran, whose oil sector was controlled by British Petroleum, fundamental political change took place in Iran: Muhammad Mossadegh was appointed prime minister in April 1951, who nationalized the oil sector and marginalized the role of the shah. It took a very well-coordinated and hence, effective oil embargo organized by the powerful Anglo-Saxon companies that drove Iran close to state bankruptcy and a British-American orchestrated coup d'état that reinstalled the shah regime in order to restore an externally dominated oil regime in Iran in 1953. Contrary to Iran and Iraq, the Gulf monarchies had no leverage—and even no interest—to put pressure on the major oil companies: they owed their existence and survival as modern states to the map drawing of Western actors, who continued to provide them with security. When the potential regional powers (such as Iran in the early 1950s and Iraq, albeit in a much more moderate way, in the

1960s) attempted to influence production and price decisions of the Western oil companies, they could rely on the monarchies and anytime influence them to increase their oil production, when they considered it necessary to discipline potential regional powers (Schneider 1983: 88–92). Only when Muammar al-Qaddafi—who had overthrown one of their fellow monarchs, King Idris—successfully challenged the oil companies in Libya by unilaterally enforcing production and price decisions in 1969–1970, the Gulf monarchs had no choice but to question the foreign-dominated consortium system in their own countries to prevent loss of regional and domestic credibility.

Yet, even the oil revolution of the early 1970s that shifted control of oil production and prices from the Western companies to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), with Saudi Arabia acting as the organization's hegemon, did not break the special relationship between the West and the Gulf countries, particularly the United States and Saudi Arabia. When the oil-exporting countries managed to become recipients of the most dramatic redistribution, in world history, of financial means from the West to the South, some observers believed it to be the start of a process of sustainable regional development in the Middle East. It seemed to be plausible that the extreme increase in petrodollars could match the needs of both the capital-rich but labor-poor oil-exporting countries in the Gulf and the capital-poor but labor-rich countries particularly in the Mashriq. However, the Gulf states did not invest in the economic development of the Mashriq; rather, their socioeconomic engagement toward this subregion was confined to attracting Arab human capital to the Gulf, otherwise focusing mainly on politics and stabilizing authoritarian rules by supporting the state budgets of Egypt and other oil-poor Arab countries (Ibrahim 1982). Saudi Arabia was ready to act as a regional stabilizer but not as a regional investor because this could have strengthened Egypt vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the bulk of the petrodollars were recycled toward the West by purchasing high-quality consumer goods as well as high-tech means of production and weapons. Moreover, Saudi Arabia transferred a good deal of its newly earned income to the Anglo-Saxon private banking system—a measure that significantly contributed to mitigate the debt crisis triggered by the sudden oil price increase in the early 1970s, mainly at the expense of emerging economic powers in Latin America (Schneider 1983: Chap. 9). Thus, petrodollar recycling proved to be a strategy that made the huge redistribution of global wealth in favor of a couple of developing countries acceptable to the West. Petrodollar recycling also served as a major strategy of Saudi Arabia after the significant increase of oil prices at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Higgins, Klitgaard, and Lerrman 2006: 1; Pfeifer 2011)—once again, Saudi Arabia could prove its commitment to the well-being of the global capitalist economy.

Saudi Arabia's and the other oil-exporting countries' reluctance to invest in regional development also contributes to an explanation why the socioeconomic development of the Middle East lags far behind other developing areas in the recent decades. Since the 1970s, there has been no lack of capital to develop the region. Rather, it is the mismatch of key factors for socioeconomic development—particularly financial and human capital—to overcome which would have required political willingness of potential regional powers. Yet, the Middle Eastern contracert prevented that from happening. Therefore, the Arab potential regional powers failed to catch up with newly emerging powers in other world areas such as Asia and Latin America.

4 The Arab Spring as a Catalyst for the Emergence of a Regional Power in the Middle East?

The Arab Spring has very often been referred to as revolutionary. Indeed, the recent uprisings in the Arab world that started in Tunisia and then spread, among other places, to the potential regional power Egypt were of historic significance because for the very first time in post-Ottoman history, major upheavals in the Arab world were primarily based on global values of human rights and good governance rather than "region-specific" ideas and sentiments. Yet, although the overthrow of the reigns of Ben Ali, Hosni Mubarak, and others are possibly the starting points for revolutions, it would be premature to coin them as such just yet. Revolutions are processes of deep structural changes both of the political and social order of a society and very often take decades to succeed such as the classic French, Russian, Chinese, and Mexican revolutions. Due to the fact that during revolutions many different, competing groups of society are mobilized, their outcome is very difficult to predict. Theories of revolutions also teach us that many more revolutionary attempts failed than succeeded and that the outcomes of revolutions very often significantly differ from the intentions of those who initiated them (Skocpol 1979).

The Arab Spring triggered a process of fundamental political change in a significant number of Middle Eastern countries. What directions these processes take can hardly be predicted: some systems may be in a transition to democracy, some others may have taken the path that leads to another form of authoritarian regime, and in yet others hybrid regimes may emerge (Beck and Hüser 2012: 9–10). In the case of Egypt, which is the only potential regional power in the Middle East whose political system has been undergoing structural change since the beginning of the Arab Spring, the July 2013 military coup increased the likelihood that its

political system may turn to another form of authoritarian system. At the same time it should be emphasized that transition processes away from authoritarianism toward more pluralistic or even democratic systems frequently retard, that is, suffer setbacks.

Contrary to the Arab Spring whose supporters focused on domestic affairs, the Egyptian revolutionary attempt of 1952 and the Iranian Revolution of 1979 promoted ideologies with a dedicated regional perspective: pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism, respectively. Thus, both Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s and Iran since the 1980s attempted to achieve the status of regional powers. Yet, since the agenda set by the Arab Spring focuses on domestic rather than regional affairs, it is not expected that one of the primary aims of the new governments, including the Egyptian military rule established in 2013, will be to invest huge resources to become a regional power. Notwithstanding the possibility that governments may try to manipulate their constituency by focusing on regional problems (such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) in order to deviate from domestic issues, there is little reason to believe that the Arab Spring will *directly* lead to the emergence of a regional power.

At the same time, it is a striking fact that the events in Tunisia and Egypt inspired social protests and strong oppositional movements in many Arab countries. Moreover, even in Arab countries where social protests triggered by the Arab Spring remained on a low level or were even nonexistent, such as in Jordan and Lebanon, respectively, the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria has been closely observed and debated very intensively, often up to a degree as if it were their respective nation's domestic affairs. Even in the oil-rich Gulf countries, which, with the exception of Bahrain, have been least affected, political leaders showed signs of nervousness and significant social groups were affected. Thus, the Gulf countries launched cost-intensive welfare programs and hastily initiated integration of Jordan and of even geographically distant Morocco into the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with the aim to establish a regional "kings' club" opposed to processes of political change. Therefore, the question arises whether the Arab Spring could contribute to the emergence of a regional power in an *indirect* way.

In order to tackle this question, it helps to examine how past regional power attempts in the Middle East had developed. As Maridi Nahas (1985) shows, neither in the Egyptian revolution from above (Trimberger 1978) in 1952 nor in the Islamic revolution in Iran 1979 had the new governments gained regional influence due to an increase in hard-power capabilities. Rather, their success—albeit limited—to act as regional powers was due to the fact that they questioned the basic principle of political leadership as well as the cooperation with imperialist powers in the Middle East. Thus, Nasser managed to act as a regional leader only as long as he could exhibit successes in Egypt such as the nationalization of

the Suez Canal in 1956, the establishment of the United Arab Republic in 1958, and achievements—albeit limited—in his policy of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI). However, the Egyptian attempts to project hard power to the region—most visibly in the case of the proxy war in Yemen—failed since the regime in Cairo did not control superior capabilities vis-à-vis its adversaries.

In the case of Egyptian attempts to become a regional power in the 1950s and 1960s, the monarchical principle was fundamentally challenged by a republican ideology, and in the case of Ruhollah Khomeini in Iran, a rotten version of the republican principle by an Islamist ideology. Again in both cases, the transnational attraction for other societies of the Middle East was derived from the fact that the political and socioeconomic systems people were exposed to in the nonrevolutionary systems shared major similarities to those that were overthrown in Egypt and Iran, respectively (Nahas 1985). Possibly, the Arab Spring constitutes a similar regional situation as in 1952 and 1979: as the Arab Spring has brought along deep political change in major parts of the Middle East, it could undermine the basic principle of authoritarian governance in the region—a legacy that was established in the summit of the Arab League in Khartoum in 1967 when the republican and monarchical systems of the Arab World terminated their fundamental conflict that had shaped the region since 1952. Progressively transforming societies of the Arab world could serve as a *role model* to attract social groups from within the remaining Arab authoritarian regimes. Presently, not only societies in the countries participating in the Arab Spring but also the overall Arab world are highly politicized around the issue of fundamental political changes and reforms. However, if the military rule in Egypt as established in July 2013 consolidates, the principle of authoritarian governance would not be challenged on a regional scale, even if Tunisia were on the transition to democracy, since Tunisia's appeal to the Arab world is limited due to its small size and peripheral location in the Middle East.

Let us take a brief look at the potential candidates for regional leadership: (Iraq), Iran, Israel, Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Who among them has a fair chance to act as a regional power in the light of the Arab Spring? Iraq has been removed from the list by the interventions in 1991 and 2003 from which it has not yet recovered. Also the chances for Iran look rather bleak: although the Islamist regime had challenged the Khartoum consensus of 1967, it does not at all share the values of the Arab Spring. If the Arab Spring further develops, it is expected that Iran will find itself in a rather defensive position. At the same time, it is unlikely that Iran, with the exception of Bashar al-Assad's Syria, will ally itself with those actors in the region that strongly oppose the Arab Spring, that is, the Gulf states. Israel could play a significant role but only if it ended the occupation of Palestine. Yet, there are not many indicators

that the Israeli government is willing to do so. Thus, neither Iran nor Israel is expected to play a major role in the Arab Spring.

Among the countries spearheading the Arab Spring, Egypt is the only one that qualifies as a potential regional power. At the same time, among those opposing the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia is the only one that is capable of playing a major role in regional affairs. Moreover, in the first two years of the Arab Spring it looked as though it could pave the way for a stronger role for Turkey in the Middle East: Turkey has been undergoing a process of democratization since the 1950s and the conservative Muslim party AKP has managed to achieve a very strong position in the Turkish system, which is why Turkey could easily ally with democratically elected Islamist governments in the Arab world. Turkey had also terminated its close relationship with Israel; started, in 2010, to intensify their support toward the Palestinians in their struggle against occupation in a much more visible way than any of the Arab regimes did; and pursued an active policy in the Syrian civil war, too. Yet, the endeavor of creating a Turkish-Egyptian alliance was deferred to the unforeseeable future as a result of the marginalization of the Muslim Brotherhood in the wake of the 2013 military coup.

At the beginning of the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia with its system of extremely low political participation, based on a very conservative political interpretation of Islam, abruptly ended up in the defensive. When incomparably more modern versions of Islamism came to power in Tunisia and Egypt, Saudi Arabia was threatened and came under real pressure to reform. Rather than proactively projecting power to the whole of the Arab world, it seemed that the most that Riyadh could hope was to achieve a refreshment of the 1967 Khartoum consensus, that is, a state of affairs in which the monarchical principle of government in the Gulf and in Jordan (as well as Morocco) was not challenged by other Arab actors (see Luciani 2009: 98–99; Luciani 2013: 122–123). However, after the forced removal of President Mohamed Mursi, Saudi Arabia ended up in a rather favorable situation: a new alliance between Riyadh and Cairo emerged. As in the years after the 1967 June war, the prospect is that Egypt could become highly dependent on Saudi financial support. Back then, it took Egypt ten years to emancipate from Saudi dependency, when it signed the peace treaty with Israel, thereby gaining US support including significant financial aid (Telhami 1990: Chap. 6).

Triggered by the Arab Spring, the Arab League has broken new ground. Particularly in terms of its policy toward Syria, the Arab League has departed from its tradition of noninterference in domestic affairs of member states, thereby adopting global, universal values of human rights. It is striking that it was not Egypt but Saudi Arabia (supported by Qatar) that took a clear lead in the Arab League's policy toward Syria. At the same time, there are good reasons to remain skeptical concerning

whether the Arab League's policy toward Syria means a fundamental shift. Syria and also Libya were rather "easy cases" since the uprisings took place in republics that had replaced monarchies in the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, the decline of the regimes in Syria and Libya could be welcomed by both the new governments in Egypt and Tunisia and the monarchies of the Gulf. Moreover, since Saudi Arabia and Qatar have been the driving forces behind the new policy of the Arab League, the reference to human rights reveals double standards. Last but not least, the policy toward Syria has been of very limited success so far. The peacekeeping mission turned out to be a failure and the economic sanction policy adopted by the Arab League in November 2011 had only a limited impact. Moreover, while the suspension of Assad's Syria from the Arab League and the offer of the Syrian seat to the opposition formalized Assad's loss of regional legitimacy (which had until recently been significant due to Syria's stylization as the only remaining "front state" against Israel) among the general Arab public, it was too little too late to have a significant impact on the ground. To be fair, many sanction policies and other forms of policies directed against "rogue states" in contemporary history of international relations have proven ineffective (Beck and Gerschewski 2009). However, a comparison with the Libyan case shows that the Arab League may be successful if its policy preferences are supported—and implemented—by the West. Moreover, it cannot be excluded that the Arab League's policy toward Syria could contribute to a structural softening of the principle of noninterference in internal Arab affairs. Another trend could be that Saudi Arabia attempts to use regional institutions—the Arab League and the GCC—for its regional politics in a more systematic way than in the pre–Arab Spring period.

At the end of the analysis on development trends of regional affairs in the light of the Arab Spring, one should recollect that Realism and also Globalism provided good service in explaining why no regional power has emerged in the recent decades. Hereby, the role of the United States and its vested interest in avoiding an independent potential regional power to gain prominence turned out to be of crucial importance. Thus, the question arises whether the United States will be able to shape regional politics in the Middle East to the same degree as it has managed in the recent past. This seems to be rather unlikely for several reasons: first, the United States is struggling with difficult domestic affairs, for instance, its huge budget deficit. Second, it lost some of its major regional allies, particularly Mubarak. Third, due to widespread anti-American attitudes among most social groups in the Arab world, increasing political participation is expected to lead to skepticism and disaffirmation of a leading role for the United States in the Middle East. Thus, from this end, the Arab Spring has improved the chances for the development of a genuine regional power in the Middle East.

However, also here one should rain on the parade of a potential future regional leader in the Middle East. As has been shown, not only power capabilities vis-à-vis other regional actors but also overall power capabilities on a global scale matter. Yet, due to its decade-long de-development, the Arab world lags far behind other developing regions such as Asia and Latin America. Thus, even though US power in the Middle East is likely to shrink, for the time being, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and even Turkey will find it difficult to challenge the United States as a quasi-regional power in the Middle East with its very firm current ties to Israel and Saudi Arabia.

5 Conclusion

The Middle East is a world region that, as the result of a complex interplay of extra-regional and intra-regional factors, did not develop regional powers. Rather, power is highly dispersed among a fairly high number of potential regional powers—Egypt, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey (including Iraq in the 1980s). The power capabilities of these potential regional powers are significantly weaker than those of the United States *in the Middle East* are. Moreover, the potential regional powers of the Middle East do not constitute a concert but a contracert of power: as a result of highly diverging interest, their relationship is basically shaped by competition rather than cooperation and the use of hard power has already played an important role in their relationships in the nineteenth century and again after World War II. Last but not least, the global power capabilities of the Middle Eastern potential regional powers are significantly lower than those of (potential) regional powers in Latin America and, above all, in Asia.

The likelihood that the Arab Spring will lead to the emergence of a regional power in the Middle East in a direct way is rather low. Yet, the chances that the Arab Spring will contribute to such an outcome in an indirect way depend on a successful future development of the Arab Spring. To be more specific, such an outcome appears to be dependent on difficult to achieve conditions. The chance that the Arab Spring leads to the emergence of a regional power, namely Egypt, depends, first, on a sustainable transformation process that will be perceived as a successful role model in the Arab world. With the military coup of July 2013, the perspectives for such a scenario look rather bleak. Second, Egypt will only have the opportunity to become a strong regional power if it manages to initiate a successful socioeconomic development that places it in the position to catch up with successful emerging powers on a global scale. Whether such a scenario is likely or not is debatable—even if it does, it will come true only in the long run.

There are some theoretical lessons to be learned for the regional power approach from the present analysis. First, the approach should not

only focus on individual case studies but also analyze the relationships among (potential) regional powers and between them and global powers. While the Middle East may be an extreme case, other world regions also deviate from the ideal-type region with one hegemon acting as a single regional power. Second, rather than taking the existence of regional powers as a "natural" result, their historical development should be analyzed. Thereby, it is also crucial to tackle the issue whether and how their development as (potential) regional powers is supported—or blocked—by other potential regional powers as well as global powers. Third, due to a theoretical bias—toward a rather naive version of Institutionalism—the regional power approach in its present form largely ignores competitive behavior and the use of hard power by (potential) regional powers. This biased perspective should be replaced by a systematic analysis of how regional powers combine the use of hard and soft power; how cooperative and competitive (or defective) behaviors intermingle; and how global powers respond to that. Last but not least, it should not be taken for granted that regional powers primarily use their capabilities to act regionally. Rather, it should be analyzed under what circumstances they invest (primarily) in global politics.

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PART I

Iran and Its "Revolutionary Mission"

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CHAPTER 2

Iran: Winner or Loser of the "Arab Spring"?

Henner Fürtig

1 Introduction

On February 11, 2011, the main celebrations in Tehran to mark the anniversary of the Iranian Revolution were heavily influenced by the recent upheavals that had occurred in the Arab world—its immediate neighborhood. The Tunisian ruler Ben Ali had fled the country at the beginning of the year and on the day of the celebrations in Iran, public anger forced the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, to step down. The Arab Spring had started, and hardly any state in the Middle East or North Africa was able to avoid the effects of its force. On this very day, the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran was jubilant. Addressing his "brothers in faith" in Tunisia and Egypt, Supreme Leader Khamenei declared that the events taking place in their home countries constituted a "natural continuation of the Iranian revolution of 1979" (Alfoneh 2011: 36) and had "special meaning for the Iranian nation... [It was] the same as 'Islamic awakening,' which [was] the result of the victory of the big revolution of the Iranian nation" (Kurzman 2012: 162). Such statements were generally not expressions of sympathy for or recognition of the courage and resolve of the protesters in Tunisia and Egypt but rather the manifestation of a firm determination to exclusively define the revolutions as an Islamic awakening and thus force them into a trajectory that began with the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Khamenei and other leaders tried to create an understanding that the Iranian model was obviously still attractive enough to serve as a role model for others in spite of its setbacks and in spite of it being condemned by Western and regional opponents. Thus, the Islamic Republic of Iran had not only received subsequent recognition

as the initiator of this Islamic awakening but was also, according to the logic of its leaders, the "natural" leader in the region.

Yet the Iranian regime (much to its displeasure) was not a clear beneficiary of the Arab Spring because Tehran's interpretation of the uprising's root causes was challenged right from the beginning—not least in Iran itself. The opposition Green Movement, which had faced relentless persecution since the disputed presidential elections of 2009, applied a completely different interpretation to what was taking place in the Arab world. At the end of January 2011, one of the movement's most prominent leaders, Mir Hossein Mousavi, declared that the events in Tunis, Sana, Cairo, Alexandria, and Suez could be traced back to the second half of June 2009 when millions of Iranian protesters demanded that their democratic rights be respected (Kurzman 2012: 162). On February 14, 2011, Mousavi and the Green Movement's coleader, Mehdi Karrubi, called for a powerful rally in solidarity with the protesters in the Arab world, as these people were struggling for the same aims as the oppressed opposition in Iran: the removal of autocracies. The Interior Ministry immediately prohibited the demonstrations and a countrywide wave of persecution ensued.

If the official interpretation of the Arab Spring met an undeniable resistance inside Iran, how was it received in Iran's neighborhood? The following paragraphs intend to highlight the motives and ambitions of Iranian foreign policy and analyze its current impact in the region.

2 Iranian Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring

The Islamic Republic of Iran constitutes a clear exception within the international community, given that the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (which preceded the republic's foundation) is one of the few genuine mass revolutions of the modern age. The Iranian Revolution shares comparable developmental stages and traits with the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917. As early as 1953, Crane Brinton, a doyen of US political science, attributed to all social mass revolutions a strong missionary ingredient that consisted of the aim to convince the entire world of the "eternal" validity of their visions (Brinton 1953: 196). This applied to civil liberties in 1789 and to communism in 1917. In 1979, the charismatic leader of the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, made no attempt to conceal his intent to (re)instate Islam with worldwide significance.

2.1 Motives of the Iranian Claim to Leadership

For Ayatollah Khomeini, Islam constituted a complete and perfect system that provided norms and offered guidance for all aspects of life. He

also believed that the Islamic religion had universal validity; he appealed to all Muslims to rise up against their powerful but "degenerate" rulers and create an Islamic state (Hussein 1995: 234). The *'umma*, the Islamic community of the era of Muhammad the Prophet and Imam Ali, represented his ideal of what should be reestablished. Khomeini viewed the Islamic world in its entirety (i.e., all nation-states where Muslims form the majority of the population) as the current manifestation of the *'umma*. He regarded the Iranian Revolution as nothing less than the starting point for spreading the idea of an Islamic state throughout the world once again. The revolution was supposed to be this movement's core as well as a leading example:

> The Iranian Revolution does not exclusively belong to Iran, for Islam is not exclusively owned by one specific people. Islam is a revelation made to all mankind, not only Iran . . . An Islamic movement can therefore not be limited to one specific country, not even just to Islamic countries, for it is the continuation of the Prophet's revolution.[1]

This statement outlined what became the defining credo of early Iranian foreign policy: export of the revolution (*Sudūr-e Enqelāb*). As Khomeini himself declared, "We shall export our revolution to the entire world because it is an Islamic revolution . . . As long as people on this earth are being oppressed, our struggle shall continue" (Khomeini 1979: 28). Sections 11, 152, and 154 of the Iranian Constitution make direct reference to this task and remain in force even today.

Thus, in the eyes of Khomeini, the revolution was not exclusively Shiite. He regarded himself and Iranian Muslims, irrespective of their denomination, as having been chosen by God to reinstate Islam's worldwide significance. In this sense, the augmentation of the revolutionary objective with the aim of liberating all oppressed people in the world (*mostazafin*)—including non-Muslims—was a more important part of Khomeini's agenda than was the implementation of special Shiite interests.

After Khomeini's death in 1989, his successor as supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, took the end of the Cold War as the starting point for a new interpretation of the mission defined by Khomeini. He consciously and deliberately affirmed a new bipolarity in the international arena characterized by the Islamic Republic of Iran as the core of a revitalized and politicized Islam on the one side and the West, its leading power, the United States, in particular, on the other side. Khamenei claimed that

> in the past the West assigned priority to the Soviet Union and Marxism, but now it has focused its concentration on our region, which has

> become the most important region for one reason, and that is because it was here that the Islamic Revolution entered the world.[2]

He believed that the challenge was immense as

> [Iranian revolutionaries] must prove that Western values and the Western way of life are not universally valid, but can be replaced by conscious adherence to Islamic norms. The eyes of other countries are on us, success and failure are being exactly weighed up against each other. It depends on us to make Islam an attractive alternative.[3]

In terms of being an example, it was no longer necessary for the Islamic Republic of Iran to actively export its revolution. Nevertheless, it was not until 1993 that Khamenei officially abandoned this mission.

In doing so, he was implicitly admitting that the concept as such had failed despite initial humble successes in Lebanon, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. His predecessor, Khomeini, had already tried to blame the "sinister practices" of the West and its regional allies (e.g., encouraging Saddam Hussein to wage war against Iran, 1980–1988) for the curtailment of revolutionary momentum. However, Khomeini was completely unable to see that his doctrine of exporting the revolution had repelled those he persistently sought to reach: oppressed Muslims. The majority of them were Sunnites and they had clear memories of the hegemonic ambitions of Iran during the shah's era. In broad consent with their respective governments, whom they usually viewed skeptically, they interpreted this Islamic sense of mission as an Iranian craving for status—this time cloaked in Shiite apparel.

2.2 Problems and Ambitions of the Iranian Claim to Leadership

After Khomeini's death, the de facto defeat in the war against Iraq, and the concomitant crisis of the system, in 1989–1990, the regime commenced its search for a new approach to implement the still-valid sense of its mission. This new method was not supposed to include any direct form of exporting the revolution. Rather, the Islamic leadership declared that primacy was to be assigned to economic reconstruction—in the end, the revolution would survive or fail with a prospering economy. An Islamic republic as a political, economic, and cultural "success story" would automatically prevail in the Arab world. Thus, Iran was to be transformed into a "model society" (*madīne-ye nemūneh*), meaning that the revolution would no longer have to be exported; instead, it would present itself to all Muslims as an alternative fit for emulation.

The first two presidents under Khamenei's aegis acted in accordance with this concept even though each of them had individual sets of

priorities. President Rafsanjani advocated a pragmatic course according to which foreign policy was primarily supposed to serve Iran's economic recovery after the devastating war against Iraq—an approach continued, in principle, by President Khatami. However, Khatami added a "dialogue of the civilizations" component, which consisted of perseveringly courting the political and economic decision makers of European states as well as those of China and Japan. This strategy was intended to indirectly compel the United States to react to the action and thus deemed a suitable instrument to overcome Iran's political isolation in the West on a long-term basis.

Thus, Mahmud Ahmadinejad's visit to Khomeini's tomb in August 2005—immediately after his first election as president—constituted more than a symbolic act. Afterward, he declared that the way of "Imam Khomeini" was the absolute way of the Islamic Republic. According to Ahmadinejad, Khomeini was not only the leader during the revolution but he also remained the revolution's guide.[4] With this statement, the president gave the impression that the Iranian Revolution had, on a higher level, returned to its point of departure. The pragmatism of Rafsanjani's two terms in office belonged to the past and Khatami's willingness to open the country and seek dialogue was forgotten. In contrast, Ahmadinejad and his mentor Khamenei reactivated Khomeini's depiction of the Islamic Republic of Iran as the "true defender of Islam against the West"—a context in which a close link between power consolidation and regional power ambitions became apparent.

It is no coincidence that in 2005, Supreme Leader Khamenei also declared the policy paper "20-Year Vision Plan" as the binding foreign policy guideline according to which Iran would assume the leading economic, scientific, and technological position in the region by 2025. Achieving this goal would not only see the Islamic Republic of Iran become a development model for the Islamic world but it would also constitute the realization of the model society project that had been cultivated since Khomeini's death. Additionally, Iran would become a role model due to its pioneering role in the "anti-imperialist" struggle, which was in keeping with the slogan "justice among the peoples and the states." Thus, the mission could not simply be reduced to a task for Shiites or Muslims in general. In order to consolidate the image of a pioneer, Iran constantly reminds the rest of the Islamic world of its merits in the struggle against "imperialism" and "Zionism." For example, the more the Palestinian problem becomes detached from its predominantly Arab context, the greater are Iran's chances to implement its current foreign policy aim to influence politically active Islamic communities around the world. Considering the pro-Western attitude of most authoritarian Arab regimes prior to the Arab Spring, Ahmadinejad's aggressive criticism of the United States and Israel was at least partially successful in

gaining approval from the "Muslim in the street." For the same reason, he also rejected the offer of normalized relations made to him by his US counterpart, Barack Obama. In fact, US and Israeli opposition was a precondition for the implementation of his foreign policy and security policy strategies.

Since the ousting of Saddam Hussein and the war in Iraq, the position of the Middle Eastern center of resistance against "US and Zionist despotism" had become vacant—a role Iran was eager to fill. Until the Arab Spring (or Islamic awakening according to Tehran's version of events), Iran's ambition to play the leading role in the creation of a "chain of resistance"—starting in Tehran and passing through Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut, and Ramallah before ending in Gaza—was based on its excellent relations with Hezbollah, stable contacts with the Palestinian resistance, strong roots within the region's Shiite communities, tremendous natural resources, and ability to exert massive influence on the events in Iraq (Hroub 2006: 32). If successful in creating this chain, it would be able to substantially harm the political aims of the West.

Nevertheless, Tehran's regained self-confidence was not so much a result of new concepts but rather of blatantly weak and unpopular Arab governments unable to counter the Iranian offensive. In fact, Iran's leadership claim had fallen short of regime expectations. Thus, in February 2011, it saw a huge opportunity to usurp the rebellions taking place in the region for its own project.

3 Reactions in the Arab World

Various conditions, at least to some degree, nurtured Iran's leadership ambitions. For decades, many inhabitants of North Africa and the Middle East had noticed that they had no access to the accelerated and increasingly globalized political, economic, and technological developments. Economic recovery, prosperity, and progress occurred in other parts of the world, while the squalid conditions in the deprived areas of Khartoum, Algiers, or Cairo, for example, had not changed. On the one hand, these destitute communities blamed past colonial and current neocolonial Western policies in the Islamic world for this misery; on the other hand, they condemned their own governments for the implementation of Western development and modernization models. The latter had failed "gloriously," leaving behind impoverished people whose cultural and religious identities were endangered. As a logical consequence, ideological imports from the West (such as nationalism, socialism, and communism) had proved useless in changing autocratic political and stagnating economic conditions. Subsequently, many deprived people (re) discovered their religion, Islam, as an approach to dealing with their current situations. Accordingly, Islam's significance increased substantially,

including in everyday culture. Against this background, there was growing support for all those who claimed that Islam need only be stripped of its "folkloristic elements" and "external additions" in order to function as a progressive and dynamic reforming factor appropriate for Muslims. Islamists who trussed that notion became the most influential organized opposition force in the region.

While the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists, and other Islamist groups increasingly gained approval and respect as consistent and authentic representatives of an "Islamic solution," they remained opposition forces; up to that point in 2011, they had only managed to seize power in Iran in 1979. This latter fact was the primary reason that the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran considered themselves pioneers and praised their country as a leading example. In an interview, the then foreign minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, referred to the "power of facts" and stated that the people of the region did not live in a vacuum: even if Iran was not omnipresent in their thoughts, they had been astutely aware that Iran was the only state in the region where Islam had become the dominant political power. Thus, the commitment to and struggle for an Islamic state would be rewarded (Salehi 2011: 3). As early as February 27, 2011, for the purpose of consolidating this impression, Iranian leaders invited Muslim leaders from around the world to a conference in Tehran on the "prospects and consequences of the Islamic awakening." They particularly appreciated the comments made by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (the oldest and most influential Islamist organization) delegate Kamal al-Helbawy, who, according to the Iranian media, expressed his deep gratitude and recognition of "Iran's leading revolutionary role."[5]

Yet, no leading Iranian politician referred to the fact that the demonstrations leading to regime change in Tunisia and Egypt by the end of February 2011 had occurred without any Islamic symbols, slogans, or demands. "Bread," "liberty," and "human dignity" were the core demands of the protestors in Tunis and Cairo—by no means the inception of an "Islamic order" or a "divine state" pursuant to the Iranian model. In fact, Iran's influence was even less significant than feared by Tehran. This will be analyzed in detailed cases studies of particular importance to Iran's foreign policy strategy.

3.1 Egypt

An assessment of the blogs produced during the first weeks of the uprising in Egypt revealed that a mere 69 of 42,466 tweets made any reference to Iran and only 3 of these were written in Arabic. A survey conducted in Alexandria and Cairo just a week before the ousting of Mubarak showed that only 18 percent of those surveyed had any sympathies for the Islamic Republic of Iran while 47 percent vehemently

rejected it. The remaining respondents expressed that they had "no interest" in Iran (Kurzman 2012: 162). Even the Muslim Brotherhood, which was heavily courted by Iran, displayed an extraordinary degree of reserve. Back in Cairo, Kamal al-Helbawy—who had been lauded in Tehran—declared that while his organization was grateful for Iran's support, it should be noted that the circumstances in Egypt were very different from those in Iran and that the Egyptian revolution was not an Islamic one (163). Muhammad Mursi, who subsequently became the Muslim Brotherhood's presidential candidate, stated his clear opposition to any Iranian influence, "We are not responsible for statements in Iran . . . we are against a religious state . . . because Islam is against it."[6] At the same time he referred to the pluralistic and democratic positions that the Muslim Brotherhood had long been advocating (Wickham 2011). Mursi and other leaders of the brotherhood were ostensibly well aware of the fact that adopting a course that made them appear too friendly with Iran could cost them the hearts and minds of the Egyptians they needed in the forthcoming elections.

Conscious of this, the Iranian government launched a charm offensive and tried to create the perception of an "equal footing" between the two Islamic centers. Via the Iranian media, Tehran depicted Iran and Egypt as

> two wings of the Islamic world. One wing began to flap with the Iranian Islamic Revolution's triumph, but the other wing was wounded. The other wing, too, has started to flap following the revolution in Egypt and is now in recovery. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Revolution move shoulder to shoulder in regard to the regional policies in the Middle East.[7]

As an initial common goal, Iran would probably seek the cancellation of the Camp David Accords (i.e., the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel), which has been described as one of the "most painful wounds in the body of the Islamic community."[8] The Egyptians, however, would presumably dismiss such assessments and proposals as "paternalistic" because they give the impression that Iran was the arena of the first successful manifestation of an Islamic "Renaissance" in modern history and that Muslim movements in all other Islamic countries remained in the opposition—even those as strong and influential as the Muslim Brotherhood. One should not forget that, according to the Iranian Constitution, the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran is also the "leader of all Muslims throughout the world."[9]

Nevertheless, when Muhammad Mursi became president, he had good reasons to write new chapters in his country's foreign policy and to widen his leeway by normalizing relations with Iran—a step that his

predecessor Mubarak had always vehemently rejected. In August 2012, Mursi took part in the 16th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) hosted by Tehran. Although this was not an official state visit, Mursi was in fact the first Egyptian president to visit Iran since President Sadat in 1978. Shortly before leaving Cairo, he declared that Egypt welcomes "a good relationship with Iran."[10] Tehran sought to maximize this opportunity, treating Mursi as a state guest and offering him both a lengthy meeting with Supreme Leader Khamenei and a visit to the nuclear facilities in Bushehr, Natanz, and Isfahan. Mursi not only declined both offers but he also used the opening hearing of the summit to call for the ousting of the Assad regime in Syria—thereby indirectly criticizing Assad's foreign supporters, including Iran. Mursi left Iran on the same day.

The new Egyptian president's message to Tehran was clear: a good relationship is fine but it should not harm fruitful relations with other countries, especially those on the Arabian Peninsula. Most Gulf leaders had boycotted the NAM summit in Iran. They, along with many other Arab and Western leaders, were suspicious of the "real intentions" behind Iran's implementation of a regional project driven by national rather than "Islamic" interests. Mursi would have risked being cut off from the vital economic and financial support provided by the Gulf monarchies if he had supported the Iranian position unconditionally.

In domestic politics, Mursi had to appease the Salafists, who were runners-up in the first parliamentary elections after the downfall of Hosni Mubarak. One of their most prominent preachers, Sheikh Ali Ghallab, called Mursi's visit to Iran "treason to the blood of the Syrians,"[11] while other Salafi leaders painted a dark picture of the Shiites—led by Iran—conquering the Sunni heartland of Egypt. Extreme anti-Shiite rhetoric is a hallmark of the Salafists, who believe the Shiites have "abandoned the true faith." Consequently, Iran's claim to leadership and self-depiction as a model for the Islamic world was seen to constitute a thinly veiled attempt to impose upon "true" Muslims yet another "un-Islamic system" in addition to the failed Western models.[12] The Muslim Brotherhood quickly responded to those accusations by describing Mursi's visit to Tehran as an initiative to pressure Iran to halt its support for the Assad regime and by promising that they will never allow Iran to spread Shiism in Sunni countries.

The paradoxical element in this dispute is that Iran had never intended to spread the Shiite faith in Egypt or anywhere else in the Islamic world. This would fundamentally contradict the Islamic Republic's claim of representing an Islamic rather than a pure Shiite model for Muslims to emulate. One could hardly imagine a more severe blow to Iran's intentions than being recognized as only the leader of the world's Shiites instead of the entire Muslim community. However, this dispute was abruptly ended

by the termination of Mursi's presidency on July 3, 2013. Even though Mursi did not meet all their expectations, the Iranian hierarchy was largely satisfied with his normalization of relations given former president Mubarak's refusal to deal with Tehran. Consequentially, all media mouthpieces condemned the coup d'état against the "elected Egyptian president." As in the following passage, they also employed the well-known propaganda clichés of a "dark" coalition of Zionists, reactionary Arab countries, and the West:

> As to whether the Egyptian army is in alliance with this coalition or not or it has been embroiled in their game, is another issue. But . . . by pushing the army into a confrontation with the people, they will, on the one hand, execute the plan to ensure the removal of Islamists from the political arena and, on the other hand, create conditions for the perpetuation of the crisis in Egypt. Regionally also, the . . . coalition of Zionists, reactionary Arab countries and the West, which through the exploitation of the Egyptian army . . . not only killed Egyptians and intensified the crisis in this country, has sought to silence the cries of oppression of the people of Bahrain and Palestine and prevent the world from paying attention to their lost rights.[13]

In strategic terms, the ousting of Muhammad Mursi and the political marginalization of the Muslim Brotherhood was another severe blow to Iran's Islamic-awakening interpretation of post–Arab Spring developments.

3.2 Libya

The events in Egypt in the summer of 2013 confirmed the view that Iran's plan to enhance its political image by interpreting the Arab Spring as an Islamic awakening held little promise—indeed, it was a claim that became increasingly difficult to maintain with each passing month. Not only had developments in Tunisia and Egypt become increasingly complex in nature, subsequent events in Libya, Bahrain, and Yemen unfolded differently than expected by Iran. UN Security Council Resolution 1973 and the subsequent North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military action against the Gaddafi regime provided the Iranian leadership with its first opportunity to rein in its Islamic-awakening propaganda in favor of tried-and-tested anti-US and anti-West slogans. Tehran condemned the operation as the continuation of a series of incidents where the West, driven by its barely concealed interest in gaining control over Libyan oil, disregarded international law (Hanau-Santini and Alessandri 2011: 1).

3.3 Saudi Arabia and the Gulf

In March 2011, when Saudi-led intervention troops entered Bahrain to thwart the popular uprising against the family rule of the Al Khalifa, Iran was presented with the chance to open another front in its propaganda war. According to the Iranian media, the Saudi king and the other monarchs of the Arabian Peninsula had intervened in Bahrain for fear of the revolutionary tide reaching them—especially if one takes into account geographic proximity and the existence of a common border. One report contended that the uprising in Bahrain "has had great costs for Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and the West, because it has revealed the Bahraini people's dynamism, which can constitute a role model for the people of Saudi Arabia."[14] By tolerating the uprising in Bahrain, the other monarchs would have been permanently concerned about the toppling of the old ruling regime and the introduction of a new one, which, by all expectations, would be hostile to them and refuse to succumb to their authority.

In fact, the Iranian media's assessment of the Gulf rulers' motives for intervening militarily in Bahrain was not so dissimilar to more neutral, even academic, interpretations. For example, the prominent anthropologist from the University of London, Madhawi al-Rashid, wrote the following:

> At this level, the blatant Saudi interference is seen at the level of three revolutions. It oppressed the revolution in Bahrain in a direct way, contained it in Yemen and supported it in Syria, which raises numerous questions regarding the Saudi role in the region. Saudi Arabia perceived the toppling of the Bahraini regime as being a direct threat to it, as it heralded the changing of the royal sheikhdom system of governance which is not only deeply rooted in Saudi Arabia, but also in the entire Gulf region…In Yemen, Saudi Arabia wished to contain the repercussions of the revolution which heralded the changing of the ruling team that is controlled by it on the political and economic levels, thus introducing an initiative to save that old team and the submission to Riyadh.[15]

However, the Al Saud and other Gulf rulers not only feared the knock-on effect of a popular uprising but also an imminent Iranian victory. The presence of a Shiite majority in Bahrain gave rise to their suspicions that an insurgent victory would, in fact, constitute a success for Tehran. Bahrain's relationship with Saudi Arabia has often been compared to that between Puerto Rico and the United States: an associated free state. How would Washington react to an anti-US change of power in San Juan (Teitelbaum 2011: 2)? Hence, as in the case of Egypt, the prominent role of the denominational factor in the battle over Bahrain was a bitter pill to

swallow for the Iranian leadership. How could it uphold the myth of an Islamic awakening of the entire Muslim community when the uprising in Bahrain was being misinterpreted (in Tehran's eyes) as a simple conflict between the Shiite majority against the Sunni minority? In response, Iran attempted to ostentatiously ignore the Shiite aspect of the conflict and accused the Saudi leaders of repeatedly opposing the clearly audible wish for change on the Arabian Peninsula in a bid to preserve their own power and the power of the West (Hanau-Santini and Alessandri 2011: 2). Although the uprising in Bahrain might have had some potential for Iran's vision of an Islamic awakening, the developments there were clearly marginalized by the events in Syria.

3.4 Syria

To the dismay of Tehran, the uprising in Syria put Iran in a similar situation to the one that Saudi Arabia was facing in Bahrain. Syria, under the friendly government of Bashar al-Assad, is of extraordinary strategic significance to Iran. Since the beginning of the Iraq-Iran war in 1980, Syria has been Iran's most trustworthy ally in the region and has provided Tehran with the ability to influence events in the Eastern Mediterranean—especially developments concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. One could argue that losing Syria would constitute Iran's biggest strategic defeat in 30 years, resulting in a loss of strategic access to Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas, and the Palestinian issue as well as a physical presence along the Israeli border (Salem 2011: 1). Given its geopolitical significance, Tehran clearly sided with Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian regime from the outset. Although it did not officially send troops to intervene (as did Saudi Arabia in Bahrain), Iran supplied Damascus with arms, money, and a disputed number of military instructors. However, Iran's support could not compensate for Syrian regime's lack of know-how in dealing with civil protests. During the first days of the uprising, it was the army—rather than a specially trained police force—that was putting down the protests. This resulted in extensive casualties among both the protesters and government forces (Venetis 2011: 20). Eventually, there was increasing evidence that Iran was contributing special units from its Revolutionary Guard forces to support Assad's efforts in dealing with the uprising.

The more Iranian support for Assad became obvious, the more regime opponents inside and outside of Iran began to sardonically ask whether Iran only supported the "people's will" in countries whose governments had alliances with the West and not in those that allied with Iran (Alfoneh 2011: 35). As a consequence, the entire construction of the Iranian interpretation of the Arab Spring as an Islamic awakening risked being undermined by Iran's actions in Syria. To address this contradiction, Iranian propaganda began to allege that the events in Syria could

not be compared to those in Egypt and Tunisia because the former were not part of a real revolution as they lacked certain requirements (e.g., the commitment of the people, a clear ideology, and a stringent leadership). Tehran argued that, on the contrary, the situation in Syria was akin to a civil war given the presence of specific demands (e.g., territorial secession, autonomy, and independence), which had been incited by foreigners pursuing their own interests.

This external interference became the second ingredient of Iran's counterpropaganda concerning Syria. Iran's link to the Arab East and to the Middle East conflict via Syria was reinterpreted as a chain of resistance against both "arrogant" and Western powers. They had no intention of daring to use the differences between Shiites and Sunnites to weaken that bond. The editorial of a conservative newspaper stated that the chain was like a "spiritual link" that had

> infused the spirit of resistance in many countries in the Middle East region. If they were able to cut off the middle link in that chain by making use of the potentials of the Salafi and Takfiri movements and by sowing the seeds of dissension among Muslims . . . they would have been able to disconnect the main link, which is the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the third and fourth links, which are Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine, respectively.[16]

Later, the editorial quoted Supreme Leader Khamenei as follows: "The reality about the Syrian issue is that the arrogant front is intent on destroying the chain of resistance in the region, which exists in the neighborhood of the usurping Zionist regime."[17] Interestingly enough, the notion of the Islamic awakening was removed from the propaganda arsenal in the Syrian case.

4 The Struggle for the Prerogative of Interpretation of the Arab Spring inside Iran

Since the severe crisis caused by the presidential elections of 2009, the Iranian regime had been eagerly looking for chances to regain legitimacy. In this context, a regional and international recognition of an interpretation of the Arab Spring as the long overdue confirmation of Iranian "revolutionary" policies would have been more than welcome. From a diametrically opposed position, the remorselessly persecuted Green Movement not only had an interest in refusing the regime's claim but also in branding it as "anachronistic" and similar to the Arab dictatorships that had just been ousted. The demonstrators who had, despite prohibition, gathered in several Iranian cities on February 14, 2011, used slogans that were unambiguous (e.g., "Mubarak, Ben Ali, it is now the

turn of Seyed Ali [Khamenei]") and referred to violent repression (e.g., "Those in Iran with motorcycles or those in Cairo with camels, death to the dictator") (Alfoneh 2011: 37–38). For the Iranian opposition, it was important to create the impression of a stable connection between the Green Movement in Iran and the protest movement in the Arab world. In this regard, the Green Movement posted the following statement on one of its websites: "In 2009 the Egyptians saw the protest rallies with millions of Iranians and asked themselves: 'Why can't we do the same?' 'Why are we weak and without strength?'" (Borszik 2011: 5). The logical conclusion should be that the Green Movement was a precursor of the Arab Spring—it had "inspired" people in Egypt and Tunisia, and the success of the protests in the Arab world was, in turn, catalyzing the Iranian opposition movement. Some bloggers even went as far as to term the "people striving for freedom in Iran, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan and Algeria" as "Green Movements of the regional nations" (5). With the increasing persecution of the Green Movement by the regime, the optimistic analysis of the former was replaced with a certain sobriety. In the long run, however, the characterization of the protest movements as a regional (not only Arab) phenomenon remained important. As Mohammadi (2011) points out,

> The protest movement may have many components, but its common denominator is its strong roots within the people and its striving for democracy…Neither a single party, nor a specific ideology dominate the protests, nor are prominent leaders discernible…thus the shared demands are what define it as a unit.

In the early days of the Arab revolts, the Iranian leadership tolerated voices in the local media that called for unconditional support of all popular uprisings against authoritarian rulers. An editorial in a reformist daily commented, for example, that "one must not abandon the support of people's demands in Syria, as in the long term it would harm Iran's foreign policy."[18] But the speed with which the supposedly stable regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya were swept away and the pace with which the regimes in Syria and Yemen came under sudden pressure undoubtedly gave rise to great concerns within the Iranian leadership and significantly contributed to its knee-jerk, harsh reaction. The alternative of yielding to the (partial) demands of the reform movement did not even merit consideration. On the contrary, Syria became the only case where the Iranian leadership claimed and propagated similarities with the domestic events of 2009 in Iran—in both cases, unrest had been caused by "foreign elements" (Granmayeh 2011: 2).

The Tunisian president, Ben Ali, and the Egyptian president, Mubarak, faced a similar decision. Their reliance on the belief that the

opposition was disorganized, without program, and thus weak did not prevent their ousting. Therefore, Tehran may have also made the wrong decision by choosing a strategy of relentless repression—though the Iranian hierarchy still deemed its position fundamentally different from that of the ousted potentates in Cairo, Tunis, and Tripoli, as it believed that a revolution against this type of regime had already occurred in Iran in 1979. Therefore, the Green Movement and even some moderate reformers constituted the "counterrevolution." Consequently, the regime's interpretation of the Arab Spring and that of the opposition remained incompatible.

5 Conclusion

The interpretation of the Arab Spring as a delayed extension of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 is far-fetched. The international circumstances at the end of the 1970s were largely shaped by the Cold War and the clergy in Iran monopolized the revolutionary agenda to an extent that was and has remained unparalleled. Carried by a messianic martyr cult, Ayatollah Khomeini implemented a programmatically coherent model for an Islamic state within one year of the shah's ousting. Even though Khomeini never ceased emphasizing the ecumenical, "pan-Islamic" nature of the Iranian revolution, Shiism was a major factor behind the success of the 1979 revolution. Iranian Twelver Shiism, for instance, obligates the faithful to agree with the doctrine of a jurisconsult, thus firmly establishing the principle of adherence. In this context, Khomeini only had to transfer this principle from the religious to the political sphere in a revolutionary act. Conversely, Sunni Islam does not endow clergymen with such superior positions. With the exception of the founder, Hassan al-Banna, and one of the most influential spiritual guides, Seyed Qutb, the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood have little theological education, if any at all (Keddie 2012: 151). After Khomeini's death, the Iranian leadership concluded that it would be counterproductive to export their specific revolution. Instead, it was deemed far more important to present an exemplary success story that could be emulated. Under these circumstances, Iran (according to Tehran's official interpretation) would also remain the undisputed originator of the "Arab awakening."

The Iranian leadership was not really surprised by the reaction of the neighboring Arab regimes, especially the monarchies. For rulers in the Gulf, it does not make any difference whether Iranian foreign policy goals are based on regional interests, sectarian beliefs, or nationalistic roots dating back to the era of the Persian Empire. "Indeed, all this represents an extension of the foreign politics and a natural reflection of the Iranian state, which is based on the principle of the [Walayet al-] Faqih rule."[19] What the Iranian leaders really lamented was their failure to bring the

Islamists onside, especially the Muslim Brotherhood branches in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. Instead of establishing a relationship with them on the basis of Islam (a relationship that would unite all Islamists in the entire region with the aim of establishing Islamic regimes, which would rule by sharia and confront all sorts of external challenges), the moderate Islamists made, if at all, polite and very general expressions of sympathy to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Salafists, however, explicitly projected an anti-Iranian and anti-Shiite image. Therefore, on balance, Iran was not among the beneficiaries of the Arab Spring. The notion of an Islamic awakening did not resonate with the Arab insurgents, while favoritism toward individual insurgent movements such as the one in Bahrain was generally interpreted as a selective measure employed in pursuance of Iran's own hegemonic ambitions.

Meanwhile, the analysis of the Arab Spring by the Green Movement primarily served propagandistic and political rather than academic interests. Yet, it cannot be denied that the parallels between Iran in 2009 and the Arab world in 2011, particularly with regard to the international framework conditions, are far more apparent than those between 1979 and 2011. The main demands of the Green Movement were the same as those of the Arab Spring insurgents: freedom, respect for human rights, social justice, and an end to corruption, nepotism, and isolation from the international community. According to ratings by Freedom House, Transparency International, and the World Bank, Iran even exceeds the figures of the ousted regimes of Ben Ali and Mubarak in Tunisia and Egypt, respectively, with regard to corruption, mismanagement, and oppression (Sadjadpour 2011: 3). However, these demands originate from the interests of the middle classes in the urban centers of North Africa and the Middle East and not from the "oppressed" and "disenfranchised" who were the target group of Khomeini and his followers' message.

Nevertheless, despite these similarities, the Green Movement always forgets to mention that its initial aim was not regime change but rather the repeal of election results. Mousavi and Karrubi are not only well known as figureheads of the Green Movement but also as representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran—the former served as prime minister (1981–1989) and the latter was Speaker of Parliament (1989–1996, 2000–2004). They have endeavored to bring about reforms in the Islamic Republic's system, not its abolition. In the wake of the repression it has faced, the Green Movement has become radicalized. But those fighting for the end of the "rule of the jurisconsult," and thus for a different republic, have neither a concise alternative program nor leaders with sufficient integrative power. In consequence, their appeal and their potential as a leading example for the Arab Spring have remained limited. Wael Ghonim, one of the best-known activists of the Egyptian insurgency, was

once asked if he was wearing his green armband as a token of solidarity with the Iranian opposition. Surprised, he answered that the color "was just a coincidence" but he was "happy" the connection had been made (Kurzman 2012: 162). Slightly more aware of probable similarities, one of Ghonim's companions included the Green Movement in a chain of other recent protest movements, including the Salt March in India, Solidarity in Poland, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, and the Lily Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. This demonstrates a respect for the Green Movement but does not assign it a prominent or leading role. Consequently, both the regime and the Green Movement should refrain from claiming that they exerted a defining influence on the events that were taking place in Arab states. With regard to the regime, former president Rafsanjani made the following sober judgment: "I maintain that the Islamic revolution serves many Muslims worldwide as an inspiration. Our current policies, however, make it extraordinarily hard for them to admit this."[20]

However, the Islamic Republic of Iran may, in fact, become a beneficiary of the Arab Spring in an unexpected way. The protests and revolts are altering the overall strategic constellation of the region. Old factions are dissolving and new ones are emerging. In general, Arab foreign policy has become more self-confident and is no longer directed by external powers. Arab governments no longer automatically accept the pariah status assigned to Iran by the West.

These states are now setting foreign policy according to national rather than Western interests. Overall, Iran is profiting from these pragmatic considerations—though it is still not a direct beneficiary as wished by the regime. On the whole, Iran has played a far more marginal role in the Arab Spring than imagined in Tehran. The benefits of the changes may become apparent in an indirect manner and, at best, in the long run.

Notes

1. *Ettela'at*, Tehran, November 3, 1979.
2. *BBC-SWB*, Reading, ME/1284A/1, January 22, 1992.
3. *Ettela'at*, Tehran, June 3, 1990.
4. *International Herald Tribune*, Paris, December 21, 2005.
5. Conference on Islamic awakening held in Tehran. http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1263085, accessed June 25, 2012.
6. *Al-Shuruq*, Cairo, February 10, 2011.
7. *Tehran-e Emroz*, Tehran, June 28, 2012.
8. Ibid.
9. Quoted in *Al-Sharq al-awsat*, London, June 17, 2011.

10. *Al-Safir*, Beirut, August 28, 2012.
11. Ibid.
12. *Al-Shuruq*, Cairo, March 6, 2011.
13. *Siyasat-e Ruz*, Tehran, August 15, 2013.
14. Ibid.
15. *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, London, August 6, 2012.
16. *Resalat*, Tehran, November 20, 2012.
17. Ibid.
18. *Mardom-Salari*, Tehran, April 7, 2011.
19. *Al-Jazirah*, al-Riyadh, May 13, 2012.
20. *Jomhori-ye Eslami*, Tehran, August 9, 2011.

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CHAPTER 3

Global Grandeur and the Meaning of Iran: From the Shah to the Islamic Republic

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam

1 Introduction

Foreign policy is never really restricted to material factors, which are conventionally defined in terms of the ability to project power through military or economic means.[1] In addition, foreign policy is about imagining the place of a country among the community of nations. The international affairs of a country are about claiming a status, questions of dignity, identity, reputation, emotions, and words. In the Iranian case, certainly from the early twentieth century onward when the contours of the modern Iranian nation-state were drawn, foreign policy has always also been about imagining global grandeur. Contemporary Iranian leaders, more professionally since the reign of Reza Shah (1921–1941), have not tended to limit the international relations of the country to issues of survival and a narrow understanding of the "national interest." Even in the absence of material resources justifying their self-perception, Iranian leaders have claimed and aspired to regional, even global power. There is then Iranian leaders' Iran-centric perception of the world that has repeatedly lent itself to political hubris. This is exemplified by imperial titles such as pivot of the universe, king of kings, light of the Aryans, for the country's royal dynasties and leader of the *umma*, shadow of god, and so on, after the Islamic revolution of 1979. Indeed, the only contemporary leader of Iran who did not claim an otherworldly title was Mohammad Mossadegh, Iran's first democratically elected prime minister who was deposed by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) led coup d'état in 1953.

In this article, I take seriously the specter of identity construction that underlies the making of foreign policy. I intend to trace the "will to international power" in Iran through the discourses constituting the contemporary foreign policy culture of the country. In a second concluding step, I will sketch the discrepancy between Iranian claims and external recognition of those claims that will explain why none of the contemporary grand discourses delineating Iran's self-perception in world politics legitimated a hegemonic regional power position. I will try to explain that the reason is not necessarily a lack of material resources but the inability of the contemporary Iranian state to forge a foreign policy culture that is not dependent on narrow definitions of Iranian "identity." Whether under the shah or the Islamic Republic, the idea of Iran as it has been invented by the state and political elites has not had universal appeal; it remained entangled and trapped in the narrow realm of identitarian politics: nationalistic and Persian-centric under the shah and Islamist/Shia-specific under the Islamic Republic. Neither of the two ways of imagining the Iranian self has been easily amenable to legitimating claims to regional or global power.

2 What Is Foreign Policy Culture?

We all have an idea about who we are. In turn, our sense of selfhood is heavily influenced by processes of socialization, our family background, profession, sexuality (being gay), religion (being catholic) or national narratives, or a mixture of all of those. A comparable sense of selfhood, heightened and dramatized by a good dose of theatrical performance and fancy modes of symbolization, is adopted by modern nation-states. Political elites conceive, invent, perform, and dramatize the national narrative through anthems, stamps, parades, national holidays, the media, and so on. States are adamant to tell the world and their populace who they are and what they represent, not in the least in order to legitimate their claim to rule. So when Iran's Supreme Guide Ayatollah Khamenei speaks of the "victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, under the able leadership of Imam Khomeini, a courageous and learned descendant of the prophet," when he deems the revolution a "watershed event in Islamic awakening in the entire world, especially in the countries of our region,"[2] and when he proclaims all this at a major international conference on Palestine, he places Iran at the center of the international politics of the region, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Islamic *umma* (nation).

This Iran-centric perception of Iran's role in the world has become a part of the self-understanding of the Islamic Republic, much in the same way as the United States claims to be the leader of the free world and allocates immense material and ideational resources to perform this role. Iran has also spent billions in order to be considered a regional superpower,

the leader of the Islamic world, or the pivot of the worldwide revolution of the oppressed, as Ayatollah Khomeini put it in 1979. To enact this role, the Iranian polity disseminates ideational and material resources through the state and its underbelly, in particular powerful foundations such as the Bonyad-e Mostafazan (the foundation of the oppressed) that are tied into a vast institutional network engaged in social and cultural projects throughout the world. After the revolution, and in particular in the last decade, Iran has also built a gigantic, state-sponsored media conglomerate that offers 24-hour news and other programs in all major languages. Such processes of self-construction of nation-states are at the heart of contemporary politics and no one remains unaffected by them.

When Ayatollah Khamenei states that "since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the colonial powers have been stepping up their attempts at fomenting discord and schism between the Shia and Sunni" and when he immediately adds in the same paragraph that "over the past years, considering that the Islamic Republic of Iran has accomplished a noble objective and conquered a high summit, which is the awakening of the Islamic world, the arrogant powers have now a stronger motive for the creation of discord and division among Muslims," he is narrating a role of Iran in world politics according to which the foreign policy elites of the country are meant to act. The same political process underlies President Obama's speeches, for instance, when he reproduces the idea of "America" as a beacon of freedom, justice, and equality. These are not merely words, free-floating ideas without sturdy hinges; they are institutionalized; and they permeate sophisticated ideational regimes of truth with a material base that carry the ideas forward and give them objective "reality." This is what I meant by the term "foreign policy culture" when I first introduced it in 2005 (Adib-Moghaddam 2005: 265–292).

I have conceptualized foreign policy culture more in depth in *Iran in World Politics*, a rather post-structural study that presents methods and theories with reference to Iranian politics. Suffice it to say here, that it is analytically important to acknowledge that the idea or a self-perception comes first, that is, it precedes the implementation of foreign policies and the interpretation of the "national interest." In the Iranian case, the idea of being the center of the Islamic world, or indeed the Third World, was crafted during the revolution. Khomeini repeatedly spoke in momentous terms when he referred to the revolution in Iran and its desired impact beyond the country. Speaking in March 1980, he reiterated in typically cosmic fashion:

> Know well that the world today belongs to the oppressed, and sooner or later they will triumph. They will inherit the earth and build the government of God. Once again, I declare my support for all the movements and groups that are fighting to gain liberation from

> the superpowers of the left and the right. I declare my support for the people of Occupied Palestine and Lebanon. I vehemently condemn once more the savage occupation of Afghanistan will achieve victory and true independence as soon as possible, and be delivered from the clutches of the so-called champions of the working class. (Khomeini 1981: 287)

In a sophisticated process galvanizing the construction of the postrevolutionary Iranian state identity, this self-perception became a salient norm, an institutionalized regime of truth, a discourse termed *sudur-e enghelab* (export of the revolution) in the first decade of the Islamic Republic, and a constitutive part of Iran's foreign policy culture. It is in this way that foreign policy culture refers to the socially constructed perception of elites who are involved in the foreign policy making process of a particular country. To put it in more formal terms, foreign policy culture refers to an integrated system of symbols (metaphors, analogies, imageries, languages, ideologies, norms, institutions, etc.) that act to define pervasive and embedded grand strategic preferences, based on the processing of indigenous and exogenous socialization, affecting the mental disposition of agents vis-à-vis their environment and giving content to the interest to be pursued. The concept of foreign policy culture thus appreciates that different countries approach the key issue of war, peace, and strategy from deeply embedded perspectives that are intrinsic to the distinct political cultures of the agent(s). To put it simply, by determining the perception of decision makers, a particular foreign policy culture shapes the broad contours of a country's foreign policy agenda, defined in terms of grand strategic preferences.

But the process of self-designation is not enough. If I would run around the campus of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and proclaim that I am Napoleon Bonaparte, I would have a hard time persuading anyone sane. At best, I would be the object of amusement; at worst, I would be restrained. Self-designations as the leader of the free world or the pivot of Islam require external recognition in order to function efficiently. As I have argued elsewhere with regard to the international politics of the Persian Gulf, role identities are neither solitary inventions nor can they be enacted in isolation (Adib-Moghaddam 2005; 2006). Any type of identity is dependent on processes of social engineering. In other words, if Iran wants to be acknowledged as the leader of the Islamic world, it has to be recognized as such by powerful elements of international society, which may explain why the Iranian state is spending so much money on public relations with the Muslim world in the first place. Yet as we will see in the next section, neither during the period of the shah nor after the Islamic revolution of 1979 did Iran receive the external recognition of its self-proclaimed role as a regional/

global power. Until today, the grandeur that Iranian leaders have sought has been repeatedly frustrated.

3 Lights of the Aryans, King of Kings

If foreign policy is about aspiring to global grandeur, contemporary Iranian leaders have had a vivid imagination about Iran's place in the world. Whether before the revolution of 1979, under the regime of the Pahlavi shahs, or the after the revolution of 1979, under the Islamic Republic, the idea of Iran as a regional, if not global power, has been central to the foreign policy discourse of the political elites in the country. Certainly, Iran carries the burden of history in that regard, an imperial complex informed by the ancient history associated with the territory that is today's Iran. This imperial complex was particularly pronounced in the ideational constructs that were meant to legitimate the policies of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and his father Reza Khan. For the Pahlavi monarchs, the meaning of the country was primarily geared to the pre-Islamic Persian empires rather than to Islam, which they deemed alien to the "true" and "authentic" Iranian identity. I have called these forms of ideational manipulation "bio-ontological" elsewhere because they target the very fabric of a nation's historical consciousness and sense of being. As such, they are weapons of mass deception (Adib-Moghaddam 2013).

Exemplifying the bio-ontological politics of modern Iran, the first monarch of the short-lived Pahlavi dynasty, Reza Khan, invested immense resources into reconstructing the meaning of Iran along racialized notions of Aryanism. Based on that mythology, the Iranian foreign ministry disseminated a memo in 1934 according to which the name Iran (land of the Aryans) would substitute Persia in all international correspondence. The term "Persia" was deemed an invention of the ancient Greeks who had invaded Iran and raided what they called "Persepolis" or the city of the Persians. Ironically, then, it was the ancient Greeks who were instrumental in the shah's decision to rename the country to Iran. According to the memo, "because Iran was the birthplace and origin of Aryans, it is natural that we should want to take advantage of this name, particularly since these days in the great nations of the world noise [*sic*] has gotten out regarding the Aryan race which indicates the greatness of the race and civilisation of ancient Iran" (Quoted in Kashani-Sabet 2000: 218).

This Aryan-centric discourse yielded and rationalized pro-Nazi policies, which would eventually be used as a pretext for the invasion of Iran by allied forces in 1941. In the imagination of many Iranian writers during that period, the country was among the superior nations of the world. Reza Khan himself was presented as a charismatic leader on par with Mussolini and Hitler (see further, Rezun 1982: 29). Journals

such as *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* (The International Journal of Ancient Iran Studies) experimented with racist ideas adopted from the pseudoscience of the Nazis. They were rather forthcoming in their infatuation with Hitler whom they deemed "a great scholarly man of the Aryan race."[3] Moreover, the swastika was reinvented as an authentically Iranian symbol. "It is truly rejoicing to see" and is noted in all sincerity that the "symbol of Iran from 2000 years before Christ has today become a symbol of pride for the Germans, who are of one race and ethnicity with us."[4] The myth of racial affinity with the supposedly "Aryan Germans" was fortified by a Nazi decree in 1936 that identified Iranians as "pure blooded Aryans," thus exempting them from the Nuremburg Race Laws. Inspired by phrenological research in Europe, the newly created Society for National Heritage even went as far as to dig up bodies in Ferdows, the birthplace of Ferdowsi whose *shahnameh* has been hailed by Iranian ultranationalist as an emblem of the purity of the Iranian language, in order to measure their skulls, which would "prove" their Aryan origin (see also Abrahamian 2008: 87). As a part of this bio-ontological reconstitution of the meaning of Iran, there emerged a policy of cultural purification that was aimed at eliminating Arabic words and their "Semitic" origins from the Persian language. Prominent writers such as Ahmad Kasravi were supportive of such measures, which were filtered through dedicated institutions such as the Farhangistan. In summary then, Reza Shah imagined grandeur exactly in bio-ontological terms; Iranian "identity" was racialized and Iranian superiority was thus inscribed in the syntax of the newly emerging national narrative that was meant to signify a new meaning of the country.

Mohammad Reza Shah, the second and last monarch of the Pahlavi dynasty was equally inspired by the discourse of Aryanism and the pre-Islamic Persian empires. He adopted the title "light of the Aryans" (*Aryamehr*) and in his speeches and writings he repeatedly invoked the symbols and imagery of ancient Persia, the memory of Darius, Cyrus, and Xerxes. At the height of his megalomania, exemplified by his Napoleon-esque self-coronation in 1967 and the extravagant festivities at Persepolis in 1971, the shah changed the Islamic solar Hijri calendar into an imperial one. At the ancient seat of the Persian monarchs he invoked the spirit of Cyrus and placed his dynasty in line with the Achaemenian kings of antiquity. In the opening speech of the festivities at Persepolis on October 12, 1971, he declared, "O Cyrus, great King, King of Kings, Achaemenian King, King of the land of Iran. I, the Shahanshah of Iran, offer thee salutations from myself and from my nation. Rest in peace, for we are awake, and we will always stay awake." The historical reengineering of the meaning of Iran is evident here. Suddenly, Iran was in the year 2535 based on the presumed date

of the foundation of the Achaemenid dynasty. In lieu of the effort to Iranianize the Persian language, which had already been pursued by his father Reza Khan, the Pahlavi state also sponsored systematic efforts to substitute Arabic terms with Persian ones.

The ideational architecture of "Pahlavism" was crafted around the symbolism of monarchic rule and the metaphysics of modern nationalism consisting of romantic myths about the authenticity of the "Persian" language and the "Iranian civilization." Their impact on the making of a modern "identity" of Iran devoid of an intrinsically "Islamic" component comes out in an article which the shah placed in *Life* magazine in May 1963: "Geographically Iran is situated at the crossroads of the East and the West; it is where Asia and Europe meet," the shah asserts. "On one side thrived the old civilisations of China and India; on the other those of Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Rome, and, later on, the modern Western World." His country was not a part of any civilization per se, but "Iran welded her own civilisation from all those many sources." This distinctly Iranian civilization holds a universal religion and universal art that "have left their traces all over the world." But this universal religion that the shah refers to is not conceptualized as Islamic. Rather, he heralds the pre-Islamic era, "the old Iranian religion of Mithra" and the "teachings of the mystic prophet Mani" (Pahlavi 1963: 66). So, Islam did not have much of a role in the making of an Iran during this period. A discourse of Islam only reenters the reimagination of what it means to be Iranian in the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s and after the Islamicized revolution of 1979.

The subject that emerges out of the shah's bio-ontological discourse is the Aryan-Persian, Indo-European heir to a lost civilization but willing to catch up along an imagined Western temporality (or historical spectrum). The shah repeatedly stressed that the culture of Iran was "more akin to that of the west." The country was deemed "an early home of the Aryans from whom most Americans and Europeans are descended." Racially, Iranians were considered to be "quite separate from the Semitic stock of the Arabs." As such, Iran was deemed to be the "oldest culture that was racially and linguistically linked to the west." After all, Persian "belongs to the Indo-European family which includes English, German, and other major Western tongues [*sic*]" (Pahlavi 1961: 18). Elsewhere, the shah stated that Iran was an "Asian Aryan power whose mentality and philosophy are close to those of the European states, above all France" (quoted in Bayat-Philipp 1978: 211). Along with the emphasis on Iran's Western heritage went an imperial narrative: "If you Europeans think yourselves superior, we have no complexes," the shah emphasized in an interview with Oriana Fallaci. "Don't ever forget that whatever you have, we [pre-Islamic, 'Aryan' Iran] taught you three thousand years ago" (Fallaci 1977: 264).

4 Signs of God, Pivots of Islam

By now, it should become clearer what I mean by bio-ontological fabrications. They target identity exactly and they are at the very heart of modern politics because contemporary nation-states require some form of ideational content in order to sustain the rule of the sovereign. If Iran was Aryan, then the light of the Aryans is entitled to rule. If the meaning of Iran was encapsulated in the history of pre-Islamic Persia, then the king of kings was the legitimate heir to the ancient kings holding the prerogative to imperial foreign policies.

After the revolution in 1979, a new discourse constituted the bio-ontological reengineering of the meaning of Iran. In the most influential writings of Iran's prototypical revolutionary intellectuals, such as Jalal al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati, Iranian history in particular and Islam in general were rewritten to function as building blocks for a viable and uncompromising ideology that was quite overtly and explicitly revolutionary. So for the former, the thirteenth century astronomer and philosopher Nasir ad-Din Tusi (1201–1274) becomes the prototypical "aggressive intellectual" (*rowshanfekr-e mohajem*), "who made history" after obliterating the prevalent order seeking to "destroy the contemporary governmental institutions in order to erect something better in their place" (quoted in Pistor-Hatam 2007: 565). Whereas for the latter, we find a comparable signification of revolutionary change that is likened to a golden age of justice, a classless society, social equality, and the final victory of the oppressed masses against their oppressors. According to Shariati, there was no choice toward that end since the victory of the revolution was historically determined. This would make it mandatory for the vanguard to "object to the status quo and to negate the ruling systems and values" (quoted in Rahnema 2000: 305). With al-e Ahmad and Shariati, then, an entirely new ontology for Iran is imagined and increasingly enacted.

This newly imagined Iran was not provincial, as some scholars have argued. The revolutionary subject in Iran was not confined to a nativist habitat, even if it indulged in the Utopia of "authenticity."[5] In the writings of intellectuals such as al-e Ahmad and Shariati, we hear echoes of, and see direct reference to, Che Guevera, Marx, Sartre, Marcuse, Fanon, and others. After all, this radical culture of resistance was also inscribed in the very linguistic infrastructure of Iran's capital Tehran after the revolution where major streets, boulevards, and squares were named Bobby Sands, Ghandi, Africa, and Palestine.[6]

Despite the obvious tilt to Islam as a liberation theology, it is in Shariati, especially, where East meets West on an immensely innovative critical spectrum and where the potentialities of a seemingly contradictory "Islamic-socialist" discourse are exploited in order to channel what

was considered to be the emancipating message of Islam and socialism to receptive constituencies within Iranian society. This internationalist cross-fertilization was not limited only to the intellectual/theoretical realm. For instance, the nascent Iranian armed movements of the 1960s drew their inspiration from theories of guerrilla warfare developed in Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Palestine, and China. "Along with centres for study of present and future zones of operations, intensive popular work must be undertaken to explain the motives of the revolution, its ends," Che Guevera suggests in his manual for guerrilla warfare that was translated and widely distributed in Iran in the 1960s. It is imperative, according to Guevara, "to spread the incontrovertible truth that victory of the enemy against the people is finally impossible. *Whoever does not feel this undoubted truth cannot be a guerrilla fighter*" (Guevara 1969: 21, emphasis in original). In Iran such bio-ontological reeducation toward the revolutionary subject gained momentum out of the disillusionment with the political order after the enforced downfall of Mossadegh in 1953, and more exponentially in the late 1950s.

As indicated, the social engineering of Iran's postrevolutionary identity discourse was precipitated and seriously affected by the writings of activist intellectuals whose ideas were widely disseminated among the anti-shah intelligentsia, especially in the late 1960s and 1970s. Two narratives, *gharbzadegi* (or westoxification) and *bazgasht be khish* (return to the self), were particularly hegemonic. The former was the title of a highly influential book authored by al-e Ahmad. In this book, he likens the increasing dependence of Iran on Western notions of modernity to a disease he terms *gharbzadegi*. If left untreated *gharbzadegi* would lead to the demise of Iran's cultural, political, and economic independence because society was made susceptible to penetration by the West. "Today," writes al-Ahmad, "the fate of those two old rivals is, as you see, this: one has become a lowly groundskeeper and the other the owner of the ballpark"(Al-e Ahmad 1982: 19). In order to escape this fate, al-e Ahmad argued, Iran had to be turned into the vanguard in the fight of the oppressed East against the imperialist West, if necessary through revolutionary action.

Shariati was equally adamant to challenge the policies of the shah and his real and perceived dependence on the politics of the United States. The narrative of *bazgasht be khish* picked up al-e Ahmad's theme accentuating cultural authenticity and the wider anticolonial struggle at the head of which Iran should position itself, not least in order to find a way back to the country's "true" self, which Shariati defined in socialist and Islamic terms. In an intellectual tour de force, Shariati turned Jesus, Abraham, Mohammad, and above all Imam Hussein (grandson of the Prophet Muhammad) and his mother Fatimah into revolutionary heroes who were positioned at the helm of a new movement for global

justice and equality. In his many speeches and written tracts, Shariati emphasized that Islam in general and Shia Islam in particular, demands revolt against unjust rulers. At the center of Shariati's oeuvre, we find Imam Hussein represented as the ultimate *homo Islamicus*, a martyr in the cause of justice who fought the "tyranny" of the Ummayad caliph Yazid and who sacrificed his life and that of his family at the Battle of Karbala in AD 680. "Look at Husayn!" Shariati demands in 1970:

> He is an unarmed, powerless and lonely man. But he is still responsible for the *jihad*... He who has no arms and no means has come with all of his existence, his family, his dearest companions so that his *shahadat* [bearing witness to God, martyrdom] and that of his whole family will bear witness to the fact that he carried out his responsibility at a time when truth was defenceless and unarmed... It is in this way that the dying of a human being guarantees the life of a nation. His *shahadat* is a means whereby faith can remain. It bears witness to the fact that great crimes, deception, oppression and tyranny rule. It proves that truth is being denied. It reveals the existence of values which are destroyed and forgotten. It is a red protest against a black sovereignty. It is a shout of anger in the silence which has cut off tongues. (Shariati 2007: 364)

The narratives of *gharbzadegi* and *bazgasht be khishtan* simulate a bifurcated syntactical order: justice ↔ oppressed (*mostazafan*) ↔ Muslim ↔ Islam ↔ revolution ↔ resistance *versus* imperialism ↔ oppressors (*mostakbaran*) ↔ superpowers ↔ the West ↔ the United States. In the writings and speeches of Ayatollah Khomeini, the dichotomies prescribed by this syntactical order find their explicit political articulation. The great utopia of universal justice, central to the former side of the dichotomy, could be turned into "reality" by the *vali-e faqih*, the supreme jurisprudent who would position himself at the helm of a global movement of resistance carried by the "oppressed" masses of the world. With Ayatollah Khomeini, Islam not only becomes a desirable object of history but it is also turned into a revolutionary, anti-imperial ideology with a universal claim. During the same period that the shah proclaimed Iran's new civilization based on the country's pre-Islamic heritage, a different meaning of Iran was being formulated: a discourse that produced "revolutionary Islam" and its radical subject. On the necessity to establish the ideal Islamic polity in order to ward off imperial intrusions, Ayatollah Khomeini was explicit: "The imperialists and the tyrannical self-seeking rulers have divided the Islamic homeland," he lectured in exile in Najaf (Iraq) in 1970:

> They have separated the various segments of the Islamic umma from each other and artificially created separate nations. There once existed

> the great Ottoman State, and that, too, the imperialists divided... In order to assure the unity of the Islamic *umma*, in order to liberate the Islamic homeland from occupation and penetration by the imperialists and their puppet governments, it is imperative that we establish a government. In order to attain the unity and freedom of the Muslim peoples, we must overthrow the oppressive governments installed by the imperialists and bring into existence an Islamic government of justice that will be in the service of the people. The formation of such a government will serve to preserve the disciplined unity of the Muslims; just as Fatima az-Zahra (upon whom be peace) said in her address: The Imamate exists for the sake of preserving order among the Muslims and replacing their disunity with unity. (Khomeini 1981: 48–49)

Of course, I can only provide a mere microcosm of what was happening below the surface of the official discourse sponsored by the shah's state apparatus in the 1960s and 1970s. The identity discourse of Iran was being populated by new symbols and signs. Suddenly, the same people who were represented as heirs to the pre-Islamic Persian empires, as Aryan, Indo-European, even French, and largely non-Muslim by the Pahlavis, appeared as primarily Islamic, anti-imperialistic, revolutionary, and supportive of the struggles of the "third worlds." The occupation of the US embassy in 1979 was the practical epitome of this discourse. It was not merely planned in response to the admittance of the shah to the United States for medical treatment, which was interpreted as the beginning of yet another plot to reinstate his rule in Iran. The self-proclaimed "students following the line of Imam Khomeini" were driven by ideas, coded by the powerful revolutionary narratives, some of which I have sketched above. As Masoumeh Ebtekar, one of the female students who was involved in the occupation of the US Embassy writes in her account of the events, "My sense of women's rights and responsibilities derived much from the Iranian context, from Dr. Shariati's book *Fatima is Fatima*, in which he describes the Muslim woman and her role in the world of today with a mixture of eloquence and penetrating insight" (Ebtekar 2000: 80). Note that Fatima, conceptualized as the ultimate female vanguard of the new order, reappears here. She traveled from seventh-century Arabia to claim a presence in the writings of Shariati and Khomeini (see above) and in the very consciousness of the revolutionaries. More strategically, the students deemed the occupation of the US embassy a necessary step toward achieving Iran's full independence from the international system, even if that meant that Iran would be labeled a pariah or rogue state by its most potent guardians. In other words, the choice to try to detach Iran from the system that was deemed corrupt and geared toward the imperial interests of the superpowers was self-consciously made by the more radical forces that gathered around

Ayatollah Khomeini. As Ebtekar imagines, "The Islamic Revolution in Iran transformed a once devoted ally of the west into a 'rogue state' that insisted on taking orders from none other than God" (241).

5 Conclusion: Iranian Power between Hubris and Reality

The claims of political actors and their reception are different matters. Both before and after the revolution, Iran was never really accepted as a regional leader or a nodal point that could safeguard regional security and progress. The Iranian state failed to forge an identity for the state that would have been inclusive enough to appeal to the major stakeholders in the region and beyond. From the perspective of regional leaders, and even the United States, the shah's self-centered ideology was suspect to say the least. As a CIA report dated May 1972 indicated with increasing worry for the stability of the regime, "Power in Iran remains, as it has been, in the hands of a small segment of society who enjoy the available rewards of money, status, and political influence . . . The Shah sees himself in the role of a latter-day Cyrus the Great who will restore to Iran at least a portion of its old glory as a power to be reckoned with . . . A noncharismatic leader, he has taken on many of the trappings of totalitarianism."[7]

From the perspective of the United States, the shah was a convenient and largely subservient regional ally but there was no suggestion, implicit or otherwise, that Iran would be accepted as a regional power in its own right. Moreover, translated into the external relations of Pahlavi Iran, the self-identification of the country as an "Aryan superpower" was anathema to an accepted leadership role in the region. In line with the notion of Iranian superiority, there emerged an aggressive military buildup under the patronage of the United States and to a lesser extent Israel, claims to Bahrain that were dropped only after a plebiscite in the small sheikhdom voted against unification with Iran, the seizure of half of the Abu Musa island from Sharjah, the Greater and Lesser Tunbs from Ras al-Khaimah in 1971, the decisive involvement of the shah's imperial army in the suppression of the Dhofar rebellion in Oman between 1973–1974, and the sponsorship of Kurdish separatist forces in Northern Iraq in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in collusion with Israel and the United States. The brand of Iranian nationalism espoused by the shah and the foreign policy narratives and actions that it informed were so Iran specific that they could never have acted as ideational devices to legitimate the country's claim to regional leadership and global grandeur.

The identity politics of the Islamic Republic after the revolution of 1979 were comparably exclusionary and ambitious, claiming, as they continue to do, a regional, if not a global, leadership role. The logic goes

that if Iran was the pivot of revolutionary Islam, then the sign of god (Ayatollah) was obliged to lead the nation. If the country reenacts the original glory of the *ummah*, then following the Imam was a duty of all Muslims. The identity politics of the Islamic Republic have been aimed at portraying the country as the vanguard of Islam and the legitimate pivot of the "Muslim nation." As part of that effort and in order to avoid isolation of the revolution as a primarily Iranian event, the Islamic Republic has tried, largely unsuccessfully so far, to narrow the gap between the two areas of potential ideational contention, namely, the Iranian-Arab and Sunni-Shia schisms. What is missing until today is a decisive "ecumenical" effort that would normalize Iran's relations with the region. Yet neither the aggressive realpolitik of the shah nor the utopian, ideologized foreign policy of the Islamic Republic achieved that aim. Neither state managed to systematically construct a politics of identity that would be more subtle and more universal/internationalist than the political elites allowed for. The meaning of Iran has to be imagined and enacted away from exclusively Persian- or (Shia)Islam-centric notions, not in the least because the country's history is heavily laden with global narratives and permeated by a world culture that sit uneasily with stringent calls for nativist "authenticity" (see further Dabashi 2012). Even three decades after the revolution of 1979, the Islamic Republic has not been in the position to implement such an effort because the indigenous salience of the country's Iranian and Shiite identity could not be escaped. Both have been intrinsic to the very idea of the Islamic Republic and were institutionalized accordingly, beginning with Khomeini's theory of the *Velayat-e-faqih*, which was deeply rooted in Shiite political thought, to the decision to retain Twelver Shi'ism (*Ja'fari* school) as Iran's official state religion and the requirement of Iranian origin to qualify for the office of presidency.[8] The new set of norms projected by the Islamic Republic was hence weaker than preexisting shared knowledge inhibiting both the domestic Iranian political culture itself and the regional system—both reproduced and represented the country first and foremost as an Iranian/Shiite entity. Hojatoleslam Hassan Yusef Eshkevari, a theorist and proponent of "Islamic Democracy" in Iran, describes the dilemma in following terms:

> *Velayat-e faqih* is a Sh'i concept of rule. The Sunnis outside of Iran, many of whom doubt that Shi'is are Muslims at all, will therefore never accept this principle. The suspicion with which Sunnis regard the pan-Islamic project of Iran's current government is being fuelled by that very same government, which made Shi'ism the religion of state and reserved all leading governmental positions for Shi'is, all in clear and incontrovertible contradiction to the message of the Islamic Revolution. If the government does not work toward Islamic unity

> within Iran, how could it do so beyond the country's borders? (Buchta 2002: 293)

The discrepancy between self-perception as a representative pan-Islamic actor and the inherent Iranian/Shiite identity of the movement has denied the Islamic Republic the sought after role as the avant-garde of an Islamic movement. Employing theoretical terminology, we may observe that the Iranian role remained a subjective self-understanding of the revolutionary state and did not turn into an objective, collectively constituted position or an accepted *role identity* of international structure. The inhibiting norms and institutions of the international system have neither accommodated the idea of a transnational Islamic Republic nor identified Iran as the vanguard of Islamic revivalism. The orbit of Iranian activity abroad has remained confined to primarily Shiite circles with established links to the clerical elite in Iran. Hence, until today, Iran's imagination of global grandeur has superseded the reality of the country's international power and influence.

Notes

1. (Neo)realist theory has been applied to the international politics of West Asia and North Africa in Birthe Hanse, *Unipolarity, and the Middle East* (Richmond: Curzon, 2010). For a counterargument, see Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *The International Politics of the Persian Gulf: A Cultural Genealogy* (London: Routledge, 2006).
2. "Address by the Eminent Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, on the Occasion of International Conference on Palestinian Intifada, Tehran, April 24, 2001." http://www.radioislam.org/tehranconference/eng.htm, accessed August 12, 2013.
3. *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān*, 28 (August 1933), 1.
4. Ibid.
5. There is emphasis on nativism in Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996).
6. Bobby Sands street is located along the UK embassy in Tehran. In 1981, the Iranian government was officially represented at Bobby Sands's funeral and presented a plaque honoring his activism to Mrs. Sands. The Tehran city council also renamed a street in Tehran after Khaled Eslambouli, who assassinated the former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, although the Iranian foreign ministry has repeatedly tried to amend the name. In 2011, the city council decided to rename a street in central Tehran as Rachel Aliene Corrie street, after the American pro-Palestinian activist who was killed while protesting against the demolition of Palestinian homes in the Gaza strip eight years ago. It was the first time since Iran's Islamic Revolution in

1979 that an Iranian street had been named after a citizen of the United States.

7. CIA, Directorate of Intelligence (1972), "Intelligence Report: Centres of Power in Iran." http://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/70712.pdf, accessed September 10, 2013, 1, 11.
8. See Articles 12 and 115 of the Iranian Constitution, respectively. For Khomeini's ideas, see Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (ed.), *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

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PART II

Egypt: Past and Future Glory?

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CHAPTER 4

The Failure of the Muslim Brotherhood: Implications for Egypt's Regional Status[*]

Elizabeth Monier and Annette Ranko

1 Introduction

Under former president Hosni Mubarak, Egypt was a major power in the Middle East (see, e.g., Lesch and Mosley 1991: 30–50). Despite Mubarak's weakened credibility in the latter years of his presidency having contributed to a decline in Egypt's regional political status (Bradley 2008: 202; see also, Rutherford 2008), Egypt continued to lay claim to its historical and physical place at the center of the Arab world (Boutros-Ghali 1982: 769–788). One of the ways in which Mubarak had sought to firm up his domestic authority and regional influence was by promoting Egypt's role as a security guard for the Arab world. Among the enemies against whom Mubarak claimed to be securing Egypt and the Arab world were Islamists (Brownlee 2002: 6–14). Yet it was Islamists, notably the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), who gradually came to dominate Egypt's postrevolution transition (Abdulrahman 2013: 569–585) and took responsibility for determining Egypt's domestic and foreign policies. Although this was initially seen as an endorsement of political Islam, even during the ascendency of Islamist forces there was a refusal to label the January 25 revolution as an Islamic awakening and there was a preference for understanding the uprising as an Egyptian renaissance (Iskander 2012a: 35). In addition, the varied reactions from other Middle East actors to the MB's rise contributed to apprehensions of the tensions to follow. The MB's political success was relatively brief. Comparisons between Mubarak and MB president Mohammed Morsi quickly arose as the latter was accused of simply continuing Mubarak's authoritarianism albeit in a new garb. Then, with the "second revolution" of June 30,

2013, and the overthrow of Morsi, the MB was discredited and represented as an enemy of the 2011 revolution, a threat to the state, and, by extension, to the Arab world.

This article examines the process through which the MB became discredited and the implications of their resultant failure for the international relations of the Middle East. We contend that it was not so much the content of the MB's vision that failed to win support but that the organization became a discredited vehicle for achieving a new and stronger Egypt free from internal authoritarianism, regional weakness, and foreign dependence. We suggest that this failure had both regional and domestic causes and that the implications of the MB's collapse has led to a shift in regional alliances and in Egypt's regional status. This shift has occurred, in part, as a result of a revitalized version of Mubarak's anti-MB narrative used by the post–June 30 government but with a stronger emphasis on Egyptian national interests than existed under Mubarak's regime. This has earned the transitional government a broad mandate from the Egyptian public and accorded it the credibility that Mubarak's discourse lacked, especially as the army has succeeded in framing itself as pro-revolution by promoting Egyptian sovereignty and independence in foreign policy. If this narrative is successfully entrenched, the MB "brand" will experience a setback throughout the Middle East and Egypt will reemerge in a stronger regional leadership role with an enhanced profile as the guardian of Arab interests.

2 Regional Power Narratives under Mubarak: Arab Stability/Islamist Instability

Mubarak's framing of Egypt's regional leadership role had relied on portraying Egypt as a guarantor of regional stability. However, Egypt's uprising initially appeared to dismiss this narrative, not only because Egypt proved vulnerable to violent political change and the instability that ensued but mainly because, according to this vision of Egypt as regional policeman, Islamists were perceived as the key enemies of both national and regional stability (Iskander 2012b: 178–179). Mubarak's reliance on the security/stability paradigm can be viewed as a hangover from the securitization approach to the region adopted by both internal and external actors during the Cold War era (Bilgin 2005). In addition to entrenching a traditional understanding of stability as the priority for the region, this securitization approach also placed an emphasis on top-down military approaches to security that failed to take into account a broader understanding of security (2). While this framework ensured that the army was privileged as the only institution capable of safeguarding security but it also required something for Egypt and the Arab world to be securitized against.

Political Islam often provided this "enemy" and Mubarak used the "Islamic threat" discourse as a form of pressure against domestic opposition and to maintain Western alliances (Dalacoura 2004: 47). State media under Mubarak portrayed the concept of a religious state as intolerant and extremist, with its proponents also portrayed as extremist (ʿAsfūr 2007). This was contrasted with the civil state, meaning a state that guards citizenship and upholds moderate Egyptian views threatened by Islamism. The Islamist threat was often symbolized by the MB, known as *al-Mahthoora* (the prohibited group), but was also extended to portraying Hamas (an offshoot of the MB in Palestine), Hezbollah, and the Iranian government as radically religious actors who sought to change the character of the region and therefore represented major threats to the stability of the Arab world as a whole. When Egyptian security services uncovered the existence of a Hezbollah cell in the Sinai on April 8, 2009, the government and media (both state and independent) quickly evoked Hezbollah and Iran as a security threat not only to Egypt but also to the Arab world as a whole; that is, in targeting Egypt, Arab unity and stability is threatened (e.g., see Al-Nimnim 2009; Farahat 2009).

Narratives that claim a central place for Egypt in the politics of the Arab world continued to have resonance, despite the decline of Arab nationalism and Arabism (Bilgin 2005). Although Mubarak's claim to domestic and regional legitimacy had been tarnished by the authoritarian nature of his presidency, in his era, Egypt remained a candidate for the role of Arab world leader. Since World War II, Egypt has employed a strategy of claiming Arab world leadership in order to consolidate domestic power and both regional and international status (Doran 2002). In order to resist British influence in the region, Egypt began to use a discourse of Arabism to set itself up as the champion of Arab interests. The competition to define what is, and is not, in Arab interests became strongly established as part of the politics of the region in this period; this was consolidated under Gamal Abdul Nasser. This led Barnett to view "Arab politics as a series of dialogues between Arab states regarding the desired regional order" (Barnett 1998: 5).

But Mubarak's regional leadership project was not one of Arab unity as understood under Nasser. The vision for stability and unity and Egypt's role in preserving this was no longer for the sake of creating a single Arab nation but for preserving the sovereignty of Arab states. This type of diluted Arabism utilized the resonance of claims to defend Arab interests without bringing it into competition with the system of national sovereignty that emerged after the failure of the Nasserite form of Arab nationalism (Barnett 1995: 479–510). But the waning of pan-Arabist ideology opened the way for pan-Islamism. According to Halliday, "The apparent failure of the socialists projects to resolve the problems of the countries they ruled in the 1960s and 1970s, and their inability to confront either

Israel or the west, opened the field to the new nationalism framed in terms of religion, heritage and identity" (2005: 204). As a result political Islam became a real force in Egypt in the 1970s (171–172) and the undermining of pan-Arabism as the foundation of Egypt's authority and system for regional order forced leaders like Sadat and Mubarak to give political space to Islamism (Legrenzi and Calculli 2013: 208–209).

The combination of the weakened, but still utilized, discourse of Arab nationalism with the rise of Islamism set up the framing of regional security as an existential battle between Islamists and Arab nation-state system. It also meant that protecting the sovereignty of one Arab state from political Islam was conflated as the protection of the Arab world as a whole with Islamism framed as the rival. This balance was exploited throughout Mubarak's presidency. Consequently, these developments underpinned intra-regional relations and Egypt's narratives of regional security under Mubarak. It also enabled the MB to be easily framed as undermining that national sovereignty and, by extension, the regional order.

3 MB: Undermining Mubarak's "Security Discourse" in His Last Decade of Rule

The MB was not a passive actor in this struggle to define the nature of Egypt or the Arab world and sought to undermine Mubarak's discourse on Egypt's regional role. The group also constructed a security threat that Egypt, and by extension the whole region, was facing (see Ranko 2014). But it was portrayed as stemming not from Islamist actors such as Hamas or Hezbollah but rather from the United States, Israel, and by extension, from the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East—including the Mubarak regime—that were deemed to be collaborating with these hostile foreign powers.[1] The struggle was not between nationalism and Islamism as Mubarak would frame it but between the Islamic world and the West. The MB's argument was based on a specific definition of legitimate and illegitimate use of violence. The MB considered the violent activities of Hamas and Hezbollah as legitimate because in cases of a foreign attack on, or occupation of, Muslim or Arab territory, armed resistance was legitimated by three sources: first, by the teachings of Islam, which can be interpreted to prescribe warfare (*Jihad*) in the event of an attack carried out on Muslim territory; second, by international laws and agreements that protect a nation's sovereignty over its territory and the right of defense; and third, the will of the people in supporting armed resistance (Akif 2005).

In contrast to this legitimate form of violence, the MB considered Israel and the United States to have committed two illegal forms of

violence. First, both had engaged in military aggression against the Middle East and in the occupation of foreign territory. Examples were the US-led war and occupation of Afghanistan since 2001, of Iraq since 2003, the Lebanon war of 2006, and the Gaza war in 2008–2009. The United States and Israel were believed to be planning, via Bush's Greater Middle East Initiative, to restructure the *whole* Middle East in order to foster the region's subjugation.[2] The second form of illegitimate violence attributed to the United States against Middle East societies did not involve military means. Instead, it was understood as being "the imposition [not necessarily through the use of force] of an opinion, a conviction, a certain religion or ideology" (Akif 2005: 212–213). Thus, exerting influence in the political, social, or economic realms in Middle Eastern societies—for example, via institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, or via a hegemonic American youth culture—was considered as illegitimate violence. This was perceived as being geared to dissolve the cohesion between Middle Eastern societies and to weaken the societies from within (2004).

In addition to the United States and Israel, those authoritarian regimes of the region that collaborated with these hostile external forces were also deemed to be security threats. These regimes—including the Mubarak regime—were portrayed as installed and then kept alive by the United States and Israel in order to secure their influence in the Middle East. The direct result of the installation of authoritarianism in the region was declared to have been the weakening of the region as a whole and of Egypt in particular. While Egypt was deemed to be the natural leader of the region, it was being held back from that natural position due to this penetration of external actors.[3] The solution the MB presented for Egypt as well as the Middle East in general to recover from their demise was simple: to unleash the will of the people through political reforms. The group argued that democratic elections must be established.[4] It was argued that these would do away with authoritarian regimes in the region and would bring the Islamists that were believed to enjoy wide-ranging popular support to power. The MB argued that there would then be a congruency between the rulers and the ruled, as both rejected the subordination of Arab interests to those of Israel and the United States. The Middle Eastern region would subsequently recover its strength and Egypt would then rise to become the regional leader that the MB envisioned.[5]

As examples to prove that this path would work, the MB cited Iran and Turkey. Both were deemed as strong regional actors because they were claimed to be based on democratic elections, which established harmony between the ruler and the ruled, bringing about Islamist regimes.[6] Iran was admired for its strong countering of Israeli and Western interests in the region but was viewed critically by some MB members who

viewed the country's elections as less than democratic. Therefore, Turkey was considered to be an even better role model. It was admired for its electoral democracy and its diplomatic skills, through which it had managed to maintain good relations with the West and Israel but had managed to do so without succumbing to Western interests.[7] Based on these examples the MB argued that unleashing the popular will would produce Islamist-dominated governments that would, thereby, end the subordination of Arab interest to the US and Israeli interests.

4 Resonance of the MB's Discourse within Egypt: Challenges for an MB Foreign Policy

This discourse of the MB resonated well among large sections of Egyptian as well as other Arab societies. A growing opposition trend countered Egypt's role as a bystander or even partner for an increasingly aggressive US and Israeli foreign policy in the region after the attacks of September 11, 2001 (see Ranko 2015: 138–175).[8] Egypt increasingly witnessed mass demonstrations in Mubarak's last decade of rule concerning regional issues, such as the Iraq war in 2003, the Lebanon-Israel war of 2006, and the Gaza War in 2008–2009 (see Shehata 2010). In fact, the MB was not the only force linking foreign policy with domestic issues. Groups like *Kefaya* and "April 6" were formed at the time and oppositions' voices argued that Mubarak subordinated Egyptian interests to Western and Israeli interests in the region only in order to garner support for bequeathing power to his son Gamal Mubarak. This was not an uncommon interpretation of events; from at least from 2004–2005 onward, the protest movement linked the call for democratic elections to a critique of Egypt's foreign policy.[9]

Despite this climate of opposition to Mubarak's regime and the MB's established opposition framework, several problems were inherent in the MB's foreign policy discourse that were to come to fore after Mubarak's fall. These problems would then make it difficult for the MB to provide a regional vision that could become broadly popular and adequately replace Mubarak's discourse. One challenge was maintaining popular support within Egypt for its regional vision. Though the MB might have been a credible proponent of a discourse that was critical of the role of the West and Israel and that criticized Egypt's increasing collaboration with them, there was nothing very "MB specific" about this discourse. Instead, it was, as mentioned above, shared by many actors and social groups in the last decade of Mubarak's rule.[10]

Furthermore, the emergence of this discourse had been linked to the domestic protest movement that evolved in Egypt in the 2000–2011 period. Accordingly it was, ultimately, oriented toward bringing

about domestic political reform, that is, to end the authoritarian rule of Mubarak and bring about democratic elections. However, once the immediate goal was achieved, the discourse did not actually provide a clear outline for Egypt's political future or regional leadership role. For the MB, the uprising should have inspired the whole region to bring about Islamist governments that would truly act in accordance with the will of the people. In turn, this was expected to lead to the establishment of a foreign policy independent of Israel and the West. However, the methods presented for achieving this were often very vague.

While in opposition, this lack of clarity did not damage the MB's domestic-support base significantly (see Ranko 2014). However, with their rise to power after the revolution, the onus was on the MB to live up to their promises to eliminate authoritarianism and establish Egypt as a leading and independent regional power. This high level of expectation meant that the MB began suffering from damage to their credibility soon after becoming the biggest bloc in parliament in early 2012 because of perceived political incompetence. Although the MB were still able to gain enough support at the ballot box for Mohammed Morsi to take office as president in June 2012, disillusionment grew due to the flawed constitution drafting process, as well as Morsi's presidential decrees of November 2012, which were perceived as a step toward establishing a new MB-style authoritarian system. In response, the *Tamarrod* campaign for early presidential elections was set up and succeeded in bringing massive numbers of protesters out onto the streets on June 30, 2013. This changed the political scene irreversibly by paving the way for the army to isolate Morsi and the MB from power.

These developments demonstrated the consequences of the MB's failure to deliver on promises to do away with authoritarianism, put Egypt on a path toward democracy, or to implement a program of social justice. Yet because the MB was consumed with managing the domestic political transition, they did not have the capacity to make any big moves on the foreign policy level either, thus further compounding their political failure. One successful exception was the Gaza truce that Morsi helped to broker in November 2011. But although the MB's failure was initially political, their fall from power quickly became an ideological struggle. While their discourse of independence and Islam garnered them domestic support, it also enhanced their political failure because their incompetence was seen by many ordinary Egyptians as a sign that their agenda was not legitimized by religion but was actually exploiting it; so, the accusation that they were *Tujjar al-Din* (literally "traders in religion" but implying the exploitation of religion for personal gain) increased in resonance.

In contrast, General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, the leader of the armed forces, emerged as a hero—portrayed as supporting the people in taking

back the revolution from the MB. On Wednesday, July 24, 2013, al-Sisi used a speech addressing a military graduation ceremony to call for Egyptians who supported Morsi's ouster to come back out into Cairo's streets and squares on the following Friday. He requested a popular mandate from the Egyptian people in order to "confront terrorism." Egyptians responded by gathering in the streets in millions to support this confrontation between the army and both the MB sit-ins in Cairo and the militant attacks in Sinai. This speech pointed to the major narrative emerging from the crisis, which was the familiar narrative of confronting terrorism and religious fascism as a threat to the stability in Egypt and the Arab world (Iskander 2012b: 118). Such developments in Egypt indicate that, although the fall of the MB began as a domestic political failure, stemming from their inability to capitalize on the previously popular vision for an independent foreign policy as well as the failure to bring Egypt on a solid path to democracy or to improve the lives of Egyptians, it has taken on a broader ideological dynamic. The discourse had thus shifted so entirely that the MB not only became an enemy of the revolution while the army was its savior but it also became a terrorist group threatening the nation's borders.

5 The Tension between the National and the Transnational in the MB's Thought

One of the key ways in which this narrative has been switched back to one in which Islamists are a threat to nation and region, is by exploiting the confusion regarding the MB's commitment to the Egyptian nation-state versus its commitment to a transnational Islamist project. This tension between the national and the transnational has existed since the MB's inception. When the MB was founded in 1928, the group was part of the then current Egyptian national movement that sought to establish independence from the colonial powers. This national movement was, however, split in two opposing camps. One was a pan-Islamic camp that sought to overcome colonial rule and intended to restore Muslim unity and the Islamic caliphate, which had been abolished in 1924. It envisioned transnational Muslim nation as the vehicle that would bring the Muslim world back to its former glory. As an Islamist movement, the MB was naturally linked to this camp. Indeed the vision of the group's founding father, Hassan al-Banna, to reform society and state so that an ideal Islamic order would gradually evolve not only involved Egypt but, ultimately, also extended to the Muslim world as a whole (Lübben 2004).

The second camp within the nationalist movement at the time was secular and focused on establishing the sovereignty of the Egyptian

nation-state. Its slogan was "*al-Din lil-Allah wal-Watan lil-Jami'a*" (Religion is for God and the state is for everyone) and *al-Wafd* party was its most important proponent. As the MB wanted to establish itself as a mass movement and sought to garner broad popular support, it was intent not to alienate the followers of the second camp. As a result, the group tended to avoid taking a clear stance on the divisive topic of Muslim unity and the caliphate (Lübben 2004). The group, for example, deliberately left unclear the form this caliphate should take. At least two versions were offered. The first would take the form of a confederation of independent and sovereign Muslim nation-states and the second that such a confederation would only be the first step that would finally lead to complete political unity realized in a supranational caliphate. Often, however, the group sought to eclipse the divisive topic of the caliphate in its discourse altogether.[11]

This lack of clarity endured as a result of the MB's dissemination of a "double discourse" during the last decade of Mubarak's presidency and after his ouster. The first element of this was a "political-pragmatic" discourse.[12] This focused on establishing popular sovereignty and overthrowing authoritarianism, which was depicted as the main stumbling block for Egypt to reach its natural regional leadership role. This discourse drew to a large extent on the notion of a regional system consisting of sovereign nation-states. It did not seek to infringe on the current regional system and it also strongly referred to the goal of restoring Egypt's leadership role within that system.[13] In principle, this political-pragmatic discourse was able to garner wide public support. This was because it took up the demands of the growing protest movement that evolved in Mubarak's last decade of rule and because it took up popular elements within the foreign policy discourses that had already been followed under Nasser and Sadat as well as under Mubarak (Ayoob 2004: 1–14).

However, on another level, the MB followed a different, "emotional" discourse. While the political-pragmatic discourse was to be found in the group's political programs and treatises, as well as whenever the MB cooperated with non-Islamist forces, the emotional discourse was especially employed when the group addressed their own followers in speeches. It was also found in their nonpolitical writings, such as their *da'wa* material.[14] In these materials there were strong and clear references to the notion of transnational Muslim unity, building on the notion of Islamic reform extending to the whole Muslim world, as well as the notion of the caliphate as the political order in which Muslim unity could ultimately be realized.[15] Yet the concept of the caliphate and how exactly this should be organized was still not being clarified by the MB.

There were also no adequate attempts by the MB to harmonize these two narratives and the contradictions between them (see, Tammam

2010), which became especially evident after the fall of Mubarak. In the Egyptian public sphere, this double discourse undermined the MB's credibility. There were suggestions that the MB would ultimately be more loyal to some kind of Islamist agenda, which it shared with Islamist groups abroad. This also brought with it suggestions that the MB might in the long term seek to establish a supranational Islamist political entity of which Egypt would become part (Hagag and Ismail 2011; Hisham 2013).[16] Both contributed to popular fears that the group would hijack the revolution for its own goals of establishing an Islamic order that would replace Mubarak's dictatorship with that of the MB (e.g., see Charbel 2012; also Abdel Mohsen 2012; Hosni 2012). This lack of clarity regarding the MB's thought appeared to some to represent a split in the group with the old guard, such as Mahmoud Ezzat and Badi'a,[17] who apparently favored the emotional discourse seeming to be more influential within the MB. In contrast, those that favored the political-pragmatic strand of thought were perceived as having less leverage within the strict hierarchical and top-down structures of the organization.[18] This contributed to undermining credibility and trust in the eyes of the Egyptian public.

6 Tensions between the MB and Regional Actors

Despite the lack of clarity in their thought concerning the national and transnational, the MB's political-pragmatic discourse—of first empowering the people vis-à-vis autocratic rulers to bring about a restoration of the strength of Arab world vis-à-vis the West—not only had the potential to resonate among the people within Egypt but also among the peoples of the wider Middle East. Realizing that a strong regional role for Egypt would bolster domestic support, the MB initially made some strong moves in laying claim to a regional leadership role for Egypt, for example, through its engagement as mediator in the Gaza conflict (Malley, Sadjadpour, and Taspinar 2012: 1–24). This and its discourse of combining democracy and Islamism offered the MB potential popular regional support. At the same time, it challenged some Arab state actors and the regional status quo in terms of the organization of power: authoritarian monarchic rule versus democratic republican rule.

But an MB Egypt was also threatening in terms of Islamic legitimacy because the group had not explicitly discarded its emotional discourse. In late 2011, for example, the supreme guide Mohammad al-Badi'a publicly declared that achieving the group's ultimate goal of establishing the caliphate was now close (Halawa 2011). Consequently, the prospect of an MB Egypt increased the fears held by regional state actors who

were already predisposed to hostility toward the MB. Saudi Arabia and other Arab states in the Gulf are particularly sensitive to the dangers of a renewed rise of Islamism as a transnational movement because of their experience of the Islamic revolution in Iran. These states regarded Iran's revolution as a very real threat to the regional order but the threat has been somewhat mediated by portraying it as a solely Shiite movement. In contrast, if the MB, as a Sunni organization, had achieved domestic legitimacy, it might have garnered so much support and popularity among Islamist groups throughout the region that it might have triggered uprisings in countries as yet unaffected by the Arab Spring, which would have dramatically shifted the balance of alliances.

Saudi Arabia was particularly challenged because the Saudi monarchy claims to represent Sunni Muslim legitimacy in the region, with the king portraying himself as protector of the two holy places Mecca and Medina. Competition from an Islamist-led Egypt was clearly unwelcome and regarded with suspicion by state actors such as Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia who quickly demonstrated their support for Egypt after Morsi was removed from power (Hicham 2013).[19] This was clear in the financial aid offered and also in the change of rhetoric. A Kuwaiti delegation visiting Egypt after June 30 portrayed the Egyptian army as a great *Arab* army, fighting an ideological battle in Egypt in order to secure the stability and strength of the Arab world (Taha 2013). This endorsement is in stark contrast to the more ambivalent speech regarding the MB's government in Egypt, which had made Egypt's regional role and legitimacy less secure under Morsi.

The MB was not entirely without the support of regional actors at the state level though. The reactions of Turkey toward the new MB government were among the most positive in the region. The foreign policy discourses between the Egyptian MB and Turkey's *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP) overlapped with both taking the view that Muslim parties coming to power in democratic elections would naturally lead to a renegotiation of which states were considered to be the most influential players in the region. The AKP sought to portray Turkey and Egypt as partners in an emerging "axis of democracy" that would establish the two countries as the leading powers in the region (Kalin 2011: 9). Initially there was clear enthusiasm in Egypt for the Turkey model, particularly regarding the entrenching of democracy, constitutional reforms, and reducing the influence of the army in politics. However, this did not endure due to the Turkish emphasis on secularism that was unacceptable to the MB and to Egypt's Salafists (Hussein 2011). Although Malley, Sadjadpour, and Taspinar argued that "the Turkish model is increasingly becoming what people look to" (2012: 7), the MB soon began to suggest that the Turkish model was inappropriate for Egypt. The Turkish model was further undermined by the government response to protests in Taksim

Square during the summer of 2013. This ensured that Turkey was no longer as attractive a partner because the legitimacy gained from democracy (Kosebalaban 2011: 112) and antiauthoritarianism was damaged.

Qatar and Iran were also both major supporters of the MB ascendency but rather than helping the MB, this was a hindrance for Egypt's regional position. Iran in particular has been regarded with suspicion in the region, most notably by Arab Gulf states, because of its perceived potential to disrupt the regional security order (Ahmady 2009). In April 2011, a number of Arab Gulf states claimed that a rapprochement between Iran and Egypt would endanger their national security. The support of Qatar and Iran also had detrimental effects on the MB's popular support within Egypt. Thus, it ultimately worked counter to the MB's interests. As Iran sought to portray the Arab Spring in Egypt as an Islamic awakening and the extension of the Islamic revolution of Iran 1978–1979,[20] it only fueled fears in Egyptian society about the true goals of the MB. Further, Qatar's support of the MB was increasingly rejected as foreign interference in Egypt's internal affairs because Qatar was seen as unworthy of trying to take Egypt's regional leadership role. In these ways, regional reactions worked counter to the MB's goal to garner domestic and foreign support and only increased fears at both levels regarding the intentions of the MB for Egypt and for the Middle East order, ultimately contributing to the group's failure.

7 The End of the MB? Implications for Egypt and the Middle East

In his major work arguing that political Islam was failing, Olivier Roy acknowledges that the MB has been among the most successful Islamist groups in terms of establishing a supranational framework. However, while these networks have been able to disseminate ideas and propaganda, Roy suggests that they have failed to shape international policy except where they have been manipulated by states in accordance with state interests (1994: 129). Yet in the wake of Egypt's 2011 uprisings, it had initially appeared that the region was witnessing a renewed rise for political Islam. With Turkey's star rising, the Egyptian MB and Tunisia's equivalent, An-Nahda, taking power in the gap left by Hosni Mubarak and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, respectively, political Islam did triumph temporarily. This triumph led Legrenzi and Calculli to argue that the 2011 revolts indicated the breakup of the Arab-based regional political system and its replacement with an Islam-based legitimacy (2013: 214).

Post June 30 Revolution, in the case of Egypt at least, this judgment may have been premature. Although, while in opposition, the MB were able to garner support through Islam-based legitimacy, challenging

authoritarianism, offering an independent foreign policy that was to render the Muslim world powerful again, the inability to produce progress on any of these promises ultimately undermined their popularity. Similar to the Turkish example after the Taksim protests, accusations of authoritarianism against Morsi and the MB served to undermine the credibility previously bestowed on them by appearing to emerge from the January 25 Revolution as a democratic force seeking to eliminate authoritarian politics from the Arab world. Moreover, the MB's double discourse amplified concerns that were then easily transformed into a weapon against the group and used by al-Sisi to represent the MB as disloyal to Egypt, in contrast with the loyalty of the army in securing Egypt's interests (Rizk 2013).

Dalacoura perceptively noted, "If, indeed, the uprisings were firmly focused on domestic, national issues, to which the rival concerns of Arabism and Islam were secondary, Islamist movements will need to adjust their ideological message in this direction" (2012: 75). Yet the MB failed to implement those aspects of their agenda that had appealed to Egyptians either before or after the uprising. Furthermore, despite evolving their discourse to place more emphasis on democracy and the Egyptian nation-state (2011), the MB—due to its emotional discourse that alluded to a transnational Islamist project—was perceived as placing "Islamic causes over the interests and policies of nation-state governments" (Mandaville 2013: 173). For a post-uprising Egypt, this seemed unsuitable and, in addition, the MB's political failure was seen as endangering the "aims of the revolution." The transitional government that succeeded Morsi has been more effective in convincing a large proportion of Egyptian society that it is prioritizing Egyptian interests and that the army is the key tool to ensure these interests. This harks back to Sadat's "Egypt first" narrative (Warburg 1982: 150) but without giving space to Islamists as Sadat and Mubarak had done (Bradley 2008; Dalacoura 2011).

This strategy has clear parallels with Mubarak's discourse on the MB and on Egypt's role in the regional political system. But this article finds that it is not simply a repeated strategy but also a revitalized one that will have different implications for Egyptian and regional politics. Although Mubarak used similar language, it was less backed up by action and was therefore seen as less credible, especially in a climate where Islamists were conceived of as the only alternative to Mubarak. If this trajectory is continued it is likely that a more credible version of Mubarak's security narrative will emerge that will emphasize national interests and identities within the regional system, with Egypt reemerging as a major player and leader but built on a more explicit base of "Egyptianism" as its legitimizing source for domestic power and through this resecuring its role as defender of Arab world stability.

8 Conclusion

For a complex, and sometimes even contradictory, series of reasons, the MB failed to convince either domestic audiences or regional actors that they were able to realize a viable or attractive transition for Egypt. It was partly due to a lack of sufficient planning and also due to the tension between Islamism as a "transnational project" infringing on national interests and the regional system of sovereign Arab states. The MB did not prioritize a vision of a regional role for Egypt, partly due to the pressures of the political situation in Egypt and partly because the MB has based its structure historically on transnational nonstate networks to promote its message rather than influencing national or regional policy. Yet if they had pursued a stronger foreign policy agenda, it would have appealed to the popular sentiments of the revolution for a stronger and more independent Egypt that could have bolstered domestic support, such as witnessed after Egypt's successful mediation role in the Gaza conflict of November 2012.

Instead, political incompetence and the persisting perception of a double discourse concerning the MB's vision for Egypt and for the Middle East undermined support domestically because this lack of clarity did not fit with an assertive "Egypt first" climate emerging from the 2011 uprising. Mubarak was ousted because Egyptians saw him as serving his own interests and Morsi was overthrown for seeming to prioritize the MB and its Islamic project (al-Mashro'a al-Islami), whereas the demands of the revolution were very much Egypt-focused, antiauthoritarian, and pro-independence. Consequently, Morsi soon became a symbol of both the authoritarianism and the continuing weakness of Egyptian regional leadership, which the MB had criticized while in opposition.

In this article, we suggest that it is not so much the MB's political vision that has been rejected than its ability to incorporate the new post–Arab Spring climate into the vision or to demonstrate real progress in securing Egypt's interests. The goals of an independent foreign policy and a stronger role for Egypt, albeit packaged in a very different discourse, are now offered by the MB's successors. This new discourse is one of Egyptian security backed by the army rather than that of the Islamist and anti-imperialist—one that the MB constructed. While this may not be the end of an MB style of political Islam as a transnational ideology within the Middle East, it has reduced its influence as a regional discourse in this pivotal post–Arab Spring phase. The MB brand will be relegated by a renewed nationalistic framework that will see Egypt's regional status as a political and ideological leader of the Arab world increase, along with greater cooperation between likeminded states, notably Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE. These alliances will draw

on the resonance of Arab cooperation but with a stronger emphasis on Egyptian security, agency, and independence.

Notes

* A shorter version of this article was published in 2013 in *Middle East Policy*, 20(4).

1. al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, "Barnāmaj Ḥizb al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn," al-Iṣdār al-Awwal, August 25, 2007.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. On how the MB partially adapted to the language of democracy see Mariz Tadros, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt: Democracy Redefined or Confined?* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2012). See also, Khalil Al-Anani, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi Misr: Shaykhukha Tusari al-Zaman?* (Cairo: al-Shorouq, 2007).
5. For example, Annette Ranko's interview with Abdel Hamid al-Ghazali, MB member and professor at Cairo University, February 2010, and with Rashad al-Bayoumi, deputy general guide, October 2010; al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, "Barnāmaj al-Intikhābī li-l-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn fī Majlis al-Shaʿb," 2005; Muhammad Mahdi Akif, "Mubādarat al-Murshid al-ʿĀmm li-l-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn Hawla al-Mabādiʾ al-ʿĀmma li-l-Iṣlāḥ fī Miṣr," March 3, 2004.
6. Akif, "Mubādarat al-Murshid al-ʿĀmm li-l-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn Hawla al-Mabādiʾ al-ʿĀmma li-l-Iṣlāḥ fī Miṣr." Also, interview with Abdel Hamid al-Ghazali, MB member and professor at Cairo University, February 2010, and interview with Rashad al-Bayoumi, deputy general guide, October 2010.
7. Annette Ranko's interview with Abdelrahman Mansour, coadministrator of "We Are All Khaled Said," October 2010.
8. Houdaiby discusses how the MB shared its foreign policy vision with the broader opposition in Egypt in Mubarak's last decade of rule. lbrahim EI Houdaiby, "Islamism in and after Egypt's Revolution," in Bahgat Korani and Rabab El-Mahdi (eds.), *Arab Spring in Egypt—Revolution and Beyond* (Cairo: AUC, 2012), 125–152.
9. ACPSS, *The Arab Strategic Report 2004–2005* (Kalyoub: Commercial Press, 2005).
10. Ibid.
11. Annette Ranko's interview with Hossam Tammam, independent researcher and expert on the MB, February 2010, and with Abdel Hamid Al Gahazali, MB member and professor at Cairo University, February 2010.
12. Compare, for example, Anani, who stresses the pragmatism of Islamists in power also on the level of foreign policy, that is, the MB in Egypt and al-Nahda in Tunisia. Khalil al-Anani, "Islamist

Parties Post–Arab Spring," *Mediterranean Politics*, 17, no. 3 (2012): 466–472.

13. FJP 2011 Program on Political Leadership. http://www.fjponline.com/article.php?id=189, accessed on March 3, 2012.
14. Annette Ranko's interview with Hossam Tammam, independent researcher and expert on the MB, February 2010.
15. Popularly circulated material were, for example, booklets authored by Mustafa Mashur, late supreme guide of the MB. He is viewed as one of the key persons propagating the notion of the caliphate within the MB: Mustafa Mashur, *A-Tayyar al-Islami* (al-Qahira: Dar al-Tawzi' wa al-Nashr al-Islamiyya, n.d.); Mustafa Mashur, *Qadaia Asasia 'ala tariq al-Da'wa* (al-Qahira: Dar al-Tawzi' wa al-Nashr al-Islamiyya, n.d.).
16. al-Nahar, "al-Ikhwan Yas'aoon li Iqama Khilafa Islamiya," June 22, 2012, http://www.alnaharegypt.com/t~76178, accessed October 2012.
17. Annette Ranko's interview with Abu Ella Madi, founder of al-Wasat party and former member of the MB, February 2010.
18. Interview with Heba Raouf, assistant professor, Cairo University, faculty of economics and political science, May 2009.
19. *Kuwait Times*, "Morsi's Fall Disconcerts Qatar, Comforts Saudis—Gulf Fears Brotherhood Would Push Radical, Islamist Agenda," July 12, 2013. http://news.kuwaittimes.net/morsis-fall-disconcerts-qatar-comforts-saudis-gulf-fears-brotherhood-would-push-radical-islamist-agenda/, accessed October 1, 2013.
20. al-Alam, "al-Khutba al-'Arabiya li Samaha Ayatollah Khamenei 'an Thowrat Misr," February 4, 2011. http://www.alalam.ir/news/57328, accessed April 2012, accessed on October 22, 2014.

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CHAPTER 5

Egypt: A "Regional Reference" in the Middle East

Mustafa El-Labbad

1 Introduction

It is with lots of scientific and methodological caution that someone should tackle the issue of regional powers in the Middle East. The mere concept of the "Middle East" is not unilaterally agreed upon: it is a concept that can be expanded or narrowed depending on each researcher; changes over the time; and more importantly, is not referred to as a specific geographic area by all researchers. Herein arises the first challenge.

The second challenge is the absence of a stable regional system in the Middle East, generally present in the case of other geographic areas in the world. Each of the five powerful countries in the Middle East—Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel—possesses some of the conditions to become a regional power, a role that Egypt came close to assuming between 1955 and 1967. Nevertheless the constant competition between these five countries is preventing any of them from developing into a sole regional power. The third challenge is in the mere definition of regional power itself, that is, its requirements.

This chapter starts from the hypothesis that though Egypt is a very important country and is very influential in building regional alliances in the Middle East, still it alone cannot shoulder the role of a regional power, as it did in the past. This is primarily due to the lack of financial and economic resources. In other words, currently Egypt is not a regional power but it can prevent any other power in the Middle East from emerging as a regional power.

Egypt can boost the regional power status of one of the other four competing powers by cooperating with it, as was the case with Turkey

during 2012–2013. Thus, Egypt could be considered as a "regional reference" in the Middle East; any ambitious country in the region has to ally with Egypt in order to achieve the regional power status.

Furthermore, under the presidents Sadat and Mubarak, Egyptian regional policy focused on preventing any regional power from emerging as such. Egypt relied on four pillars for implementing this policy: first, strengthening its alliance with the United States; second, its adherence to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and to the role of mediator between the Palestinians and the Israelis; third, building an Arab nationalism environment in the region preventing the two non-Arab regional powers, Iran and Turkey, from being part of the region's equations; and finally, building a special relationship with Saudi Arabia as a way to balance the Egyptian economic disruptions.

These four pillars continued with slight changes through the period of Mubarak, 1981–2011, and that of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) in the aftermath of the January 25, 2011, uprisings. Thus, the first postrevolution period was an extension of Mubarak's era but with minor changes related to form and substance. The Egyptian regional policy witnessed some changes during the year that Mohamed Morsi spent in power (June 2012–July 2013). This year witnessed deterioration of relations with Saudi Arabia but remarkable improvements in relations with Turkey, and to a lesser extent with Iran. Egypt brokered a cease-fire between Hamas and the Israeli government, after a military escalation. These four pillars of the Egyptian regional policy are likely to stay unchanged under the new system that will be formed following the coming elections in Egypt, though they may generate more dynamics and will have broader maneuver margins.

Based on the analysis of Egyptian relations with the four competing regional states—Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel—during Mubarak's, the SCAF, and the Muslim Brotherhood's (MB's) eras, this chapter will try to foresee the shape of Egypt's regional policy in the near future.

2 Egyptian-Saudi Relations

Geography imposes a political balance between Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the most populous and influential Arab country, as they are separated by the Red Sea. Saudi Arabia holds a bitter memory of Egypt that goes back to the rule of Mohammed Ali Pasha (1805–1840), who destroyed the first Saudi state. Later Nasser's project of pan-Arab nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s was Saudi Arabia's most difficult challenge in its history.

The oil boom in the 1970s (during and after the October War in 1973) completely flipped the equation in the region. Saudi Arabia and

the Arab Gulf states came out politically victorious from the international and regional transformations that followed the war. They relied on the huge financial resources derived from high oil prices, making the regional balance of power lean toward Saudi Arabia. At the same time, Egypt was exhausted from the wars with Israel and was suffering from economic difficulties. With major political shifts during the regime of the late president Anwar Sadat, the issue of "financial aid" was very important to Saudi Arabia to manage its relations with Egypt.

2.1 Egyptian-Saudi Relations under Mubarak

The policy of financial aids was the cornerstone of the Saudi policy in the Mubarak era to prevent Egypt, its traditional rival, from obtaining the leadership of the Arab region and later from extending its leeway. This seemed to be a fruitful policy and Mubarak was the first Egyptian ruler to acknowledge Saudi Arabia as the leading power in the Arab world.

Mubarak persisted in swapping Egypt's role with financial grants to compensate for the weakness of the Egyptian economy caused by the corruption of his regime and the lack of real sustainable investments.

Egypt under Mubarak allied with Saudi Arabia in the so-called moderate axis that also included Arab gulf monarchies and Jordan in opposing to the "Axis of Resistance" led by Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iraq. The special relations with Saudi Arabia, the peace treaty with Israel, and the alliance with the United States were the three main pillars of Egyptian regional policy under Mubarak. Additionally, it followed the policy that Turkey should be blocked from being integrated in the region institutionally and that Iran should be isolated.

2.2 Egyptian-Saudi Relations under SCAF

The Saudi tactics of using financial aid to influence the Egyptian political decisions continued even after the ousting of Mubarak. While Saudi promised new financial aids amounting to USD 4 billion, only USD 500 million reached Egypt, when it is known that Saudi investments in Western countries in general, and notably the United States, reaches USD 6 trillion. Egyptian workers in Saudi Arabia are estimated to be over 1 million; there are also about 400,000 Saudis living in Egypt. Saudi Arabia is Egypt's largest Arab trading partner, with a volume of trade exchange reaching USD 2.5 billion in 2010 but with a deficit balance in favor of Saudi Arabia (about USD 1 billion). Saudi Arabia is also the second-largest investor in Egypt, estimated at USD 3–5 billion, although most of these investments are located in the service and commercial sectors. In addition, according to figures from the Saudi Investment Authority, the Egyptian capital funds more than a thousand

projects in Saudi Arabia, with a total of USD 750 million. The Saudi spending in Egyptian tourism is about USD 500 million each year but in exchange a larger amount is paid by the Egyptians for annual visits to the Islamic holy places (Mecca and Medina) in Saudi Arabia.[1]

On the one hand, Egyptian-Saudi relations are suffering since the 1970s from an essential disequilibrium with a continuous threat of withdrawal of Saudi financial aid if Egypt doesn't comply with the conditions and desires of Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, the economic potential of both countries pushes them to engage in a complementary relationship, in theory: Saudi capital surpluses combined with Egypt's unique geographic location and labor force could create mutual benefits for both sides, which has not been applied enough so far. Neither was former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak able to build sustainable economic development in Egypt nor was Saudi Arabia willing to help him substantially in this for the reasons explained previously. The proof is that Saudi investments in Egypt account for less than 10 percent of the total Saudi investments in the world.

2.3 Egyptian-Saudi Relations under MB

The MB movement had historic relations with Saudi Arabia but Saudis were very concerned about the movement's aspirations. These relations existed even during Nasser's rule and the movement tried to attract the Egyptian society toward a rather conservative model, which the Saudi side might have appreciated. However, due to the alliance between Saudi Arabia and Mubarak, the Saudi-MB relations have seen a decline over the past three decades. The MB had aspirations of reestablishing an Islamic caliphate, which clashes with Saudi's own perception of the model by which they want to lead the Muslim world.

President Mohamed Morsi's first official visit was to Saudi Arabia[2] as a step to ease tension with the state. Mohamed Al-Catani, the MB Parliament Speaker, also visited Saudi Arabia[3] to apologize for the demonstrations that besieged the Saudi embassy in Cairo[4] but the tension between the two countries remained unchanged.

The logic of the conflict over roles in the Middle East went as follows: Saudi Arabia has played key role over the past three decades in creating a regional system and its balances, which would not have been possible without the approval of Mubarak. Egypt's return to its regional leadership aspirations will mean a reversal of the equation and restructuring of Egyptian-Saudi relations on the basis of reevaluation of new roles.

The dynamics of their bilateral relations under MB were as follows: Saudi Arabia is using various means to prevent Egypt from expanding its regional maneuver margin, primarily by financial aid. The MB was allying with Qatar to get financial benefits and with Turkey for economic

projects. By multiplying their regional relations, the MB also improved its relations with Iran.

Saudi Arabia's fears lie precisely here. First, a new Cairo that expands its regional maneuver margin by building communication bridges with Tehran. The reestablishment of Egyptian-Iranian relations would put a lot of pressure on Saudi Arabia. Second, a democratically governed Egypt would also put the Saudi throne under heavy pressures and challenge the "leadership status" of Saudis in the Arab world. Third, if the MB was going to govern Egypt, it would have been the worst-case scenario for Saudi Arabia, since the royal family's Islamic leadership model would be challenged. Even more so since the moderate opposition to the rule of the Saud family inside and outside the kingdom is known to be very near to the ideals of the MB.

Furthermore, after the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, Washington focused its efforts on creating a new balance of powers in the region to secure its interests on the one hand, yet not expanding its military bases on the other hand. The new alliances in the region should then be the cornerstone of the US policy; thus, in theory, the Egyptian-Turkish axis should become one of those cornerstones. The development of the Egyptian-Turkish relations into a "strategic alliance," as it was called by Ankara, would have weakened the Saudis more within the regional equation, especially since Cairo and Ankara are also allies of the United States and both have the possibility of acting as "Sunni Power." Thus, they are both able to compete effectively with Saudi Arabia.

3 Egyptian-Turkish Relations

In modern history, the relations between Cairo and Ankara were stabilized at normal levels most of the time but had never ascended to the level of strategic alliance since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 until the Arab Spring. The fall of the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s opened new avenues for regional powers allied with Washington to play new roles.

3.1 Egyptian-Turkish Relations under Mubarak

The Egyptian-Turkish relations were always bound by two elements of convergence: the alliance with the United States and the relations with Israel. However, the bilateral relations suffered due to the absence of a shared vision for the future of the Middle East as well as the perception of a "common threat." At the beginning of the new millennium the Middle East saw two meaningful changes: the arrival of "the Justice and Development Party," or "AK party" (AKP), to power in Turkey in 2002 and the occupation of Iraq in 2003. Cairo looked with suspicion at the

AKP, given its Islamic reference; thus, at that moment, this third element was added to the factors curbing the Egyptian-Turkish relations.

Turkey succeeded in building its image in the region by a succession of condemnations of Israeli behavior toward Palestinians at the same time in which Egypt under Mubarak was acting in favor of the Israelis by putting more pressure on Palestinians. Turkey mediated five rounds of negotiations between Syria and Israel during the year 2008, in order to expand Turkish soft power in the Middle East.

Turkish mediation was stealing from Cairo its traditional role, which contributed to the steady cooling of relations between Cairo and Ankara. The Israeli aggression on Gaza in 2008–2009 was a milestone in the Egyptian-Turkish relations; the aggression came at a time when Turkey emerged as a defender of Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip under siege by Cairo in partnership with Tel Aviv. The Turkish attitude showed unprecedented popularity for the Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and this exacerbated tensions between Cairo and Ankara. Thus, Cairo tended to topple the "Arab neighboring initiative," launched by the former secretary general of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, for integrating Turkey and Iran in Arab affairs. The situation was exacerbated by the resounding rise of Erdoğan in the Arab street after the incident of the "Mavi Marmara Flotilla" in May 2010. Since then it became clear that Turkey had become a fierce opponent of Egypt under Mubarak.

3.2 Egyptian-Turkish Relations under SCAF

During the SCAF rule, 2011–2012, Turkey was regarded as a regional competitor. The concerns of SCAF were focused on four points: (1) the relations between the AKP and the army in Turkey, with the fear that the same scenario might be repeated in Egypt; (2) relations between AKP and the MB in Egypt could undermine the regional as well as domestic maneuver margin of SCAF; (3) the fear of the massive economic power of Turkey and their domination of the Egyptian market; and (4) Turkish competition over mediation roles in the region, seeking to displace Egypt from playing its historical role.

Despite the repeated visits of high-ranking Turkish officials, like Erdoğan[5] and Gül,[6] to Cairo, no substantial improvement of Egyptian-Turkish bilateral relations under SCAF's rule was recorded.

3.3 Egyptian-Turkish Relations under MB

The MB generally admires Turkey, especially under AKP. It is important to note that Hassan Al-Banna founded the MB in 1928 as a reaction to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. However, the balances and compromises

that led the AKP in Turkey to agree on a secular Constitution were not acceptable to the MB in the Egyptian case. Economic cooperation was one of the key motives for the MB cooperation with Turkey, since Turkey is the largest economy in the Middle East based on its GDP, without having to rely on oil, as is the case with Iran and Saudi Arabia. This makes Turkey more qualified than any other Middle Eastern country to be part of the development and modernization of the Egyptian economy. However, the economic ties between Egypt and Turkey were monopolized by businessmen affiliated with the MB itself such as Hassan Malek, Khairat El Shater, and Essam Haddad.[7] Due to the similarity of key actors in the political system in both Egypt and Turkey (the military institution vs. political parties with Islamist reference), the similarity of the internal political balance of both sides (AKP and MB vs. secular oppositions) was a further motivation for improving the bilateral relations. In other words, the MB became the main parameter in defining the Egyptian-Turkish relations. Turkey promoted the use of "strategic partnership"[8] to describe the bilateral relations between Ankara and Cairo.

4 Egyptian-Iranian Relations

4.1 Egyptian-Iranian Relations under Mubarak

Iran suspended diplomatic relations with Egypt opposing the "Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty." Since 1979, there had been many fluctuations in the relation between both countries. In the 1980s, Egyptian-Iranian conflictual relations returned with innovative features; it has become part of Egyptian politics to accuse Iran of supporting and funding political Islam groups. Egypt clearly sided with Iraq in the Iraq-Iran war (1980–1988) and accused Iran of relentlessly spreading Shiite Islam in the region. In the 1990s Egypt tried to soften the confrontation with Iran, especially after former Iranian president Khatami came to power. Both countries opposed the Israeli nuclear program; Cairo launched the initiative of nuclear free zone in the Middle East, which got the support of Iran. A meeting between Mubarak and Khatami was held in Geneva but full diplomatic relations with Iran weren't restored. Egypt was keen to align with Saudi Arabia and Arab Gulf countries in their regional confrontation with Iran. After the year 2000, Cairo made a slight change in its policy toward Iran; it manipulated the relations with it to prevent potential pressures or to collect regional benefits. This was seen with the announcement to launch an air route between Cairo and Tehran in October 2010,[9] right before the Egyptian parliamentary elections in November 2010, as an attempt to bargain with Washington. These elections were rigged and designed to bring loyalists of Gamal Mubarak, Mubarak's ambitious son, to the Parliament. Cairo leveraged

Iran to contain American pressure. Another example illustrates Egypt's bid to collect regional benefits on account of its relation with Tehran, with the visit of Ali Larijani, Iran's Parliament Speaker, to Cairo[10] and his meeting with Mubarak on December 20, 2009, one day before Mubarak started on a tour to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE to discuss economic cooperation with Egypt. Historical experience of Egyptian-Iranian relations in the twentieth century shows that there cannot be any developed and prosperous relations between two countries unless both countries are under a similar international umbrella, since this umbrella draws boundaries and creates horizons of cooperation between the two regional powers that consequently limits the substantive collision of their interests.

4.2 Egyptian-Iranian Relations under SCAF

Iran carefully analyzed the transformations in the Arab region in general and in Egypt in particular, stemming from the "popular uprisings," and was concerned about losing its soft power in the region. Thus, Tehran proceeded to stamp all popular uprisings as "Islamic uprisings," which reflected Iran's fear of losing its soft power in the region. In this context particularly, we should refer to the demonstrations of the Green Movement of Mir Hussein Mousavi in Iran on February 14, 2011, in support of the "revolution" in Egypt, which was the first demonstration in Iran since decades that reacted to developments in Egypt (see also Henner Fürtig's chapter 2 in this book). In contradiction to Mubarak's era, Egypt was winning morally vis-à-vis Iran. Later, statements of Egyptian foreign minister Nabil El-Araby on "reevaluation" of the relation with Iran toward normalization attracted regional and global attention. But on the same day, a statement came from the ruling SCAF, announcing in a meeting with Egyptian official newspapers' editors, "Egypt would never be like Iran or Gaza."[11] Like Mubarak, SCAF was careful to keep relations with Iran at the same low level. However, this didn't preclude Cairo from manipulating relations with Iran to spur economic cooperation with Saudi and other Gulf countries or as a bargaining card with the United States. Here, we were witnessing a continuation of Mubarak's regional policy but with slight and calculated openness toward Iran.

SCAF allowed two Iranian barges to cross the Suez Canal, which led some analysts to talk about a potential strategic partnership between Cairo and Tehran. However, the key weakness of this assumption was the difficulty of establishing common interest between the two states without one having to relegate the core of regional and international alliances thereof. Neither Iran would ever relegate its power over the Gulf and Levant for the sake of Egypt nor would Egypt surrender its Arab Gulf and regional alliances to mollify Iran.

4.3 Egyptian-Iranian Relations under the MB

The MB had historic relations with Iran that date back to the times of Nawwab Safawi in 1951 up to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, the Iraq-Iran war, and even until today. The MB used Iran as a wild card to pressurize Arab Gulf countries and to create a space in regional affairs; however, it was careful not to restore full diplomatic relations. Here the MB differs from Mubarak and SCAF slightly, in their respective eras: Iran was nearly approaching the restoration of full diplomatic relations with Egypt in the MB era. The visit of Mohamed Morsi to Tehran[12] to attend the Non-Aligned Movement summit at the end of August 2012 was the first for an Egyptian president since three decades. Morsi exploited the platform to direct international and regional political messages. The Sunni-Shiite rift was clear in his speech at the summit. The aim of the visit was to widen the Egyptian regional maneuver margin and to gain more popularity among Sunni masses in the region at the same time. The visit of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Cairo[13] to attend a summit of the Islamic Cooperation Organization was the first visit of an Iranian president to Egypt. During the visit Ahmadinejad met with Sheikh al Azhar; he was faced with demands focused on Sunni-Shiite rift. Therefore, with this Tehran was achieving its goal of showing the region that the imposed economic sanctions did not prevent it from opening doors that were locked for many years. At the same time, the MB achieved a goal against its opponents across the Gulf region by waving the card of relations with Iran. The Egyptian initiative to solve the Syrian crisis[14] by its suggestion to establish a commission of Egypt, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia was welcomed by Tehran. Cairo and Tehran moved a step forward and coordinated in regional issues, which was a clear improvement in the bilateral relations. Owing to domestic and regional pressure (Salafis and Turkey), the MB changed its position on Syria and decided to break ties with Syria.[15] This marked the death of the initiative and the bilateral relations with Iran took a step back.

5 Egyptian-Israeli Relations

5.1 Egyptian-Israeli Relations under Mubarak

Egyptian-Israeli relations are based on the peace agreement signed in 1979, ending a war that lasted for three decades. Egypt has suffered a political alienation in the Arab region because of this agreement; thus, its regional role regressed dramatically. The Palestinian cause was and still is the most important pillar of any regional legitimacy for any effective actor in the region: Egypt's Nasser, Revolutionary Iran, and Islamic-rooted Turkey relied on it. That's why the agreement not only ended the war but it also took Egypt out of the regional influence equation. This

situation continued after the assassination of the late president Anwar Al-Saddat, who had signed the agreement, and during the first years of Mubarak's rule. Later, in 1989,[16] during the Arab summit, Arab countries reestablished their relations with Egypt in the wake of Iraq-Iran war. The Egyptian-Israeli agreement was seen to be in favor of both parties. For Israel, making peace with the biggest Arab country would change the existing balances in the region to the benefit of Israel, protect its southern borders, and give it freedom to adjust its northern borders. The Egyptian interest was shown in the late president Sadat's ideas who wanted to continue his international alliance with the United States and play the role of its regional partner by directing all Egyptian economic resources to developmental projects. Despite the agreement, the majority of the Egyptians never perceived Israel as a "friend" state because of the rejection of Palestinians' rights by Israel; thus, peace between the two parties was kept cold at the popular level and pragmatic at the official level.

Furthermore, Egypt kept its stand on the map agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and the presence of Yasser Arafat heading the Palestinian Authority was a guarantee for Egypt to sustain its regional role, since Arafat relied on Mubarak's support. Later, due to the regression of the Arab influence in the region and the absence of Arafat from the scene, the situation changed to the benefit of Israel and the Egyptian regional influence diminished. In Mubarak's era, Israel succeeded in transforming the cold peace to an economic partnership, in parallel with Mubarak's desire to bequeath power to his son Gamal, relying on the Israeli influence in Washington to achieve this goal.

In parallel, the Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ) agreement was signed in 2004 that allowed the entrance of Egyptian textile exports to the American markets without fees provided those textiles were made of 10.5 percent Israeli components. Until November 2008, about 689 companies Egyptian companies benefited from this agreement.[17]

In 2005, another agreement to export Egyptian gas to Israel was signed. Egyptians who knew of the urgent need of gas in the local Egyptian market had many reservations against this agreement. In addition, they were further angered after becoming aware of the very low price at which the gas was exported to Israel as compared to global market prices; heavy losses for the Egyptian economy were unavoidable. Furthermore, Mubarak's aversion to Iran and Tehran's alliance with Hamas and Hezbollah was seen as politically unwise; this was all the more so, since he proved unable to facilitate any kind of improvement in the relations between Israel and Palestinians. Mubarak became such a strong pillar in the Israeli security-military vision that Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, the former Israeli defense minister, called him "a strategic treasure for Israel."

In the final stages of Mubarak's rule, the Egyptian-Israeli relations became more and more dysfunctional for Israel, while simultaneously the regional influence of Egypt deteriorated to unprecedented levels. The blockade by Israel on Gaza and Egypt's inability or unwillingness to respond highlighted the bankruptcy of Mubarak's regional policies toward Israel. Egypt lost the ability to become an intermediary between Palestinians parties Fatah and Hamas after it clearly aligned itself with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority, thus loosing its status of an honest intermediary between Palestinians and Israel. What made it worse was its competition with regional powers, such as Turkey, and Arabs, such as Jordan and Qatar, for the intermediary role; thus, Egyptian regional capacity was subject to erosion.

5.2 Egyptian-Israeli Relations under SCAF

The Egyptian revolution on January 25, 2011, was a shock to Israel who relied on security and intelligence estimates, which confirmed the stability of Mubarak's regime. At this moment Israel was facing existential challenges. Many of the Israeli observers expected the export of cheap Egyptian gas to Israel to stop and were waiting for adjustments in the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement. Yet, after assuming responsibilities in the country, the fourth and fifth statements of the military junta announced Egypt's commitment to all signed international agreements including Camp David and the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement. Once more Egypt returned to the intermediary role between Palestinian Fatah and Hamas factions, after the Syrian regime, Hamas's ally, became busy with fighting its own people; thus, the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas was signed in Cairo[18] on May 3, 2011. Egypt also succeeded in making the deal for the release of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the release of Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier detained by Hamas. A border accident resulting in the killing of Egyptian soldiers by Israeli forces in August 2011 led to major demonstrations asking for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador in September 2011,[19] especially as Israel was late in presenting any legal or diplomatic apology. The military junta accepted the call for cancelling or modifying the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement and expelling the ambassador. At that point it became clear that Egyptian-Israeli relations would not return to what they used to be in Mubarak's era, that is, being the strategic treasure for Israel.

5.3 Egyptian-Israeli Relations under MB

Morsi and his MB were able to intermediate between Israel and Hamas, since the latter is the Palestinian branch of the MB organization. After coming to power in 2012, it was clear that the MB had no intension to

have a confrontation with Israel. Morsi tried to use the excellent relations between MB and Hamas to broker a long-term cease-fire between Israel and Hamas and to settle a solution for the Gaza blockade. The chance came few months later, after the Israeli aggression on the Palestinians in Gaza. In any case, the political horizon for the Palestinians is no longer represented by one group on the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, that is, on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Since Hamas is controlling the Gaza Strip (since 2006), we are facing two Palestines: one in the West Bank controlled administratively only by the Palestinian Authority (Fatah) and the second in Gaza under the control of the political and military group Hamas.

The preferred option for Mubarak to besiege the Gaza Strip and comply with the Israeli repression against the Palestinians in Gaza was no longer on the table for the new ruling regime, the MB, in Egypt. The MB was not hostile to Hamas from an ideological perspective as was Mubarak, which could restore the status of Egypt again to the guarantor of the agreements. Thus, it was not difficult to translate the cease-fire into external benefits through a unique partnership with Washington. Mohamed Morsi knew that a political settlement that gave Gaza residents greater margin of freedom, but within the long armistice between Hamas and the Israeli occupation, would be a great success for the MB.

The Gaza strip reflects the wider regional context; it was clear that winning a political agreement in Gaza was an Egyptian and regional priority, since it is a meeting point for the interests of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United States. In this case a political settlement would decrease Iranian influence in the region. By any solution between Hamas and Israel, Iran would be a loser despite the fact that Iranian missiles were launched by Hamas on Tel Aviv during the last confrontations. The experience of the region in the past two decades shows that whenever the United States wants to isolate Iran and its allies in the region, a more active "peace process" between Israel and the Palestinians is put in place, regardless of the final outcome. Similarly, higher the Israel's intransigence and flouting of the attempts for a peace process, the higher are the shares of Iran in the region and deterioration of political and moral influence of the United States.

Israeli interests would be better served by dividing the Palestinian issue into "the Gaza of Hamas" and "the West Bank of Fatah." And if Israel annexed the West Bank later, the demographic balance will lean in favor of the Jewish population, especially after excluding the part of the Palestinian people living in Gaza. The Gaza Strip or "State of Gaza" may be later guaranteed for the return of Palestinian refugees in Diaspora since 1948, and therefore Israel would have made a net profit of its aggression on the Palestinian people in Gaza. Therefore, the MB was

a very important partner for Israel in that cause. In contrast, the regional ambitions of the MB and their ability to gather popular support in Arab countries were a cause of concern for Tel Aviv.

6 Conclusion

It is hard to exactly predict the new regional policy of Egypt after the ousting of Mohamed Morsi on July 3, 2013, since it would depend largely on the internal stability of Egypt and its success in achieving the goal of stabilization according to the "road map" announced by General Abdel Fattah Al Sissi. However, the frame of Egypt's regional policy in the last three decades could give some directions and guidelines. Egypt's regional policy focused in the last decades on preventing any regional power from emerging as such. In order to be able to act in this direction, Egypt still relies on the previously mentioned four pillars, that is, strengthening its alliance with the United States, adherence to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and mediating between the Palestinians and the Israelis, building an "Arab space" in the region to prevent the two non-Arab regional powers, Iran and Turkey, from being part of the equations of the region, and building a special relationship with Saudi Arabia to correct the Egyptian financial disruptions.

We can assume that the four above-mentioned pillars of Egyptian foreign policy would be the same in the near future, with slight differences in Egypt's relations to the other four competing powers in the Middle East.

6.1 Egyptian-Saudi Relations

After the ousting of Morsi, Saudi Arabia is among the winners in Egypt for many reasons:

1. MB posed threats to the hegemony of Saudi Arabia in Arab affairs.
2. MB challenged even the religious superiority of Saudi Arabia in the region.
3. MB reconciled with Iran, the number one regional enemy for Saudi Arabia.
4. The Egyptian-Turkish-Qatari triangle under the MB was a real threat to Saudi Arabia from within the Sunni camp.
5. Saudi Arabia would be logically better positioned vis-à-vis Egypt after declaring financial support to the new government amounting to USD 10 billion in grants, loans, and reserves at the Central Bank.[20]

Saudi Arabia would again have the better position in Cairo's regional designs, in comparison to other regional players, especially after the financial and political backing of the new power constellation in Cairo.

6.2 Future of Egyptian-Turkish Relations

With the fall of the Egyptian MB, Turkey's losses appear to be multidimensional. Turkey's tactical and strategic losses posed a major challenge to Turkish decision makers. Morsi's fall ended the so-called Turkish model debate in the region, whereby the elites in the Arab Spring countries were inspired by AKP in Turkey. However, a model needs to be adopted by someone to be called a true model. Egypt 2013 was closer to Turkey of 1997 than to Turkey of 2002. By ending its experiment with the Turkish model, Egypt has effectively turned it into a mere theoretical idea. Ankara has benefited from the Turkish model mantra to raise its importance in the West, where Turkey was considered as the most capable to "tame" the MB. And the MB, in return, used the Turkish model to build bridges with the West as a way to fight its political opponents in Egypt. In short, during the MB's rule, the Turkish model went from being an inspirational idea to a subterfuge used by both Turkey and the MB so that each could achieve its aims through it.

Turkey's plan to help the MB reach power in Libya and Syria was greatly harmed by Morsi's fall. Turkey lost its most important, and apparently irreplaceable, Arab ally in the region. Erdoğan's dream to enter Gaza may have ended because the new Egyptian government would not allow him to use Egypt's territory to enter Gaza. Worse, Turkey's relations with Iraq and the Syrian regime are deteriorating. With the loss of its Egyptian partner, Turkey's "zero problems" policy, as set by Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, has effectively ended.

Now, Turkey has good relations with only two of its neighbors—Hamas in Gaza and Israel—a tragic end to the dream of Turkish regional leadership.

According to realistic estimates, Turkey's ability to influence events in Egypt is very limited because Ankara has no special relations with any force in the new Egyptian structure. Economically, Egypt can put pressures on Turkey but the opposite is not the case.

First, there is a USD 4.2 billion trade between the two countries. According to 2011 estimates, Turkey exports USD 3.9 billion worth of goods to Egypt and imports only USD 0.3 billion.[21] Thus, a negative trade balance harms Turkey a lot more than it does Egypt.

Second, Turkish goods are relatively not very competitive in general. Western goods are of better quality while Chinese and Asian goods are cheaper. Thus, Egyptian importers can easily replace Turkish goods.

Third, Turkey can only use Egyptian ports to export its goods to the Gulf states and Africa after Syrian territory has been closed to Turkish trucks heading to the Gulf states. The Turkish government will probably continue to denounce the "military coup" in Egypt for domestic Turkish purposes—confronting the political power of the Turkish military. Turkey will also continue its behind-the-scenes efforts to change the Egyptian policy of Turkey's Western and Arab allies. But in the end, Turkey will be forced to bow to the status quo to limit its losses in Egypt.

A diplomatic escalation between Cairo and Ankara is expected, since Turkish prime minister Erdoğan is continuously attacking the new power in Egypt and trying to delegitimize it regionally and internationally.

6.3 Future of Egyptian-Iranian Relations

The MB was not a strategic partner of Iran, as it has been to Turkey, but the MB was conducive to the interests of Iran. Tehran lost a potential partner in Egypt and the whole region after the ousting of the MB in Egypt.

Strategic and regional losses for Iran after Morsi's ouster are as follows:

1. Arab-Persian divide: Iran wanted the rule of political Islam in the region both for ideological and strategic reasons because political Islam is an excellent tool to neutralize the Arab-Persian divide that dates back more than a thousand years.
2. Sunni-Shiite sectarian tension: The MB is considered as the largest Sunni political organization in the world. And the importance for the Iranian perspective comes from the theoretical capacity of the MB in Egypt to achieve Sunni-Shiite reconciliation that could possibly soften the pressure on Iran.
3. Saudi Arabia: The mutual aversion between the MB and Saudi Arabia suits Iran because it is an effective way to divert the attention of Saudis from the mobilization of regional media in the face of Iran.
4. The return of the "axis of moderation": The direct impact of the Arab Spring was on regional alignments, since Egypt's transition to a new Turkish-Egyptian-Qatari axis made Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Arab states lose weight in the face of Iran. The change in Egypt gave new impetus to the axis of moderation—a result that is unpleasant for Iran.
5. The fall of the narrative of Islamic awakening: The fall of the MB represented the fall of this narrative; this weakened the moral and ideological arsenal of Iran.

Iran had developed common relations with the MB and saw them as the most suitable partner in Egypt instead of the army and Mubarak's state apparatus, Salafis and liberal and leftist parties. Most probably, the restoration of relations with Iran will not be on the agenda of Egypt in the light of the new structure of power in Egypt (the army, the remnants of the old regime, the Salafists, and the democratic and revolutionary forces).

In all probability, Egyptian-Iranian relations would be limited in its current status. Neither Cairo nor Tehran is interested in a new escalation but the conflicting interests of both countries in the Levant would draw the limits on their eventual cooperation. Cairo would try to avoid an escalation of bilateral tensions; yet, at the same time, there is no frame for real cooperation between both parties.

6.4 Future of Egyptian-Israeli Relations

It is unlikely that Egyptian-Israeli relations would witness a radical change in the coming period, especially with the Israeli positive response about increasing the number of Egyptian forces in the "C" area of Sinai adjacent to borders with Israel. Yet, now that the Egyptian public opinion has become an important and influential actor in drawing Egyptian regional policy, Egyptian-Israeli relations will not return to be as they used to be in Mubarak's era. It is possible that in the coming period Egypt will continue its commitment to Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement but at the same time, developing tools that will reduce negative effects of these relations on its regional presence. This can be achieved through a return to mediation between the Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, and rehabilitating itself as the guarantor of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements as well as adopting a more tough attitude in forcing Israel to abide by the decisions of the UN Security Council and the international legitimacy. All these measures are guaranteeing procedures for stability on the one hand, while on the other hand preventing the emergence of a new power constellation by "kidnapping" the Palestinian cause by other non-Arab powers in the region to its benefit, which would harm Egyptian image and accordingly Egyptian interests in the region.

Notes

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PART III

Turkey and the Ottoman Past

CHAPTER 6

Before the Arab Revolts and After: Turkey's Transformed Regional Power Status in the Middle East*

André Bank and Roy Karadag

1 Introduction

At the outset of the Arab revolts in late 2010 and early 2011, Turkey seemed to be the most likely contender for regional leadership in the Middle East. The signs for this development were all too obvious at the time: Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) were hailed as having, at last, successfully reconciled Muslim-conservative values, political liberalism, and economic developmentalism, as Erdoğan held mass rallies in post-uprising Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia in September 2011. The fact that Turkey could accomplish all that while, at the same time, being able to follow its own interests independently and not being bound by extra-regional superpowers—at least less so than other relevant regional players, such as Israel or Saudi Arabia—contributed even more to Turkey's positive image in Arab societies. While some splits in the self-assigned "zero problems" framework of then foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu became visible after the uprisings, Turkey still maneuvered quite effectively between new Arab societal aspirations and its own material interests (cf. Bank 2011; Öniş 2012; Tugal 2012). However, in 2014, Turkey does not look as promising a regional power as it did three years ago. The AKP's assertiveness in actively promoting a regime change in Syria could no longer be resolved with the aim to maintain good relations with Iran, the then Maliki government in Iraq, and with its crucial energy partner Russia. Given that the downfall of the Syrian regime

under Bashar al-Assad is not as likely as it was in late 2011 and into 2012, Turkey may have, in fact, been too overambitious regarding its newly self-ascribed transformative role in the region. Still, the Arab revolts represent a challenge not only for Turkey but also to all regional powers, which have had to adapt to a re-forming Middle Eastern theater.

This chapter seeks to explain how Turkey managed to transform into a powerful regional player in the Middle East in the first place. Against the background of a brief state of the art (section 2), we highlight in sections 3 and 4—the main parts of the chapter—a particular domestic-regional linkage that AKP elites could set up and profit from. We hold that only when foreign and regional policy could be made into a legitimizing tool for domestic elites, regional power was conceivable. And without the post-2003 regional dynamics in the Middle East, in which Turkey could position itself in an independent manner, there would have been no region into which AKP power could have emanated. To demonstrate this domestic-regional linkage that worked very well for Turkey's ruling elites in the period immediately before the Arab revolts, we outline the gradual domestic consolidation of the AKP government under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the face of the pressures from the Kemalist establishment and the foreign policy shifts it has initiated, mostly as a result of the pragmatist ideology and agency of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. After highlighting the self-reinforcing regional and domestic dynamics, we conclude, in section 5, by relating these findings to post–Arab revolts dynamics that have seriously weakened, if not ended, this special domestic-regional linkage. First, it became clear that Turkish capacities to impact political developments in the region are limited. Second, the latest wave of contestation in the aftermath of the Gezi Park protests in May and June 2013, the mass arrests of journalists and activists, the power struggle between Erdoğanists and Gülenists within the religious-conservative camp, and the massive corruption allegations against the AKP leadership, including the prime minister and his family, seriously weakened the ruling party's hegemonic status within Turkey itself. As Turkey's regional position mostly depended on the way Turkey has been discursively appropriated in Arab publics, the AKP by 2014 faces the danger of completely losing its democratic appeal, which was so inspirational for new Arab elites and Arab societies in the pre-Arab revolts period.

2 Turkey's Positioning toward the Middle East: A Brief State of the Art

To illustrate that Turkey has, in fact, gained a powerful position in the regional theater, we need to take into consideration a variety of material and ideational factors. In material terms, what matters most is Turkey's

deepened and ongoing regional integration into Middle Eastern markets (Kirişçi 2009; 2013). Compared to the mid-1990s, where Turkish–Middle Eastern trade volume stood at USD 6 billion (and around USD 7 billion when the AKP came to power), in 2012, Turkey exported and imported goods and services valued at USD 42 billion and USD 21 billion, respectively. This capturing of Middle Eastern export outlets cannot be overstated in its importance for Turkey's developmental project, as the Middle East represents the sole world region from which Turkey realized trade surpluses (as compared to the country's overall trade deficit of USD 84 billion in 2012).[1] Along with this economic process comes the movement of people and ideas, with Istanbul, in particular, as one of the new places to be for middle- and upper-class Arab tourists, businessmen, and cultural actors. As to the ideational side of regional power, Turkey can be seen as one vital point of reference for Arab publics. The state increases developmental cooperation and new forms of "cultural diplomacy" to enhance Turkey's image via exchanges in arts and academia (Öner 2013). Beyond the state, private-based cultural productions strengthen the linkages between Turkey and its neighborhood. This occurs, most prominently, via the sale and broadcasting of Turkish TV productions, especially soap operas across and beyond the region, which demonstrates the new cultural and discursive affinities across ethnic ties (Rousselin 2013).

Turkish commodities and its popular cultures form one part of the country's soft power in the region. However, Turkey's new regional position goes beyond cultural interactions and enters the political realm as well. For, according to the Arab Public Opinion Polls of 2011 and 2012, Turkey has seemingly played the most constructive role in the early phase of the Arab revolts; accordingly, Erdoğan had been considered to be the most admired political figure in the Middle East (with an approval rate of 31%, thus, by far outcompeting the Saudi King Abdullah with merely 5%). Also, in the 2012 poll carried out in Egypt before the presidential elections, Turkey ranked first as a model of Muslim democracy, with an overwhelming figure of 63 percent of respondents admiring Erdoğan most (before King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and US president Obama with 5% approval rates each).

How did Turkey manage to get to this position? To understand this transformed regional power status, scholars of Turkish politics, international relations, and Middle Eastern politics have proposed a variety of explanatory factors and mechanisms (Altunışık 2008; Altunışık and Martin 2011; Jung 2005; Kirişçi 2011; Pope 2010). Such factors are, for example, the opposition of European states to Turkey's European Union (EU) accession bid (Oğuzlu and Kibaroğlu 2009), a new era of independent foreign policy making after the end of the Cold War (Larrabee 2010), and the capacity to de-securitize formerly contentious issues and

security threats, most prominently Syria and Iran (Aras and Polat 2008), which worked well with Turkey's expansion of trade relations across its regional neighborhood (Kirişçi 2009), and the empowerment of civilian elites and civil society organizations in the field of foreign policy oriented toward furthering economic integration (Altay 2011).

Despite these works' merits, they suffer from a serious flaw in that they merely account for the changes taking place in Turkish foreign policy making. What they cannot explain is *why* Turkey has been so successful in becoming a new regional power in the Middle East. To do so, we need to go beyond domestic transformations and emphasize the linkage between the domestic dimension, which Turkish elites can influence, and the regional setting, which they cannot influence and where Turkey's power is acknowledged, admired, and feared. In other words, Turkey's positioning may tell us less about Turkey and more about the regional dynamics in the Middle East itself. Given the relationality of regional power, any explanation omitting this linkage remains simplistic, if not insufficient.

3 Domestic and Regional Power: AKP Turkey

Before the AKP era, the Turkish state and economy underwent dramatic transformations, which did not allow for the manifestation of any reasonable claim to regional power, in the Middle East or elsewhere. On the one hand, since the military intervention on September 12, 1980, Turkish politics was dominated by a highly conflict-ridden neoliberal restructuring process under military tutelage. The combination of drastic limitations on political contestation and the dis-embedding of market forces resulted, in the 1990s, in a new era of disorderly politics, instable governments, inflation-based social discontent, and the recurrent outbreak of financial crises (1994, 2000–2001), which shattered public confidence in the state's institutions in general (Karadag 2010). Moreover, the war between the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and the Kurdish rebel group PKK caused enormous dislocations in Turkey's southeast, as military and political elites aimed at restrengthening ethno-nationalism and Sunni Islam as the sole cement holding Turkish society together. On the other hand, in post-1980 Turkey, foreign and security policy fell mainly under the purview of the TAF, as institutionalized in the National Security Council (NSC). Thus, there existed almost no potential for civilian elites to politicize foreign policy and to use it as a tool of domestic legitimization. As soon as they tried to accomplish that, as did the Islamist Welfare Party under Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan in 1996–1997, the NSC used its prerogatives and despotic powers to reverse that opportunity.

3.1 Gradual Consolidation under the AKP

If Turkey faced substantial dilemmas in economic-policy making in the 1990s, the massive economic growth in the first decade of this century was all the more astonishing. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth resumed at a high level, comparable only to the growth rates of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) countries; it was also accompanied by relatively low inflation rates, fiscal austerity, and unforeseen levels of foreign direct investment (Öniş and Senses 2009). Although relevant postcrisis institutional changes go back to the entrepreneurship of Kemal Derviş, former minister of economy, in 2001, the AKP has maintained the confidence of international financial institutions, big business holdings, and foreign investors by strictly committing itself to the prescribed policy recommendations, in particular those concerning banking regulation. The AKP government has also been the first in Turkish history to credibly implement the privatization program that is based on broad societal support and is not as contested any longer (Öniş 2011). From its introduction in 1985 up until 2002, privatization had only generated USD 9.5 billion. Since 2002, privatization proceeds have surpassed USD 34 billion, with most of the sales occurring in the fields of energy, telecommunications, mining, sugar, and tobacco. Related to this, foreign direct investment surged from below USD 5 billion before 2004 to USD 20 billion in 2007. Turkey has cut subsidies in the agricultural sector, and today its economy consists mainly of private companies, the biggest of which actively engage in international markets. There has been an almost tenfold increase in the country's foreign direct investment since 2002 (Kutlay 2011). Thus, as Caner Bakir argues, the break with the conflictual 1990s seems to have been completed. The AKP has managed to strengthen the new complementarities between low inflation, low interest rates, and fiscal austerity, something that was impossible within the former political-economic framework (Bakir 2009).

Furthermore, this new phase of ordered politics has come with a new narrative on the part of domestic political elites that at last takes up the struggle with the powers of the TAF. Having been elected into a rather precarious position in 2002, the AKP has within one decade managed to disempower the NSC and the General Staff. It initially did so via the anchor of EU negotiations, but during and after the constitutional crisis of 2007 it did so by mobilizing antimilitary civil society and media organizations, framing the TAF as enemies of Turkish democracy. That this struggle against the TAF, which came to an end with the resignation of Chief of General Staff Ilker Başbuğ in July 2011, was fought by elites with a distinct Muslim identity has provided the AKP with a powerful discursive weapon according to which there is no contradiction between Islam on the one hand and democracy, capitalism, and modernity on

the other. It is particularly this discursive toolkit that has been appropriated within the Arab Middle East, both by regime elites and opposition movements.

While not all has been well economically in Turkey in the first decade of the twenty-first century, what renders the AKP's impact truly revolutionary is the fact that it acts both as the source driving the dis-embedding of the market and as the main "re-embedder" of the discontented, and thus propagates pro-capitalist and social solidarity values at the same time (Tugal 2009). Various segments of its Muslim constituency are involved in new business associations (e.g., Müstakil Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği [MÜSIAD] and Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu [TUSKON]) that take an active stand in formulating domestic and regional policy initiatives, thereby further "civilizing" political processes, and in social solidarity organizations that provide charity and private education, which operate as important venues for success in the fiercely contested access to the public university system. These segments, with which the AKP is organically linked, cooperate most successfully within the municipalities under AKP control. What some label "public-private partnerships" are in fact a demonstration of the successful mobilization of anti-Kemalist counter-elites, who are maintaining and deepening their grassroots linkages and who represent a new vision of social harmony based upon strong notions of social embeddedness, which resonated so well among Arab Islamist parties and movements that hoped, eventually to no avail, to capture and transform the state apparatus in a similarly successful way, for example, in Egypt and Tunisia.

3.2 AKP Turkey's Rise in the Middle East

The AKP's electoral success in the parliamentary elections of June 12, 2011, in which it received 49.9 percent of the votes, its most successful result thus far, underscored the party's newfound position in Turkish politics at the outset of the Arab revolts. In addition to the domestic transformations, it is the AKP's foreign policy reorientation over the course of the last decade that has provided it with a solid support base at home. Traditionally, Turkish foreign policy has been characterized by a Western orientation deeply anchored in a Kemalist nation-building process. Even though this crux of Turkish foreign policy has so far remained intact, a stronger multidimensionality and a diversification of alliances outside the West have also characterized Turkish foreign policy under the AKP (Pope 2010).

According to Ahmet Davutoğlu, AKP's foreign policy architect, instead of adopting a cautious, reactive, and from time to time suspicious approach to its regional environment, Turkey should negotiate proactively and look pragmatically for opportunities to solve conflicts and create

cooperation. Located between Western Europe, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East, Turkey might be virtually predestined to have such a foreign policy of "zero problems with neighbors." Davutoğlu's doctrine has been most comprehensively enacted in the Middle East region, particularly in the AKP's second term 2007–2011. The two dominant driving forces of Turkey's Middle East policy are geoeconomic and the nonmaterial generation of soft power, that is, the creation of ideological support for Turkey within the Middle East (Altunışık 2008; Pope 2010).

The geoeconomic driving forces of Turkey's Middle East policy can be illustrated by the significantly increased volumes of capital expenditures and trade that have occurred under the AKP government as well as by the diversity of Turkish business partners in the region. Energy cooperation and especially the availability of reliable and cheap natural gas and oil have played an important role in Turkey's relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran. In turn, Turkish companies in Iran have been active in the areas of construction and infrastructure. This interweaving of foreign trade policy also explains why the Turkish government—despite differing ideological orientations—welcomed the controversial June 2009 reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and why Turkey voted against the tightening of the sanctions against Iran that was being called for by Western nations in the UN Security Council, in which Turkey had a seat as a nonpermanent member in 2009 and 2010. At the same time, Turkish-Iranian relations continue to be conflict-ridden, as the installation of the NATO radar base on Turkish soil in 2011 indicates. In Kurdish-dominated northern Iraq, Anatolian companies with close ties to the AKP administration are so financially active that any closing of the border by Turkey would cause substantial economic turbulence in that area, which is controlled by the Kurdistan Democratic Party under Mas'ud Barzani. Similar to Turkey's economic cooperation with Iran was its cooperation with Libya under Muammar Gaddafi: Turkey imported Libyan oil and Turkish construction, tourism, energy, and retail businesses were active in Libya. In each of the years 2008 and 2009, the volume of bilateral trade amounted to nearly USD 10 billion.[2]

The rapprochement between the AKP administration and Syria under President Bashar al-Assad was also largely economically motivated. In light of the years-long animosity between Turkey and Syria, which nearly escalated into a war in 1998, the formation of "brotherly relations" between Ankara and Damascus through a diversity of collaborative projects—a high point of this being the joint cabinet meetings in 2010—was particularly remarkable. In its relations with Syria, Turkey had capital expenditures and trade close to the border in its sights. However, it also aimed to develop a new transit route, which would run primarily through Jordan and Iraq and carry domestic products into the financially strong

Gulf states. Another development to come out of the new economic relationship was Turkey's 2009 lifting of visa restrictions for Syrian citizens: by the end of 2010, approximately sixty thousand Syrians were visiting Turkey monthly (Tür 2011).

Along with its geoeconomic interests, the formation of soft power in the Middle East is the other main driving force of Turkey's regional policy. Prime Minister Erdoğan, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu, and President Abdullah Gül (also from the AKP) have primarily used two tactics. First, they have continuously promoted, however subtly, a kind of "Turkish model" for the Middle East in their political speeches and statements. This model includes, with varying degrees of emphasis, elements of pluralism and party-based democracy, a successful economy, religious and cultural authenticity, and a relatively independent foreign policy, all of which amount to a positive and relatively coherent self-description of the AKP administration.

Second, the Turkish government has also developed a strong anti-Israel, pro-Palestine rhetoric since the beginning of the war in Gaza on December 27, 2008, a rhetoric that has at times come off as clearly populist. The reason for such rhetoric was the visible irritation on the part of Ankara, which, despite the intensive mediations it had been conducting between Israel and Syria since May 2008, received no advance notice from Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's administration about the imminent war in the Gaza Strip. Ankara was also visibly jarred by the way Israel conducted the war, which led to the deaths of 1,300 Palestinians, almost of all of whom were civilians. At the meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos at the end of January 2009, Prime Minister Erdoğan openly turned against Israel's president, Shimon Peres, for the first time. The worsening of Turkish-Israeli relations reached a new low with the Gaza flotilla affair at the end of May and beginning of June 2010: after Israeli commandos boarded the Turkish ship *Mavi Marmara*, an aid convoy, in the Eastern Mediterranean and ended up killing eight Turks and an American-Turkish dual citizen, the conflict between Turkey and Israel escalated to a previously unprecedented level. While Israel insisted that the Gaza aid flotilla was illegal, that its forces were provoked, and that the commandos essentially acted in self-defense, Turkey demanded both a legal investigation of the Israeli military's intervention in international waters and a comprehensive apology from Israel. Only in March 2013 did Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu halfheartedly apologize to Turkey for the raid of the Gaza flotilla. But this did not immediately lead to restoration of bilateral relations. Again, this is not to suggest that less-open military cooperation between Turkey and Israel has continued, as the delivery of Israeli Heron drones to Turkey in August 2010 underline.

In the wider, regional context of the Middle East, Turkey's openly pro-Palestine stance required that it distance itself from Egypt under

Hosni Mubarak and that it also reject his pro-West and pro-Israel attitudes regarding the Gaza Strip and the party that has been in power there since June 2007, Hamas. Turkey has played a more moderate tune in relations with the governments of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the smaller Gulf states, which are perceived as being just as pro-West; particularly with respect to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), economic considerations have once again played a central role.

Despite its successes, Turkish regional policy under the AKP cannot hide the fundamental conflict of interest between the country's geoeconomic and nonmaterial interests. On the one hand, Turkey's interest in economic cooperation, trade, and investment in the Middle East calls for a stable, surrounding political environment and pragmatic collaboration with authoritarian regimes, whether they be in Iran, northern Iraq, Libya, Syria, Saudi Arabia, or the UAE. On the other hand, because of the populist generation of soft power, the status quo in the Middle East—especially regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—is being called into question. Before the Arab revolts of 2011, this basic contradiction has led to, among other things, the AKP administration's discontinuation of the propagation of its Turkish model, beyond its economic components, to its important trade partners Iran, Libya, and Syria. This move evinces the pragmatism of the AKP's Middle East policy. The worsening of Turkish-Israeli public relations since 2009 and Turkish-Syrian relations since 2011 show, however, that Ankara's policy of zero problems with the neighbors indicates more wishful thinking on the AKP's part than the complex and contradictory regional political realities.

4 Finding the Missing Link: Self-Reinforcing Domestic and Regional Dynamics

Following these empirical descriptions of *what* happened in Turkey and the Middle East's regional constellation, our aim in this section is to establish *why* this ascension to regional power was possible after 2007. For that, there exist two preconditions—one domestic and one regional—that together generate a lock-in effect with increasing returns, meaning that domestic AKP successes translate into regional action capacity and that regional policies and initiatives legitimize and strengthen the AKP's domestic powers at the same time.

4.1 Domestic Dynamics and Their Effects: Inside Out

On the domestic front, the tipping point for the consolidation of the AKP government was its victory over the Kemalist establishment in the 2007 constitutional crisis. The government overcame this challenge with

two electoral successes: the referendum that called for the direct election of the president and the parliamentary elections in which the AKP secured 47 percent of the national vote. Until then, the AKP had faced a rather precarious power setting and was contained by the TAF, the judiciary, and President Necdet Sezer, who was replaced in 2007 with former foreign minister and AKP politician, Abdullah Gül. The AKP's monopolization of power was far from obvious and unexpected at the time of its coming to power in 2002–2003. This accounts for its rather pragmatic political stand until 2006, which saw it refrain from making any moves to alter the post-1982 neo-Kemalist order. In this context, the AKP profited from the implementation of the first few EU harmonization packages under the Eçevit government. The latter decided to deepen the reforms to maintain its democratic and pro-European identity. Through the EU negotiations, which were reciprocated with the formal beginning of accession talks in 2005, the AKP could dismantle the NSC (Hale and Özbudun 2010: 87). Even so, this dynamic of linking foreign and domestic policy lasted only until 2006, when further negotiations were halted because the question of Cypriot access to Turkish ports was not solved. Also, the government could not address the headscarf issue with the help of European institutions, which suggests that, at that time, the EU card had been played out and the AKP could make no further domestic legitimacy gains while simultaneously getting rid of the Kemalist influence.

Thus, during and after the 2007 attempt by the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP), the military, and Kemalist civil society organizations to prevent Gül's election as state president, the AKP decided to engage in a full-fledged power struggle against those groups it labeled as the real enemies of Turkish democracy. Backed with a strong popular mandate, no move by the opposition—despite the party closure case in 2008, which the AKP survived—could endanger the party's position. The AKP has gone on to win every electoral contest since then. Thus, without this victorious struggle against the self-ascribed defenders of Kemalism, there would be nothing with which the AKP could act as a model in foreign affairs. Since then, foreign policy has been used as a tool for domestic legitimation that neither the opposition parties nor the TAF have been able to harm.

4.2 Regional Dynamics and Their Effects: Outside In

In addition to the domestic consolidation of the AKP-dominated version of Turkey's political economy, the dynamics of regional politics in the Middle East since the middle of the 2000s need to be understood as a second self-reinforcing mechanism to understand Turkey acquiring regional power status in the Middle East. In most instances, the regional

dynamics have been largely beyond the direct influence of Turkish policy but they have, nevertheless, increased its potential to make inroads as a key player in the Middle East arena.

The first basic aspect relates to the increased multiplicity of influential actors in regional politics since the middle of the last decade. This is an indirect result of the wars that characterized the Middle East around this time. Put simply, since 2003, the Iraq War has decisively contributed to the much-cited regional rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the context of the Lebanon War of 2006, it was the Islamist Hezbollah that gained popular region-wide appraisals for its tough *muqawama* (resistance) stance against Israel. And finally, after having won the Palestinian parliamentary elections in January 2006 and having seized control of the Gaza Strip, the Islamist Hamas also became a regionally relevant player through its *muqawama* posture against Israel—particularly in the context of the Gaza War of 2008–2009 (Valbjorn and Bank 2012). In addition to these war-related dynamics, it has been the immense loss of US influence in the Middle East, especially after the second Bush administration from 2005 to 2009, that has allowed for the rise of influential regional players. Other actors have gradually filled the "diplomatic gap." In addition to the well-known, regionally dominant actors like the pro-Western Egypt and Saudi Arabia, new actors have gained influence through their role in mediating important conflicts in the region. In Lebanon, it was Qatar's decisive third-party role that allowed for the agreement on the new president Michel Suleiman, the compromise candidate, as well as on the formation of a national unity government, both in May 2008. Around the same time, Turkey hosted secret talks between Israel and Syria. They lasted for eight months, until the outbreak of the Gaza War following Israeli attacks in December 2008.

The second and related aspect that has allowed for Turkey's regional rise to prominence relates to the dominant pattern of alliance-building and ideological polarization in the Middle East. Since the middle of the last decade, a clear dichotomy between two regional camps, most openly expressed in the differing reactions to the wars in Lebanon in 2006 and Gaza in 2008–2009, has emerged. While the traditionally influential Arab states Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan have maintained their pro-Western position and their, at least indirectly, acquiescent stance toward Israel, the diverse actors representing the so-called *muqawama* axis—Iran, Syria, the Lebanese Hezbollah, the Palestinian Hamas, and sometimes also the Maliki government in Iraq—have emerged as important challengers to the conservative "status quo" alliance. In this highly polarized context, a new space has opened up for less directly allied and more flexible players in the Middle East. And while this increased multiplicity of influential actors in regional politics together with the specific pattern of alliance-building and ideological polarization in the Middle

East since the middle of the 2000s has provided Turkey with the opportunity to seize the moment, it is the massively increased regional initiatives of the AKP government since 2008–2009 that have truly allowed for its unprecedented rise to a source of inspiration, as already outlined in detail.

4.3 Summary

With respect to Turkey's rise as a regional power after 2007, the following points stand out. First, compared to most, if not all, other Middle Eastern countries, Turkey had the capacity for independent action in and beyond the Middle East. Not being tied directly to any of the camps in intra-Arab struggles, Turkey had assumed a vital brokerage position and followed an impartial and multidimensional approach, despite popular anti-European slogans that should not be interpreted too hastily as a total break with the EU option in the future. This freedom of action in the regional sphere parallels the domestic context, where the AKP has managed to break out of its initially precarious power position and to decrease the TAF's influence over Turkish politics. This linkage between the domestic and the regional dimensions cannot be emphasized enough as it provides the government with a powerful narrative.

Second, this narrative is the basis for the emanation of a kind of "Ankara Moment" (Bank and Karadag 2013). To repeat, this has less to do with Turkish purely domestic developments and more to do with the state of political, economic, and cultural affairs in the Middle East and Turkey's relational position in the region. Turkey's positioning can be easily contrasted with other countries' lack of political freedom and macroeconomic imbalances, their citizens' everyday encounters and disillusionments with corrupt and ineffective state apparatuses, and the obvious contradictions between Muslim and Arab national identities on the one hand and geopolitical realities on the other. At a time when a new regional public sphere has been in the making, such grievances have been increasingly debated. This has allowed for the inclusion of the Turkish model, which addressed the social and identity conflicts attributed to the authoritarian Kemalist legacies of the country, in these discussions; hence, the growing acceptance of and support for Turkey as a regional actor whose approach differs radically from that of global and other rival regional actors in their attempts to become dominant. Neither Iran nor Saudi Arabia can credibly act as defenders of the Muslim voice as the AKP has done domestically.

However, we should not overlook the fact that this regional attribution of values has occurred only in a partial and limited way. The idealist assumption that the AKP successfully manages to combine Islam, democracy, and neoliberal capitalism underplays the serious political

de-liberalization trend since the 2009 municipal elections, escalating into the Gezi Park protests of May and June 2013 and the open power struggle with powerful Islamic Gülen movement (see section 5 below). Since then the government has fundamentally strained the notion of the rule of law by using the state's still-existing despotic powers against its enemies. The *Ergenekon* case was originally intended to uncover and dismantle Turkey's "deep state," an illicit network of paramilitaries and ultranationalists that is held responsible for political violence during the war against the PKK in the 1990s and for the murder of, among others, Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in 2007.[3] Yet, with the opening of the *Balyoz* case against members of the TAF who allegedly planned to overthrow the government in 2003 and with new waves of arrests since 2009—which have included Kurdish and Turkish political activists, journalists, and professors—the long-standing Turkish tradition of politicizing the judiciary to silence any form of political opposition appears to have been upheld, its most recent victims being Gülenist judges, prosecutors, and policemen.

Thus, the AKP itself is not living up to the expectations for a democratic Turkey that it stirred in 2007 when making concrete plans to devise a new, democratic constitution and in 2009 when announcing the Kurdish, or democratic, opening that was intended to settle the decades-long Kurdish issue. The nonfulfillment of its liberalizing mandate indicates that the AKP's independent action capacity may have been an unforeseen consequence of the capture and imprisonment of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, which represented only a short-term solution to the country's Kurdish problem. Since the conflict remilitarized in 2007, despite the limited cultural reforms to liberalize the public use of the Kurdish language, the AKP has been faced with the dilemma of how to solve the issue without giving in to more nationalist movements and parties such as the hypernationalist MHP (*Milliyetci Hareket Partisi*). At any rate, the political de-liberalization trend has diminished Turkey's symbolic power in the Middle East, since Turkey is about to lose its unique status as a Muslim democracy in the region and since its failure, so far, to credibly deal with the Kurdish issue domestically will constrain its foreign policy moves in the Middle East.

5 After the Arab Revolts: New Challenges for Turkey's Regional Power Status

The example of Turkey could be easily appropriated in the Middle East to juxtapose it with the economic weaknesses, rigid discourses, and authoritarian politics in Arab states and societies. During the Arab revolts, which started in Tunisia in December 2010 and then quickly

spread to most other Arab countries in early 2011, exactly these features of authoritarian-corrupt practices, the broader socioeconomic malaise, and the exclusionary discourses were the main targets of the protestors. Against the background of the developments of Arab revolts, this final section tries to answer the following two questions: How did the Arab revolts change AKP Turkey's position in and positioning vis-à-vis the Middle East? Did the effects of Arab revolts reinforce Turkey's regional power status or did they rather weaken it?

Like for most observers, the Arab revolts came as a surprise also for Turkish elites. Prime Minister Erdoğan and his government had to figure out quickly as to how to deal with the various uprisings in their neighborhood and they faced new and immediate challenges to maintain their newly gained regional power status. In the very beginning of the Arab revolts in January and February 2011, the ousting of the authoritarian presidents Ben Ali in Tunisia and, especially, Mubarak in Egypt worked in Turkey's favor. Prime Minister Erdoğan was the first leader of a powerful state to openly side with the demonstrators on Tahrir Square in Cairo, calling Hosni Mubarak to step down on February 1. Over the months, the reform in political processes also contributed to Turkey's soft power in the Middle East, as moderate Islamists not only in Tunisia (an-Nahda) and Egypt (Muslim Brothers) but also in Morocco (*Parti de la Justice et du Développement*, PJD) and later in Syria (Muslim Brothers) referred to the AKP as a positive point of reference for their own democratic claims and self-ascriptions.

Complications in the attempt to act as transformational regional power and symbol of "democratizing force" emerged already for Turkey in Libya and Syria in February and March 2011. In both cases, the AKP government had, on the one hand, considerable economic interests and, on the other, the respective uprisings quickly transformed into full-fledged civil wars as a consequence of massive regime repression and the ensuing militarization of the opposition. Concerning the "Libyan Revolt," AKP Turkey's position was meandering in the spring of 2011: Turkey's zero problems approach vis-à-vis the authoritarian regime of Colonel Gaddafi before the Arab revolts resulted in contracts for Turkish construction, tourism, energy, and retail businesses, which also meant that circa twenty-five thousand Turkish citizens were in Libya at the time when the uprising started in the eastern part of the country in February 2011. Therefore, one motive for the AKP government was to ensure that the Turkish citizens could safely leave Libya, a process that was finished by late February. At the same time, as a NATO member, Turkey could not openly turn against the calls of the French, British, and gradually also US governments to militarily support the anti-Gaddafi rebels. Only in early May 2011, that is over six weeks after the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1973, which provided NATO with a mandate to establish

in no-fly zone in Libya, did Prime Minister Erdoğan openly call for the ousting of Colonel Gaddafi. Between February and May 2011, Turkey's shifting positions were criticized by the Libyan and other Arab oppositions and for the first time in a long while Turkish flags were burned in an Arab country, symbolizing the challenge to AKP Turkey's soft-power assets.

While the "Libya problem" was still rather quickly solved, despite the already emerging challenges, with the relatively early victory of rebel groups and the quick military support of NATO members, the "Syrian Revolt" has proved much more difficult to handle for Turkey. Sharing a border of circa 800 kilometers, Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davotuğlu had made neighboring Syria the cornerstone of their Middle East policy in the years prior to the Arab revolts, culminating in joint cabinet meetings in 2010. When the uprising started in Syria in the southern city of Dara'a in mid-March 2011, Turkey initially kept a rather low profile, assuming—falsely, in hindsight—that they would subside again rather quickly. It was only when the Syrian security forces massively repressed the largely nonviolent protests, which quickly spread to other parts of Syria, and when President Bashar al-Assad gave his uncompromising speech on March 30 that Foreign Minister Davotuğlu traveled to Damascus to mediate. Over the coming months, Davutoğlu undertook a number of further mediation attempts in the unfolding Syrian crisis, which quickly militarized, regionalized, and internationalized, but to no avail: after six hours of talks in early August 2011, Davutoğlu left Damascus empty-handed. And from then on, the Turkish position vis-à-vis the Syrian government also officially changed: Ankara has openly called for regime change in Syria. Already, prior to fall 2011, AKP Turkey had been involved on the side of the Syrian opposition. First, it supported the establishment of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which declared its existence on Turkish territory on July 25, 2011. Second, it hosted other opposition activities by providing refuge to activists and by organizing conferences. Here, the strong connections between AKP elites and members of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood were of particular importance. Finally, early on, Turkey has also accepted Syrian refugees to cross the border.

In spite of Turkey's 180 degrees shift of position, turning "from friend to foe" of the Syrian regime, the AKP government has not managed to decisively influence the situation on the ground in Syria in the first three years of the conflict (see also the contribution to this volume by Meliha Altunışık). Without intending to underestimate Turkey's role as a conduit for weapons transfers to the opposition often financed for by Qataris and Saudis, Turkey has, by summer 2014, largely refrained from getting more directly involved militarily in Syria. This has to do, first, with the complexities of Kurdish politics emanating from Syria, which might

potentially backfire to the Turkish domestic arena. Second, a Turkish military intervention in Syria is very unpopular domestically, including among AKP supporters.

If the Arab revolts present a challenge that Turkey may only indirectly influence to maintain its regional power ambitions, the Gezi Park protests in May and June 2013 and the ensuing power struggle with the Gülen movement can be regarded as even more threatening to the AKP as both directly undermine the party's self-ascribed hegemony in domestic politics. To repeat, in June 2011, the AKP had finally succeeded in disempowering most, if not all, rival domestic power contenders. The TAF has been brought under effective civilian control. The Kemalist judiciary, which aimed to contain AKP elites in the 2008 party closure trial in the Constitutional Court, was later reined in by the constitutional amendments expanding the number of Constitutional Court judges. These amendments have been successfully implemented in a nationwide referendum on September 12, 2010, which demonstrated, again, the general public support for the AKP's ambitious reform projects.

Afterward, a new outside-in challenge came with the Arab revolts. How would Turkey be able to cope with the Kurdish issue at a time when the renewed, long-term aspirations to realizing Kurdish independence across southeast Turkey, northern Iraq, and northern Syria again loomed on the horizon? The AKP was aware of this dilemma that limited its action capacities. However, even here, concerning the most-contested political issue in recent decades in Turkey, the government could win time with the historic agreement with the PKK on March 21, 2013.[4]

Thus, in spring 2013, all seemed to work again in favor of the government. However, this drastically changed by the end of May 2013, when a group of activists organized a demonstration in Istanbul's Gezi Park to protest the municipality's plans to demolish the park in its current form and have a shopping mall and a neo-Ottoman military barrack erected there. While public discontent with urban restructuring projects, gentrification pressures, and the AKP's "bulldozer neo-liberalism" (Lovering and Türkmen 2011) was not new, the aggressive response against the demonstrations by the authorities and police forces triggered unseen and unforeseen mass protests across Turkey's urban centers against the AKP elites and in particular, Prime Minister Erdoğan. By April 2014, police violence and the hardline stance of the government against the claims of protestors left 11 dead and more than 8,000 injured protestors. After the violent clearing of the park and Taksim square, waves of arrests have begun with the alleged intent to identify those responsible for attacks against policemen and for allegedly inciting hatred and rebellion.

While it is too early to interpret the midterm implications of the Gezi Park protests and the ensuing domestic power struggle for Turkey's internal and regional politics, what has become clear is that AKP power will

likely not continue to dominate domestic politics in an uncontested manner. At the same time, it seems clear that AKP elites are willing to resort to the same repressive tactics as, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and, after the coup d'état of July 2013, the country's military, which obviously has a disenchanting effect on Arab publics (see also the chapters by El-Labbad and Monier and Ranko in this volume). Thus, the external appropriation of what Turkey can mean for Arab discourses will surely change in the months and years to come.

Thus, even if the AKP wins the parliamentary elections in 2015, its hegemony is challenged as it has visibly demonstrated the dark side of Turkish democracy. For the first time since its ascent to power in 2003, it has to live up to its democratic credentials in a regional context of, however limited, liberalized politics. Finally, if the AKP was the first political party to legitimize its power via foreign and regional policies, then it is also the first party that may delegitimize its domestic position via regional policy failures. The discontent arising from the terrorist bombing of Reyhanli on May 11, 2013, that killed 51 people hints in such a direction.

In sum, Turkey became a regional power in the Middle East before the Arab revolts, profiting from the interplay of AKP's hegemonic status domestically and very favorable conditions in the region after 2007. However, since the Arab revolts started in 2010–2011, AKP Turkey's regional position has been massively weakened. Like its pre-2011 rise in Middle Eastern regional politics, the AKP Turkey's drastic loss of influence post-2011 is due to a combination of unforeseen developments in the Middle East, primarily the war in neighboring Syria and the ousting and persecution of the allied Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt post-July 2013, and the twin domestic challenges emanating from a frustrated urban population (the Gezi protest movements) and a disgruntled former elite ally (the Gülen movement). Against this backdrop, to evaluate whether Turkey will in the near future completely lose its regional power status in the Middle East or whether it will make a successful comeback will most likely be determined by the interplay between its domestic political economy and the still-volatile regional dynamics.

Notes

* This chapter is a revised and updated version of Bank and Karadag (2013).

1. The trade figures are taken from TÜIK, the Turkish Statistical Institute. http://www.tuik.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist, accessed July 2, 2013.
2. For detailed figures on Turkish-Arab trade in the 2000s, cf. Tür (2011).

3. For a recent account of the Turkish "deep state," cf. Söyler (2013).
4. The March 21, 2013, agreement was historic because it was directly negotiated between the Turkish government and the PKK's imprisoned leader, Abdullah Öcalan. If fully implemented, the agreement would include a complete cease-fire and the withdrawal of PKK fighters from Turkish territories. Subsequently, the Turkish state would be obliged to introduce further political reforms bettering the situation of the Kurdish population. While the PKK withdrew its fighters from Turkish territory, the state did not initiate further reforms. In many ways, the peace process never really started.

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CHAPTER 7

Turkey's "Return" to the Middle East

Meliha Benli Altunışık

Turkey's potential as a regional power in the Middle East has been discussed since the 1990s. This was in contrast with Turkey's historical reluctance to get deeply involved with this region. This refluctance stemmed from not only Turkey's own concerns about "being dragged into this conflict-ridden" region, but also the low level of acceptance of Turkey in the Middle East as a regional actor. The situation has changed significantly especially since the 2000s due to both actor-specific and structural factors. The coming of power of Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey in 2002 and the transformation of Turkish politics and economy coinciding with the evolution of regional politics in post-2003 Iraq War era led to Turkey's actorness in the region. In parallel Turkey's attractiveness increased among both the public and the policy makers in the Middle East, albeit for different reasons. The eruption of the Arab uprisings in 2011, however, once again severely limited Turkey's influence and power in the region, as well as tainting its positive image.

The analysis of Turkey as a regional power in the Middle East raises important issues. Not having a clear geographical reference, the Middle East as a region has been difficult to define. The regional identities of countries like Turkey further accentuate the boundary problem for this region. Turkey has not always been seen as part of the regional politics and thus a member of this region. A related issue has been the way Turkey itself has constructed its regional identity. For a long time in the republican history Turkey did not identify itself as a Middle Eastern actor and aimed to be a part of the Western state system. Even when Turkey accepted its Middle Eastern identity this has always occurred in the context of defining Turkey as having multiple

identities. In fact, together with a handful of countries in the world, Turkey defies regional categorizations. As such Turkey is called as a "cusp state" that straddles different regions physically and ideationally (Altunişik 2014). In short, the fuzziness of the boundaries of the Middle East as a region and Turkey's multiple regional belongings and activism present a challenge to analyze Turkey as a regional power in the Middle East.

The Middle East itself has been a region where generally multiple regional powers have been competing for power and influence and yet none of them, except may be for brief periods, have established a clear hegemony over the region. Thus, Turkey's rise as a regional power has been occurring in the context of such a highly competitive and shifting environment. This meant not only that Turkey, although it has been unable to establish a hegemonic position, continued to be one of the regional powers especially since the end of the Cold War, but also that Turkey's regional powerness has been quite sensitive to constantly changing regional landscape. The context-specific nature of Turkey as a regional power has been exposed at times of extreme regional turbulence or fragmentation, such as the evolution of the regional system right after the Iraq War of 2003 or the Arab uprisings.

In addition to regional context, domestic politics in the regional powers may also influence their positions, as they may affect not only regional powers' will for leadership but also their capacities. For instance, although the governments that came to power in Turkey since the end of the Cold War have played with the idea of Turkey as a regional power in its surrounding regions, only the AKP which has been ruling Turkey as majority governments since 2002 has pursued regional activism in the Middle East quite intensely in its foreign policy. This activism has developed in parallel with a construction of Turkey as a regional power by the governing elites. Similarly, a country's domestic assets, such as stability, astuteness of its political system, and economic successes contribute to its regional power status. Thus, in addition to sensitivity to the impact of regional changes, regional powerness is also responsive to domestic factors.

This chapter explores Turkey's regional power status and its evolution through four criteria that are used by Daniel Flemes (2007: 11): Formulation of the claim to leadership; possession of the necessary power resources; employment of foreign policy instruments; and acceptance of the leadership role by the third states.[1] The first three criteria relate to the regional power itself, whereas the fourth focuses on the regional and major extra-regional actors. I will expand the discussion on the region, however, beyond the responses of the actors and discuss the evolution of regional politics, its structural opportunities and constraints in effecting the rise of a regional power.

1 Emergence of Turkey as a Regional Power

The end of the Cold War contributed to the emergence of regional powers by relaxing the bipolar alignment structures and increasing their room for maneuver (Lake and Morgan 1997; Buzan and Waever 2003). Being part of the Western alliance during the Cold War and thus engaged with the world mostly through the lens of bipolarity, Turkey found itself witnessing a reemergence of new regions, such as the Balkans and Caspian region around itself and faced with an evolving Middle East in the aftermath of the Gulf War of 1991. As a result, Turkey began to emphasize regional interests rather than the global ones. Turkey's foreign policy started to be characterized by, what Sabri Sayarı (2000: 170) called, "assertive activism."

Has Turkey's activism in the Middle East in the 1990s resulted in Turkey's emergence as a regional power? I will discuss the issue through the four criteria identified above:

Claim to leadership: Throughout the 1990s Turkey did at times make claims to regional leadership but these have not been articulated clearly and consistently. Furthermore, Turkey's political leaders largely declared such a role in the Balkans and more so among the Turkic Republics of Central Asia, whereas the Middle East was less emphasized.

Turgut Özal, who served as a prime minister in 1983–1989, and the president from 1989 till his death in 1993, sought to make Turkey an "assertive regional power" (Kosebalaban 2011: 122). The Democratic Left Party (DSP) of Bülent Ecevit that came to power in 1997–2002 only as coalition partners in several governments, also advocated a "region-centered foreign policy" that aimed Turkey's active engagement in the neighborhoods around it with the recognition that Turkey is affected by all neighborhood region's problems and also can affect the developments in these regions. Ismail Cem, who served as foreign minister in those coalition governments, for instance, claimed that: "At the dawn of a new millennium, we are confident that Turkey will have a leadership role in her wider region. She will continue to be the bridge, the communicator, and the peacemaker" (Cem 2001: 59).

In addition to political leaders, the military, which was a dominant actor also in the foreign policy field in the 1990s, emphasized Turkey's role as a regional power. The Joint Chief of Staff Hilmi Özkök in a speech referred to a power vacuum "in the new world order that emerged after the end of the Cold War" which "increased global uncertainty and geopolitical vacuum" in the Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East. According to General Özkök, "Turkey is taking place in the center of this newly emerging political geography as a regional power."[2]

Possession of the necessary power resources: As to military capabilities Turkey, a NATO member, was one of the most powerful states in the

Table 7.1 Military expenditure in constant (1988–2011) USD million

1988	**1989**	**1990**	**1991**	**1992**	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**
9475	19.966	13.246	13.607	14.328	15.833	15.483	15.905	17.808	18.553
1998	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**
19.441	21.464	20.773	19.043	20.261	18.287	16.689	15.799	16.511	15.924
2008	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**					
16.119	17.275	16.976	17.690	17.906					

Source: SIPRI Yearbook, www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/.../milexdata1988-2012v2.xsls

Middle East in the 1990s. Turkey's military capabilities were accentuated as a result of the military modernization program that was adopted in the late 1980s. The result of this policy was a significant increase in Turkey's military spending (Table 7.1). Thus, Turkey could not use the peace dividend due to the end of the Cold War as it was concerned with the instabilities around it, but also as a result of its aspirations for a regional power.[3] As a result, between 1988 and 1999, Turkey's military spending increased more than fourfold, except for a brief drop in 1994 due to the economic crisis. Spending on military equipment, on the other hand, increased more than five times (Akça 2010: 17–18).

In addition to its military power, Turkey was presented as an important actor in the surrounding regions also due to its demography and strategic location as a gateway between the East and the West. During the 1990s Turkey was also characterized as an energy bridge, acting as a transit point for the oil and natural gas resources of the Persian Gulf and the Caspian regions. The attempts for the realization of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline became an example of Turkey's rising importance in global and regional energy politics, so as Turkey's aspirations to become not just a transit country but also an energy hub. Thus, these capabilities increased Turkey's weight in the surrounding regions, including the Middle East.

Nevertheless, in the 1990s Turkey was weaker economically as it faced a severe economic crisis in 1993–1994 and in response started to implement an IMF austerity program. Furthermore, the domestic political system was in constant crisis in the 1990s. From 1989 to 2002 Turkey had 13 governments, some of them staying in power for less than a year, and 15 foreign ministers. Although Turkey was presented as an "island of stability" and rightly so in comparison with the instabilities in its surrounding regions, it faced its own problems due to rising challenges of the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

In the 1990s in addition to its material capabilities Turkey also tried to use ideational power. Particularly for the newly independent states in

the post-Soviet space with a Muslim population, Turkey was presented as a "model," a secular, democratic, and Western-oriented country with a Muslim population. However, Turkey's normative power was weakest in the Middle East as during this period Turkey had problematic relationship with key Middle Eastern powers and its alignment with Israel in the mid-1990s further undermined its position. More significantly, in the Arab world negative views of Turkey's secularism and what is perceived as its suppression of its Islamic identity continued to prevail even among secular circles and thus what Turkey represented was seen irrelevant to the Arab political trajectory.

Employment of foreign policy instruments: In the 1990s Turkey mostly used hard power in the Middle East. Alliances, threat to use force, interventions, and sanctions constituted important tools in Turkey's foreign policy toward the region.

During most of the decade Turkey perceived the Middle East as a source of threats to its national security. Post–Gulf War developments in Iraq heightened fears in Ankara about a possible spillover impact on Turkey's Kurdish problem (Park 2005). The already problematic Turkish-Syrian relationship deteriorated still further amid tension over Syrian support to the PKK and over Syrian access to the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Furthermore, by putting the water issue on the agenda of the Arab League meetings Syria succeeded in converting it from a bilateral to a Turkish-Arab conflict.[4] Turkish-Iranian relations were similarly sour during this period. The two countries accused each other of meddling in internal affairs, and engaged in strategic competition in Central Asia and the Caucasus as well as in Iraq.

The Turkish army conducted periodic military incursions into northern Iraq in pursuit of the PKK and also collaborated with the United States in sustaining the post–Gulf War regime imposed on Iraq. Militarily, Ankara aligned itself with Israel, involving strategic and intelligence cooperation as well as permission for the Israeli air force to conduct military exercises in Turkish airspace. In October 1998 Turkey also threatened to use force against Syria if it continued to support the PKK.

Acceptance of the leadership role by the third states: As it is explained above, Turkey was not a benign regional power in the 1990s. Turkey's militant activism was a result of a perception of threat and vulnerability on the part of Ankara. Yet this was not the way Turkey was perceived especially in the Arab world. Contrary to its self-image of vulnerability, Turkey was seen as a bully adopting assertive policies in the region (El-Shazly and Hinnebusch 2002: 78–80). From this perspective, Turkey was trying to control the Arab world, as evinced by the water conflict, its incursions into Iraq, and its alignment with Israel and the United States.

As a result, although Turkey's power and influence were recognized in the region and its policies had consequences for regional politics; its involvement was not seen in a positive light by most of the countries in the region. In fact, when the regional countries engaged in a debate about the future of a new regional order in the post–Cold War and Gulf War era, Turkey was not part of the debate (El Sayid Selim 2009). In short, throughout most of the 1990s, mutual perceptions of threat and distrust characterized the relations between Turkey and the Middle East.

Unlike Turkey's problematic relations with major regional countries, Ankara's increasing activism in the Middle East was welcomed by the United States, the major extra-regional power that was enjoying its "unipolar moment" in global politics. Turkey actively cooperated with Washington in its Iraq policy through Operation Provide Comfort and the United States encouraged and supported Turkey's alignment with Israel. However, Turkey's close relations with the United States became yet another factor limiting Turkey's acceptance in the Arab world as Washington became largely unpopular due to its Iraq policy as well as being accused for the faltering Arab-Israeli peace process.

To conclude, in the 1990s the state actors were not only grappling with the question of finding a new place for Turkey in the post-bipolar world, but also were aware of the opportunities and challenges that Turkey's evolving neighborhood was presenting Turkey as a regional power. In fact, with its population, size, location, military power, stability amidst unstable regions as well as "political, economic and military experiences it acquired during the Cold War" Turkey had aspirations to be a regional power in a constantly shifting world in the immediate aftermath of the end of bipolarity (Sander 1994: 419). However, this claim, which was not pursued consistently, was also the weakest in the Middle East. Turkey's involvement in this region was largely limited to threat perceptions emanating from the Kurdish issue. In response Turkey employed largely hard power tools to deal with what it perceived as threats coming from the Middle East. Furthermore, the possibility of Turkey as a regional power was hampered by Turkey's own domestic economic and political weaknesses, as well as its lack of legitimacy in the eyes of most of regional countries. The regional material and ideational context was limiting Turkey's regional powerness.

2 Turkey as Regional Power in the Middle East Under AKP

After the coming of power of AKP in 2002 Turkey's activism in the Middle East gained momentum. The AKP made the Middle East as one of the priority regions in its foreign policy, and thus, Turkey has

involved in this region more than any other time in the republican history. Furthermore, Turkey's involvement and leadership role was linked to the AKP government's desire to make Turkey as a "global power," a linkage that is very much present also in the other so-called emerging powers.

Formulation of the claim to leadership: Under the AKP Turkey not only got involved more extensively in the Middle East, but also clearly formulated its claim to leadership in the region. The AKP governments' claim to leadership in the Middle East was made through several concepts and ideas that were developed mainly by Ahmet Davutoğlu, who is considered as the architect of AKP foreign policy. A former academic Davutoğlu's ideas were influential since the beginning as he started to serve as the chief advisor to the prime minister, but his stamp in foreign policy became much clear after he became the foreign minister in May 2009.

One such idea has been related to the importance of Turkey's historical and cultural ties with this region. Such ties were used to justify Turkey's involvement in the Middle East and argued to give Turkey a responsibility for the maintenance of peace and stability in this region. Such claims of influence over the regions that was once ruled by the Ottoman Empire led to criticisms of Neo-Ottomanism in AKP's Middle East policy, a claim that was renounced by Davutoğlu.[5] This, however, did not prevent the AKP from making references to the Ottoman past. For instance, while referring to conflict over Jerusalem, Davutoğlu (2001: 333) claimed that "no political problem in the region can be resolved without utilizing Ottoman archives". As such, therefore, the Ottoman past was invoked not only to justify Turkey's involvement in the region, but also to go beyond stronger relations with the regional countries to an implicit claim of natural leadership role. This constituted a double edged sword for the AKP government as Turkey had to stay away from clear references to the Ottoman Empire as that would invoke criticisms in the Arab world (see: Altunişik 2009: 169–192).[6]

Davutoğlu also came up with fresh ideas such as "zero problems with neighbors" as part of this claim. This concept not only allowed the AKP to criticize previous policy, but also helped to reframe Turkey as a constructive actor in its neighborhood including the Middle East. Similarly, the AKP government used liberal ideas to build itself as a regional power, a new kind that would now be acceptable to the regional countries. Thus, win-win was emphasized in Turkey's engagement with the regional countries; overall Turkey was able to build a vision where all would benefit from regional stability and prosperity and that Turkey was working to achieve exactly that. In fact, Davutoğlu (2007: 31) stated the interrelated nature of Turkey's interest with the interest of the region when he argued that Turkey wanted to "guarantee its own security and stability by taking on a more active, constructive role to provide order, stability and security in its environs".

Another idea that Davutoğlu put forward for Turkey's role was to brand Turkey as an "order setter country" (*düzen kurucu ülke*). The AKP government has been clear about its willingness to assume the role of a stabilizer in the region. Finally, Turkey was eager to play the role of a rule maker in regional economics, promoting intense regional economic ties and interdependence.

In the claim for a leadership role as defined through these key notions, the implicit target for Turkey's sphere of influence seemed to be the Arab world. This was a geography that in fact two emerging regional powers, namely Turkey and Iran, were vying to influence, albeit through very different sets of policy tools.

Possession of the necessary power resources: During this period Turkey acquired new power resources besides the already existing ones, namely demography, location, and military power. The continuing emphasis on acquiring military power was rather interesting as the AKP government did not underline military power in its foreign policy. Yet, Turkey's military spending continued to increase in nominal terms during this period (Akça 2010).

In addition, domestic stability and growing economic power contributed to Turkey's regional power status. In the early 2000s Turkey's political and economic transformation hastened. The AKP government continued and accelerated the EU reforms that had already begun under the previous government. Furthermore, defining itself as an anti-status quo party and relying on its increasing public support as was demonstrated in consecutive elections, the AKP could engage in major reforms in more sensitive issues such as civil-military relations and the Kurdish issue. Despite continuing difficulties in consolidating democracy in Turkey, the political changes especially during the early years of AKP rule not only increased Turkey's self-confidence but also created an image of a country that was able to solve its own problems, and thus contributed to Turkey's regional power status in the Arab world which was beset by political problems.

Turkey's economic successes led to similar consequences. After coming out of a deep economic crisis of 2000–2001 due to the economic program that started to be implemented by the previous government, the AKP period has been characterized by high growth rates that led to important gains in income. In the same period, foreign direct investment (FDI) rose from just over USD 1 billion in the early 2000s to an average of USD 13 billion in the 2008–2012 period.[7] As a result, there has been a rapid growth of the industrial and service sectors which have also become highly integrated with the global economy. These developments were summarized in a recent World Bank report as follows:

> Turkey's rapid growth and development over the last decade is one of the success stories of the global economy. Turkey's GDP has

> tripled in nominal U.S. dollar terms in that time. Today, Turkey is an upper-middle-income country with a population of 75 million and a GDP of US$786 billion, making it the 18th largest economy in the world.[8]

Despite these successes important challenges remain, such as the risks of volatility, the challenge of increasing the productivity growth; low savings, inequality remaining higher than in many European countries; and the so-called middle-income trap. Yet, overall strengthening of Turkey's economy, also relative to the other regional powers, increased Turkey's influence in the region.

As a result of these domestic transformations during this period Turkey's ideational power in the Middle East also became relevant. The coming of power of AKP, which was established through a split of the Turkey's Islamist movement, to some extent undermined the clichés about Turkey in the region. The parliament's refusal to participate in the Iraq War of 2003 and AKP government's increasing criticism of Israel after the Lebanon War of 2006 but more so after the Gaza War (2008–2009) increased Turkey's normative power.

Employment of foreign policy instruments: The AKP government moved away from using realist tools of foreign policy that largely characterized Turkey's engagement with the Middle East in the 1990s. During this period, in addition to strengthening bilateral ties, Turkey sought to deepen regional cooperation and thereby enhance regional security. Responsibility for regional security and for the maintenance of order in the region was exemplified through Turkey's involvement in UNIFIL II and launching of Iraq's Neighbors Initiative.

Ankara also actively engaged in mediation activities. Turkey's involvement in resolving Lebanese domestic crises, its attempts to mediate between Israel and Syria and to achieve Palestinian reconciliation, its efforts to facilitate the participation of Iraqi Sunni groups in the 2005 parliamentary elections, and its involvement in the Iranian nuclear issue are just examples of this policy. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu went one step further in his opening speech at the Third Ambassadors' Conference entitled "Visionary Diplomacy: Global and Regional Order from Turkey's Perspective" in January 2011 when he said that Turkey should not only get involved in the management and resolution of existing conflicts, but it should implement a "proactive peace diplomacy" that aims to take measures before crises emerge and escalate. This, he claimed, meant that Turkey should act as a "wise country" and be considered as such.[9]

During this period economic relations have boomed with the region as a whole. Turkey launched an initiative to set up a free trade area with

Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Policy of visa liberalization with regional countries aimed to facilitate free movement of people.

In sum, the government claimed that Ankara's proactive foreign policy in the Middle East was emphasizing principles of "security for all, high-level political dialogue, economic integration and interdependence, and multicultural co-existence."[10] The adoption of a new language and diplomacy toward the region aimed to frame Turkey as a civil and economic power. Thus, foreign policy has been used as an important source of Turkey's soft power.

Acceptance of the leadership role by third states: A major change in Turkey's regional power status during this period between AKP's coming to power and the Arab uprisings was the level of acceptance that Turkey in general enjoyed in the Middle East. One way of assessing Turkey's attraction is to look at polling data measuring different aspects of Turkey's popularity in the region. Turkish think tank TESEV has conducted two sets of public opinion polls in the region[11] before the Arab uprisings that can be used as a good measure to determine the attractiveness of Turkey in terms of its soft power resources. Both surveys not only showed a very positive view of Turkey but also an increase in Turkey's popularity. In 2010 survey Turkey was the most positively regarded country in Jordan, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon and Iran; it was so in Syria and Saudi Arabia after these countries themselves. The surveys also demonstrated that Turkey was perceived as a major actor in the region whose opinions are listened to and which has influence. There is clear support for Turkey's mediation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (overall 78%) and there seems to be a perception that Turkey has a positive impact on peace in the Middle East (overall 76%). We see the highest percentages in the Palestinian territories (77%), Jordan (76%), Syria (75%), and Lebanon (71%) in thinking that Turkey could be a "model" in the Middle East, whereas the regional average is 66 percent. According to the survey, Turkey was also seen as a successful example of coherence of Islam and democracy; again higher percentages than the regional average in the above listed countries. Finally, Turkey was identified as the strongest economy in the Middle East by the respondents in all countries, except in Iran where Turkey came behind Iran and Saudi Arabia.

All this shows a big shift in how Turkey is perceived among the public in most of the region. This juxtaposes dramatically with a survey that Zogby International conducted in March–April 2002.[12] In that survey, the respondents' attitudes toward Turkey were found to be very negative, coming only after the United Kingdom, the United States, and Israel in the list.

In addition to the public, during this period Turkey's attractiveness also increased among the opinion makers in the region as well. Turkey became popular with the opposition groups in the Arab countries, be it Islamists or liberal, albeit for different reasons (Altunişik 2010).

As to the regional states, due to changes in regional politics Turkey became much more acceptable. 2003 Iraq War altered the balances in the region by ultimately weakening the United States, strengthening Iran, making sectarianism part of the strategic game and leading to increased polarization and fragmentation in the region. In such an environment Turkey's policies and its emphasis on engagement made Turkey welcomed in the region. Each actor had their own specific motives, like ending their isolation (Syria, Iran) or balancing their adversaries (like the GCC) and yet all perceived Turkey's involvement with the region to a large extent positively, despite continuing to have their ambiguities about it (Abou-El-Fadl 2012: 231–257).

In sum, Turkey became a regional power especially after the mid-2000s. As Bank and Karadag argue, only then domestic and regional developments created what they called an "Ankara moment" (Bank and Karadag 2013). The claim for increasing relations with and leadership in the region was there from the beginning. Through conceptualizations of Davutoğlu, the AKP government clearly developed core ideas of its engagement in the Middle East and initiated policies accordingly. Turkey's political and economic transformation became its additional assets. These developments increased Turkey's attractiveness in the region during this period. The regional landscape and the engagement of extra-regional actors once again created the structural context that enabled Turkey's rising regional power status. The declining influence of the United States left a vacuum for regional countries to fill. The traditional Arab regional powers faced limitations. Egypt under Mubarak had increasingly lost its regional clout, Saudi Arabia felt threatened by Iran and overall the Arab world suffered from fragmentation. Turkey, in this regional context, juxtaposed itself against Iran as a constructive regional power using soft power tools to increase its influence in the region. Although Turkey was not necessarily a regional hegemon as regards to its military and economic power

Table 7.2 Main indicators—2011

	Turkey	*Egypt*	*Iran*	*Saudi Arabia*	*Israel*
GNI per capita	17.070	6.440	10.320*	25.010	28.070
Population	73m	79m	75m	27m	7m
GDP (current USD)	7.7478E+11	2.36E+11	5.1406E+11	5.7682E+11	2.4293E+11
GDP growth (annual %)	8.7	1.7	1.8*	6.7	4.8

*Data available for 2009.
Source: The World Bank.

(Table 7.2), it became the only country that combined respectable capabilities with normative power, having a story to tell as "a democratic, very mildly Islamist-led country experiencing a stunning economic boom" (Marks 2013). Ironically at least some parts of this story began to unravel as the Arab uprisings that shook the region began.

3 Challenges to Turkey's Regional Power Status After the Arab Uprisings

The uprisings against the regimes that started in Tunisia and quickly spread to several Arab countries had the potential to strengthen Turkey as a regional power. Turkey, which had become highly popular in the Arab world, was poised to benefit from a possible move toward more accountable governments. On the other hand, there was also the challenge of increasing instability. After all, Turkey had already established quite good relations with most of the existing regimes. Yet, AKP government decided that it could establish much better relations with the parties that would come to power as a result of elections and this would put Turkey at a clearly advantageous position vis-à-vis other regional powers. Furthermore, the government perceived change inevitably and adopted its policies accordingly. Thus, after a brief period of hesitation Turkey decided to side with the opposition groups and began to adopt a robust discourse of "supporting the people." Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu characterized the process of political change as inevitable and irreversible and argued that "at this process, the place of Turkey is with the peoples of the region. Turkey will stand side by side with the peoples, their legitimate aspirations and work tirelessly for the realization of these aspirations in a stable and peaceful fashion."[13]

In short, Turkey's response to the Arab uprisings consisted mainly of four strategies: First, the government adopted a "pro-change" agenda and sided with the opposition. AKP governments' promotion of democracy, however, from the beginning suffered from important weaknesses. It coincided with increasing domestic criticisms of AKP government about slowing down of the democratization process in Turkey and even worse slipping to authoritarianism. This situation progressively undermined AKP government's pro-democracy stand in the region. Furthermore, AKP government's approach to democratization remained limited as it became clear that it espoused only a majoritarian form of democracy and focused only on electoral politics. These weaknesses were exposed more clearly during the Gezi protests in Turkey in the summer of 2013 and the government's crackdown of it.

Second, AKP government's strategy relied on the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab Spring countries. Electoral successes of Muslim Brotherhood

parties in these countries were perceived as an opportunity. Having grown out of Turkey's Islamist movement itself the AKP leadership historically had ties with Muslim Brotherhood movements. More importantly, however, the AKP with its own transformation to a "conservative democratic" party presented itself as a model to the transformation of the Muslim Brotherhood parties to work within a democratic system. In Egypt the AKP provided election advice to Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the party of the Brotherhood, especially during the presidential elections, mainly "to correct the image that the Muslim Brotherhood aims to monopolize political activity."[14] On their part, the Muslim Brotherhood parties also found making references to the AKP experience useful, to give the message to the West and to domestic groups concerned about their democratic credentials. The leader of Ennahda, Rached Ghannouchi in several occasions likened his party to the AKP and referred to his excellent relationship with Prime Minister Erdoğan.[15] Similarly, especially the younger members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt frequently referred to AKP, its electoral successes and economic achievements as a source of inspiration.[16] AKP's strategy of relying on Muslim Brotherhood parties was criticized by non-Islamists reformers in the Arab world. In the Syrian case, Turkey's reliance largely on Muslim Brotherhood in the opposition was particularly criticized as the Brotherhood was not as powerful in Syria as in other Arab countries. Yet this policy still seemed to give Turkey an upper hand as Muslim Brotherhood parties won electoral victories in the Arab Spring countries. However, with the coup in Egypt in the summer of 2013 AKP government lost an important ally.

Third, the AKP government sought a managed and stable transition in these countries, and thus provided several support to this process, including technical assistance, political advice, and economic help. Once Mohammed Morsi came to power, Turkey committed to provide Egypt USD 2 billion, both to finance infrastructure projects and to contribute to the foreign currency reserves.[17] Turkey's aid to Tunisia focused on administrative and civil infrastructure in 2012, whereas it emphasized social and educational infrastructure, productive sectors, police and security capacity building, and technical cooperation in 2013. In the meantime trade and investment relations between the two countries began to flourish. In Yemen and Libya as well Turkey provided humanitarian and institutional aid to help to build stability and institutions. Yet, the difficulties of the transition process even in countries like Tunisia and increased instability in Libya and Syria made clear the difficulties of achieving controlled transition.

Finally, as regards to the countries where the previous leaders were toppled Turkey eventually developed a policy of either building new ties (such as Egypt and Tunisia) or protecting the already established

relations (Libya and Yemen). Turkey, for instance, started to push for a new strategic partnership with Morsi's Egypt. This clearly has been a new element that emerged in response to changing regional political order in the Middle East in post–Arab uprisings. Davutoğlu stated, "For the regional balance of power, we want to have a strong, very strong Egypt. Some people may think Egypt and Turkey are competing. No. This is our strategic decision. We want a strong Egypt now" (Shadid 2011). Similarly, in December 2012 Turkey and Tunisia decided to establish a high-level strategic cooperation council.[18] However, the coup in Egypt and AKP government's response to it undermined Turkey-Egypt relations. In November 2013 Egypt announced that it will downgrade its diplomatic relations with Turkey.

The case of Syria, on the other hand, presented the most complex challenge. Syria was the cornerstone of Turkey's new Middle East policy. Turkey was able to turn its historically very problematic relationship with this country into a very cooperative one after the Adana agreement of 1998. Thus the uprising in Syria put Turkey in a very difficult position. Initially Turkish policy was to try to convince Bashar Assad to initiate necessary reforms.[19] Davutoğlu explained his failure to do that as follows:

> At the last meeting I had with Assad in August 2011, we agreed upon a 14-point plan. There I clearly told him the following: In the past, when many countries were putting pressure on you we sided with you. Today if such pressures existed, we would take your side. In the past, when you were confronted with those countries, as a neighboring country we stood by you. If one day you clash with your own people and say "either choose me or my people" and force us to make a choice, we would not hesitate even for a moment to choose the people of Syria, because the leaders are temporary and the people are eternal. That was our last meeting.

When it became clear that Turkey did not have any leverage over the Syrian regime after all, the AKP government drastically changed its policy and openly began to call for a regime change in Syria. Turkey started to support the opposition movement and allowed it to organize in its own territory under an umbrella called the Syrian National Council (SNC). However, the Syrian opposition continued to be divided and failed to come up with a common agenda which was inclusive of all groups. Turkey was especially accused of supporting the disproportionate representation of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in the Council. This perception prevented other actors to participate in this framework. On the other hand, Turkey also began to host and support the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA), a militarized group

fighting with the Assad regime. These policies made Turkey a party to the Syrian conflict.

The AKP government miscalculated the resilience of the Bashar regime. Looking at the examples in Tunisia, Egypt as well as Libya, they seemed to think that the regime in Syria will be toppled in a short time either by the people of Syria or through an outside intervention and thus wanted to take a clear and strong stance from the beginning to be able to play an active role in the process later as well. In fact, throughout 2011 both Erdoğan and Davutoğlu declared several times that Assad's days are numbered and predicted the fall of regime in a few months.

By the end of 2013 Turkey's policies toward the Middle East continued to face significant challenges. The post–Arab uprising era demonstrated the limits of Turkey's power in the region. Contrary to its claims, Turkey found out that it lacked the ability to bring order and stability to the region. Its policies were successfully challenged and undermined by other regional powers, especially by Iran in Syria and by Saudi Arabia in Egypt and even at times in Syria. Turkey's acceptance in the region began to decline. Turkey started to be seen as part of regional divisions. Finally, the problems in Turkey's democracy further undermined Turkey's image in the Arab world. The Gezi protests and the police crackdown on them were followed closely in the region. During Erdoğan's visit to Tunisia he was protested by about 2,000 demonstrators who wanted to show their solidarity with the protestors in Turkey (Marks 2013). Thus, as was the case in the previous period, both actor-specific and structural factors led to the decline of Turkey as a regional power.

4 Conclusions

Turkey as a cusp state has had multiple regional belongings. Yet it was only after the end of the Cold War and with the consequent regionalization of Turkey's foreign policy that the possibility of Turkey's regional power status emerged. This, however, raised the question of in which region Turkey would emerge as a regional power. Throughout most of the post–Cold War era Turkey simultaneously engaged in its surrounding neighborhoods and made claims for leadership in all. Yet since the rise of the AKP to power in 2002 Turkey has focused more on the Middle East vying for regional power status.

In the pre-Arab uprisings period Turkey demonstrated important elements of a regional power. The AKP, more than its predecessors, put forward a clear claim for regional leadership and developed concepts and policies toward this aim. During this period in addition to conventional sources of Turkey's power, Turkey's economic and political transformation also became part of its strength. The AKP government developed

a discourse of cooperation for mutual gain and relied on soft power tools. In doing so Turkey was constantly treading a fine line between frequent accusations of neo-Ottomanism and an image of a constructive actor. This is, however, a typical dilemma that is faced by regional powers and Turkey tried to manage it. Turkey also demonstrated two characteristics of regional powers that are identified by Martin Beck in his introductory chapter: First, it used its developing relations with the EU during that period as an asset. In fact, the start of the accession negotiations was hailed in the region and Turkey's possible membership in the EU was thought to have positive repercussions for the region as well. Second, in the international arena Turkey tried to develop a new role conception to itself as the defender of regional interests. Turkey's mediation efforts in the Iranian nuclear issue, its coleadership of Alliance of Civilization initiative, its proposals to reform international organizations to have representations from the Muslim world etc. can be seen as examples. Post-2003 evolution of Middle East regional system also provided opportunities for Turkey and the kind of policies it was implementing. Thus, Turkey emerged as a rising regional power prior to the Arab uprisings.

Yet, in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings Turkey failed to take the opportunities and its strategies were also limited by the intense regional competition which was at times also engaged by global powers. In fact, the new regional landscape exposed Turkey's limitations as a regional power, especially its capacity to effect the developments on the ground. Its attraction also waned due to domestic problems in the country. The accusations of increasing authoritarian tendencies of the AKP government and the corruption charges against it rapidly eroded Turkey's positive image in the region.

The Turkish case has demonstrated the possibilities and limits of a regional power in a highly competitive region like the Middle East with limited regional institutionalization and multipolarity. Furthermore, it has also showed the importance of domestic trajectory of regional powers in effecting their power and influence in the region. The proliferation of domestic problems in Turkey went in parallel with its deteriorating position in the region. Finally, the case of Turkey once again underlined the importance of regional actors' consent for an effective regional power status, whereas the limited importance of acceptance by extra-regional powers. The AKP government linked its attempts of redefining Turkey's domestic identity to its aim to reconstruct a new international identity that articulated closely with its regional power status in the Middle East. This was a major change in Turkey's foreign policy unlike the previous periods it was firmly defining Turkey in the Middle East context. The Arab uprisings have put an end to this project at least for now.

Notes

1. See, Meliha Benli Altunışık, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 27 (2005): 45–63, for a similar kind of classification in discussing Turkey as a "model" in the process of democratization in the Middle East. There I identified the will, capability, and acceptance as three aspects of Turkey's soft power.
2. http://www.haberler.com/org-ozkok-turkiye-bolgesel-bir-guc-olarak-haberi/
3. Turkey's increasing military spending during this period was also a response to increasing PKK challenge.
4. For Turkish-Syrian relations in the 1980s and 1990s see, for instance, Muhammed Muslih, "Syria and Turkey: Uneasy Relations," in H. J. Barkey (ed.), *Reluctant Neighbor* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996), 113–129; Robert Olson, "Turkey-Syria Relations since the Gulf War: Kurds and Water," *Middle East Policy*, 5, no. 2 (1997): 168–193.
5. "I Am Not a neo-Ottoman, Davutoğlu Says," *Today's Zaman,* November 25, 2009, http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-193944-i-am-not-a-neo-ottoman-davutoglu-says.html
6. Making peace with the Ottoman past and to link it with Turkey's foreign policy was present as a *Weltanschauung* also in Prime Minister and President Turgut Özal and Foreign Minister İsmail Cem.
7. "World Bank Group-Turkey Partnership: Country Program Snapshot," October 2013, p. 5, available at http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/Turkey-Snapshot.pdf
8. Ibid.: 2.
9. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-entitled-_vision-2023_-turkey_s-foreign-policy-objectives__-delivered-by-h_e_-ahmet-davutoglu_-minister-of-foreign-af.en.mfa
10. Speech by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu entitled "Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy," at SETA Foundation's Washington DC Branch, December 8, 2009, http://setadc.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=202:unofficial-transcript-of-foreign-minister-ahmed-davutoglus-speech&catid=58:text&Itemid=113
11. The first survey was conducted on July 24–29, 2009, by telephone in Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, and face-to-face in Iraq totaling 2,006 people. The second survey was conducted on August 25–September 27, 2010, this time including Iran with a sample size of 2,267. For 2009 survey see Mensur Akgun et al., *Orta Dogu'da Turkiye Algisi* (Perception of Turkey in the Middle East) (Istanbul: TESEV Publications, 2009), http://www.tesev.org.tr/default.asp?PG=DPL00TR01; Mensur Akgun et al., *The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East 2010* (Istanbul: TESEV Publications, 2011).

12. The survey comprised 600 face-to-face interviews in each of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and 400 adults in Morocco, Lebanon, Kuwait, and the UAE. Zogby International (2002) *What Arabs Think: Values, Beliefs, and Concerns* (New York: Zogby International), 61, cited in Peter A. Furia and Russell E. Lucas, "Determinants of Arab Public Opinion on Foreign Relations," *International Studies Quarterly*, 50 (2006): 585–605.
13. Speech Delivered by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu at Africa-Turkey Partnership Ministerial Review Conference, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-delivered-by-h_e_-ahmet-davutoglu_-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-turkey-at-africa-turkey-partnership.en.mfa
14. "Freedom and Justice Party Seeks Election Advice from Turkey's Ruling Party," *Egypt Independent,* November 18, 2011, http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/freedom-and-justice-party-seeks-election-advice-turkeys-ruling-party
15. See, for instance, "Ghannouchi: 'Our Party Is Close to Turkey's AKP'," *tunisialive,* August 29, 2011, http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/08/29/ghannouchi-our-party-is-close-to-turkeys-akp/
16. Conversations with two younger members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.
17. "Turkey to Provide Egypt $2 Billion in Aid," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 15, 2012, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444517304577653852418813354.html
18. "Turkey, Tunisia to Establish High Level Cooperation Council," *Anadolu Agency,* December 25, 2012, http://www.aa.com.tr/en/news/115269--turkey-tunisia-to-establish-high-level-cooperation-councilHigh Level Strategic Councils that comprise of regular bilateral meetings of prime ministers and relevant ministers of the countries involved, have been an important tool of AKP government's foreign policy. Several such councils have been formed between Turkey and its neighbors.
19. "Esad-Davutoğlu baş başa 3 saat görüştüler," (Asad and Davutoğlu met privately for three hours), August 9, 2011, *NTVMSNBC*, http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25239896/

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PART IV

Israel—Hidden Opportunities

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CHAPTER 8

Israel: The Partial Regional Power in the Middle East

Robert Kappel

1 Introduction[1]

Mark Heller stated that Israel has the power to block, but not the power to shape the regional order. Although its power is impressive "and almost certainly sufficient to defend its security against threats by others" (Heller 2011: 238), Israel is not a regional power that is able to manage the regional order. It tries to prevent the emergence of any other power that could seriously damage it, but has no soft or smart power, as this contribution will show.

Louise Fawcett identifies Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey as possible powers in the Middle East. She also states that the regional balance of power has changed in the last ten years. There is the declining hegemony of the United States, and Arab countries have been weak powers in the past. This weakness was exacerbated by the Arab Spring, which triggered ongoing deep crisis in several countries. Who are the leadership contenders in the Middle East? What qualifies them as potential leaders? Fawcett's criteria for leadership are that a country (a) deploys a mix of hard and soft power resources, (b) promotes regional institutions, (c) provides public goods, (d) sets the regional agenda, (e) builds cooperation, and (f) bears the costs of cooperation. Based on these criteria, some of the above-mentioned countries (Syria and Egypt) are no longer regional power candidates. The remaining countries (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran) all have limited leadership qualities. For Fawcett, Israel is in some sense an "obvious regional great power" (Fawcett 2011: 163) despite having failed to help construct a regional order by not providing public goods or institutions.

Similar to Fawcett, Martin Beck (2010) also identifies Israel as a regional power. Developing a concept of regional power applicable to the Middle East, he discusses neorealism, institutionalism, and constructivism—all of which have competing ideas on regional power. Despite their major differences (see Godehardt, Nabers 2011; Nabers 2010), they produce mutually compatible results. According to these approaches, Israel is the single most powerful economic and military actor in the region but not strong enough to impose its will on the other countries in the region. In Beck's view, the United States plays a major role, "thereby [. . .] confirming Israel's role as a regional outsider" (Beck 2010: 148).

These three important approaches have largely left out the economic dimension of power in the region. The criteria and combination of factors that would enable any of these states to qualify as regional powers are not sufficiently clear yet. But the economic power of a country is clearly of paramount importance. This chapter contributes to this discussion by focusing on Israel from a political economy perspective, outlining and testing clear criteria. Starting with these different and important views on Israel's position in the Middle East, this chapter discusses the question of to what extent Israel—a very small country with a small population—qualifies as a potential regional power. What are the main characteristics of Israel's power? How much influence can it exert on others? How important is it that Israel is a close ally of the United States and an important economic partner of both the European Union and the United States? In this contribution, I will characterize Israel as a partial power, which means that it has limited reach and limited influence in the region. Based on prior publications on the economics of regional power (Kappel 2011a 2011b), I will focus my contribution on the economic, hard, soft, and smart powers;[2] economic and political interconnectedness; provision of public goods by the most important countries in the region; ideational leadership; and alliances.

In the second section of this chapter, I review different power concepts that deal with economic, hard, soft, and smart power, identify criteria for an evaluation of Israel's power. The third section summarizes some aspects of economic developments of Israel. In the fourth section, I focus on the main constellations in the Middle East, including the role of the United States. The fifth and final section draws conclusions about Israel's status as a partial power.

2 Regional Power: Who Is Influential Over What Actors?

There are competing conceptions of what constitutes a regional power, of which Robert Dahl's is the most influential. According to Dahl

(1957), "when you hear that country X is an influential regional power, the proper question is: Influential over what actors, in what period, with respect to what matters?" Of further importance is whether a nation is leading or has allies and whether it tries to actively shape the regional order. In many studies, scholars have emphasized that regional powers need followers (Nabers 2010; Destradi 2011). It is obvious that Israel has no followers—neither regionally nor globally. Although the United States defends Israel's existence as an independent country, the US government cannot be regarded as a staunch supporter of the Israeli government.[3] In the Middle East, Israel is an isolated country surrounded by more or less unfriendly or even threatening states and Islamist groups. This is why the leadership-followership nexus (or even hegemon-follower nexus) is a misleading concept for Israel's role in the region (Destradi 2011; Beck 2011).[4]

Dahl states that A has power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do (Dahl 1957: 202). This basic approach of course needs further criteria to identify power. Of importance here (Godehardt/Nabers 2011; Nabers 2010; Flemes 2010), are the following concepts: international relations' (IR) theory, international political economy (IPE), strategic and relational power, and economic power.

In IR theory, national power and "hard power" concepts continue to draw on Dahl. States applying hard power strategies use coercion, threat, rewards or their resources to get others to do what they would not otherwise do.

In IPE, economic networks present one form of power. Today, transnational networks and network power in value chains impact economics as much as political factors (Brach/Kappel 2009).

Drawing on earlier works, it is useful to differentiate between three dimensions of economic power: (1) economic strength; (2) a country's behavior—that is, cooperation or noncooperation—in international and regional negotiations, which may be the result of bargaining power or retaliatory power and reflect the current and prospective size of an economy and thus its power to shape future rules; and (3) a country's soft power (Nye 2010; Nolte 2010). The belief in the market economy, free trade, openness and integration into the global economy as desirable strategies is a manifestation of this kind of power (Whalley 2009: 6).

There are a few authors, dealing with the *economics of regional power* (Kappel 2011; Strange 1975; Rothschild 1971; Whalley 2009), who focus their arguments on a country's capacity (measured by share of global gross domestic product [GDP], GDP per capita, population, innovation in technology, and research and development [R&D] expenditure) to shape and possibly dominate the world economy. Based on economic analyses,[5] regression analyses, and testing several indicators,

I have identified additional factors of the economics of "regional powers." First, regional powers possess regionally and globally active businesses, which are integrated into global value chains and govern these chains (norms, distribution of rents, access to value chain). Second, regional powers provide public goods (security, monetary stability, development aid). Third, regional powers play a decisive role in the governance of the region (Kappel 2011a 2011b). This is a starting point for an evaluation of Israel's economic power.

Relational and structural power approaches in both political science and economics shift the relation and interaction between actor A and actor B into the center. Accordingly, it is necessary to analyze power not only in relation to others, but also as a process in a specific context. Specific conceptualization of the relationships between actors can be found in economic power studies (Kappel 2011b; Herz/Starbatty 1991). Relational power concepts have been criticized for neglecting the structural dimension of power (Strange 1988). Structural power refers to the influence of an actor on the international structures and institutions that shape the general context conditions other actors have to deal with. These are, for instance, the security, financial, productive, and knowledge structures (Strange 1975). In Strange's concept, the ability to shape the knowledge structure directly relates to technological power and innovation. The above discussion highlights the importance of clarifying which kind of power is exercised (or not exercised), in which context, and by what means.

3 How Much Economic Power Does Israel Have?

On the basis of the preceding theoretical discussion, I consider the following aspects to be particularly viable for an empirical investigation of Israel's power:

3.1 Economic Dynamic

A regional power can be characterized by the size of its market and its technological dynamism. It is a relatively strong industrial power, and its growth is shaped by technology, innovation, R&D and dynamic entrepreneurship. A high level of industrial growth draws investment from around the world, labor and supply industries and radiates via vertical integration into the region. The thesis is as follows: due to their economic dynamism, regional powers are attractive to foreign direct investment (FDI). Through technological advances, a rapidly growing regional power gains competitive advantages over countries that are growing more slowly.

Israel's economy is characterized by a relatively good level of performance. Israel was forced to be an export-oriented country because the regional market is largely closed and the domestic market is too small for the profitable production of Israeli goods. Dependence on foreign markets caused exports to reach more than 40 percent of GDP in 2010. Despite wars, three-digit inflation and immigration accounting for one-fifth of the country's population within the span of just a few years, Israel's growth path is outstanding (Nathanson 2011; Fischer 2006). Today, Israel has a population of about 7 million inhabitants. Over the first 25 years of the country's existence, Israel's economic policy produced exceptional growth. Since 1973, however, the growth trajectory has been much flatter, reflecting a slower annual GDP per capita growth rate of 1.7 percent. Israel's standard of living has risen in absolute terms since 1973. In 2010, the average per capita income was USD 25,000—similar to the European average. The country's improved economic performance and living standards are also confirmed by the Human Development Index ranking Israel number 24 (2012). In terms of productivity—a primary factor underlying steady state growth in GDP per capita—Israel approaches that of the G7 countries (see OECD 2011; IMF 2012; Ben-David 2012). It is also a leader in inventions and innovations. The country invests 4.5 percent of GDP per year in R&D, compared to the average of 2.1 percent of GDP spent by the OECD countries collectively; this rate is also higher than that of each of the OECD countries, and much higher than any other country in the Middle East.[6] R&D expenditure reflects some of the extensive structural changes in Israel's economy since its establishment. In 1950, agricultural exports constituted nearly half of the country's exports. Since then, agricultural exports have exhibited a nine-fold increase in real terms, but their share of total Israeli exports has fallen to just 2 percent. Israel is one of the few countries worldwide and the only one in the Middle East that has managed to transform an agrarian economy into an advanced high-tech society. Today, it has a competitive advantage over all neighboring countries and—when comparing technological progress, economic growth, structural change in the economy, and per capita income (Helpman 2003; Brach 2012) has even left strong performers like Turkey and Tunisia well behind. In short, Israel is a dynamic industrial power, whose attraction as a hub is illustrated by its high inflows of FDI and technology. It is an important exporter of high-quality products and services. In 1993, FDI in Israel amounted to a total of USD 600 million. FDI in Israel totaled USD 5.5 billion in 2000, USD 10.5 billion in 2008, and USD 8.1 billion in 2011, thus showing that Israel—despite its small size and limited market—is capable of attracting international companies (IMF 2012).[7] Israel is a highly developed small country in a stagnating and crisis-driven region.

3.2 Geography

A regional power's close proximity to the region should favor trade and direct investment. The thesis is that a regional power influences trade more strongly than the other countries in the region and advances regional integration due to its own growth. Positive relations with neighbors lead to cooperation, increases in growth and technological spillover. Regional powers take on a key role in regional organizations and, through norm-setting contributions, in the design of regional governance.

Regionally speaking, Israel's economy is fairly isolated. The country maintains close trade relations with the OECD world, Russia and China (accounting for 90% of its trade), but only conducts 5 percent of its trade with neighboring countries (Jones, Milton-Edwards 2013). Due to political and ideological differences, trade relations between Israel and its neighbors suffer. Israel does not maintain political and cultural networks regionally, but rather with the United States, Europe, and Russia (Magen 2013). It also is not a member of any regional institution, although it has contacts in several countries (e.g., Egypt and Jordan). As such, Israel does not shape customs regulations or trade agreements and has no voice on currency agreements or environmental and labor standards in the region (Beck 2011; Heller 2011).

It is acknowledged that positive trade relations with neighboring countries can lead to cooperation, an increase in growth and technological spillover (Collier 2007: 53). Negative effects occur because of "bad neighbors." In the Middle East, perhaps Israel's neighbors avoid trade cooperation and openness—besides the dominant political and ideological reasons—because Israel would be better adept at utilizing such trade openness (Krugman 1994). Whatever the concrete reasons, Israel—like its neighbors—is unable to exploit the growth potential of regional trade integration. Israel has, however, overcome this disadvantage by integrating itself into the growing markets of the OECD and BRICS countries. Thus on the one hand, Israel's economic power is self-generated; on the other hand, it is derived from extra-regional sources (Heller 2011: 238). These results imply that Israel geographically belongs to the region, but is not economically integrated into the region. Being not part of a weak economic region, its isolation in the region, but participation in extra-regional activities constitutes Israel's strength. Its nonembeddedness or isolation illustrates what Dahl has characterized as follows: "Being too deeply and unavoidingly entrapped in a particular region may be a source of weakness rather than strength" (Dahl 1957).

3.3 Vertical Networks

In the global economy, global value chains are playing an increasingly important role. Leading businesses from regional powers often take on a dominant role in hierarchical and quasi-hierarchical value chains. Within the value chains, the leading enterprises steer the businesses that are participating in the chain. The thesis is that technologically leading businesses from the regional powers strongly codetermine the governance in these chains and—through subcontracting and the vertical integration of businesses from the countries of the region—have a steering function in the value chain with respect to technology, technology transfer, distribution of rents, and barriers of entry. Leadership in the global value chain represents an important basis for the economic position of regional powers in their regions.

Israel is not part of any close regional networks, although it is an important economic actor in Jordan and Egypt. The qualified industrial zone (QIZ) agreement makes it possible for Jordan and Egypt to export without any tariff barriers to the United States if the products have a certain degree of Israeli value added. In these QIZs, hundreds of Israeli companies produce and employ labor and subcontractors (Bijaoui, Sultan, Yedidia Tarba 2010; Gaffney 2005).

The US-Israel Free Trade Area Implementation Act (2008)[8] defines QIZs as the territories of Israel and Jordan or Israel and Egypt designated locally as an enclave where merchandise may enter without payment of duty or excise taxes. The QIZ program allows the Jordanian business community to export to the United States free of duties and restrictions provided that the sum of the cost or value of material produced in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, in other QIZs, or in Israel, plus the direct costs of processing operations, is not less than 35 percent of the price paid by the US buyer. Job creation was a central objective of the agreement. In 2001, 70 percent of the employees in the QIZ enclave were Jordanian. In 2003, 57 percent of the 26,000 employees were Jordanian (Al Houri, 2000). QIZs have not produced backward linkage to any significant extent. The QIZ sector remains heavily dependent on importing intermediate goods, materials, and accessories. About 90–95 percent of fabrics used in QIZ production are imported. The companies operating in QIZs are labor-intensive, low-tech assembly firms, with scant access to advanced technology. Thus, there is no transfer of technology.

To sum up, in terms of geography and regional cooperation, Israel can be seen as an isolated country that is not embedded in any of the regional institutions. It is—as Beck stated—a regional outsider. Due to

its economic dynamism, Israel is attractive to FDI. Through technological advances, Israel has gained a competitive advantage over its slower-growing Middle East neighbors. Its main partners are advanced countries and the emerging countries of China and India (Kappel 2011b). These extra-regional powers realize high growth rates and have a demand for the technology (e.g., weapons, chemicals, manufactured goods, and high-quality goods) offered by companies producing in Israel. However, as a high-income country in need of high-quality consumer and capital goods, Israel is also a key import nation. Because of its nonembeddedness in a quite fragile, nondynamic region and its economic orientation toward the EU and the United States, Israel's isolation in the Middle East has facilitated the country's development. Therefore, Israel can be identified as a partial regional economic power (see Shambaugh 2013).

4 Political Instability and Israel's Political Power

Relational power applies to all fields considered. That is, regional powers act in an environment marked by competition and cooperation. Relational power means that regional powers influence significant decisions within the regional organizations. The thesis is that regional powers possess decision-making power that stems not only from their economic and military power[9] but also their political networking capacity vis-à-vis their cooperation partners.

Adding these political aspects and applying the aforementioned criteria, we can evaluate leadership in the region. Which other countries have economic and political power and ambitions? Which other countries display material and ideational capabilities for regional power projection? Table 8.1 outlines the most significant actors in the Middle East. To understand Middle East political developments and the regional powers, it is important to be aware of the foreign policy strategies of the United States and the EU, on the one hand, and Turkey and Saudi Arabia, on the other.

The Middle East is a dispersed region with different actors and changing coalitions. There are many countries which can be identified as potential regional powers, such as Turkey. Given its dynamic economic development during the last 20 years, Turkey belongs to the emerging economies. Its growing economic importance and its very close relationship with the United States and the EU serve as an important anchor for Turkey's foreign policy ambitions (Bank and Karadag 2013; Önis and Kutlay 2013; Kramer 2010). Traditionally, Turkish foreign policy has been characterized by its Western orientation (Müftüler-Bac; Gürsoy 2010), which is evidenced by Turkey's NATO membership (since

Table 8.1 Israel's power related to other countries of the Middle East

Regional power	*Economic, political, and cultural interconnectedness*	*Provision of goods for the region*	*Ideational leadership*	*Allies*	*Hard/soft power*
Israel	Weak linkages, no participation in any of the regional institutions	No jobs and employment in Jordan and Egypt in QIZs Economic stability and attractiveness	Democracy, attractiveness of the economic success	No regional allies, Israel perceived as a threat US and EU as extraregional allies	Yes: strong military, economic power and power to defend its security against threats by others Isolation No soft power in the region
Turkey	In some parts of the region; important player in regional institutions	Partly: military cooperation; development aid	Partly, model for economic development Mediator	Some allies Extraregional: US and EU Intraregional: Iran, some small countries	Strong military and economic power Limited soft power
Iran	In some parts of the region, cooperation with terrorist groups Weak partner in regional institutions	Support for some radical groups Support for Syria's Assad regime	Based on nationalism and Islamism against Western powers and neoliberal globalization	Mainly perceived as a threat and contested Few followers in the region: Syria, Hezbollah	Weakened and isolated since years; declined economic and hard power, little soft and smart power
Saudi Arabia	Strong actor in regional institutions	Development aid Support for regional institutions	Religious leadership in some countries		Strong economic and military power Limited soft power
Egypt	Strong actor in regional institutions	Support for regional institutions	Religious and ideological leadership	Many allies in the region and extraregional partners (US)	Before crisis strong economic and military power Widespread regional soft power

Source: Author's own compilation, derived from Altunışık (2008), Bank (2011), Bank, Karadag (2013), Beck (2010), Beck (2013), Fawcett (2011), Fürtig, Gratius (2010), Heller (2010), Heller (2013), Jones, Milton-Edwards (2013), Kramer (2010), Pope (2010), Robins (2013), Valbjörn, Bank (2012).

1952) and its long-held ambition to join the EU. There is, however, a certain diversification of alliances outside the West, which can be characterized as the "new Turkish foreign policy" (Pope 2010). The strong anti-Israel and pro-Palestine rhetoric after the start of the war in Gaza in December 2008 and the Gaza flotilla affair in 2010 are indicators of Turkey's significant repositioning in the Arab world (Valbjörn and Bank 2012: 19–21). This change in foreign policy entails the strategy of "zero problems" (with the neighbors), introduced by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. According to Davutoğlu (2010), Turkey should look for opportunities to resolve conflicts and create further cooperation with the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East; the Middle East is the region in which this doctrine has been put into action.

Within the context of the "zero problems" doctrine, the three dominant aspects of Turkey's Middle East policy are geoeconomic ambitions, economic relationships, and the generation of soft power (Altunışık 2008; Pope 2010). The geoeconomic driving forces can be illustrated by the increased volumes of capital expenditure and trade as well as energy cooperation with various countries, including Iran, the Gulf states, and until 2013 Syria. The soft power activities in the Middle East can be characterized by the export of the "Turkish model," which includes elements of pluralism and party-based democracy, a successful economy, religious and cultural authenticity, and a relatively independent foreign policy.

Turkey's quite successful Middle East repositioning under President Erdoğan cannot hide the conflict of interests between its geoeconomic and soft power ambitions: Turkey has, on the one hand, an interest in a stable political environment and, on the other, wants to raise its attractiveness as a model and a mediator. But the unrest in North Africa, Syria, and Egypt and the activities of other actors (e.g., the United States, Iran, and Saudi Arabia) has left Turkey "with the worst of both worlds" (Robins 2013: 397).

Natural resources have played a significant role in structuring *Saudi Arabia*'s relationships internationally. As one of the most important global oil producers, Saudi Arabia is a key actor in the affairs of the Middle East. The availability of huge financial means with which to support its foreign policy and security objectives is central to how it organizes its policy. It uses its significant geostrategic bargaining power, and friendly relationship with the United States to help secure its role in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the G20. Saudi foreign policy has historically been depicted as cautious and pragmatic (Fürtig 2011). It has, however, reoriented its foreign policy since 2011, which has seen containment of the Arab uprisings and Iran's activities become a defining feature. Like many authoritarian states, Saudi Arabia uses the

promise of economic well-being and the provision of national security for its power status. Its military expenditure as a share of GDP was about 10 percent in 2010.

Regionally and internationally, Saudi Arabia has tried to influence multilateral organizations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Arab League, OPEC, and the G20. Saudi Arabia considers mediation integral to its foreign policy goals of maintaining an active involvement in regional issues and enhancing and deepening its influence. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia is an active opponent of any democratic processes in the region.

No country can be identified as a regional power. There are some would-be leaders (like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran) that have influence, but are not actually leading. Therefore, the Middle East is missing a leadership-follower dynamic and, despite its energy abundance, can be characterized as a weak region that, on the one hand, limits economic development and, on the other, increases the costs of security.

5 Conclusion: Israel's Partial Power

In the following, I will formulate some major results about Israel's role as a partial power. They show that Israel is one of the few stabilizers in the region (Yadlin 2013; Heller 2013b, Beck 2010 and 2011).

Israel is a democracy. Long-term democratic development could be an asset for a nation and its soft power strategy. Nevertheless, Israel's outstanding record as a democratic society cannot be seen as an attractive model for the neighboring countries, because none of the other Middle Eastern states is democratic—except for Turkey and Tunisia, the latter of which is an infant democracy. Because Israel is abnormal in the sense that it has a long tradition as a democracy, it is far from being accepted as a regional ally.

Most of the Arab countries perceive Israel as a threat. But in fact, Israel is threatened by Iran, Hezbollah, Islamic jihad, radical groups using the governmental vacuum in Sinai for terrorist activities, and heightened security problems resulting from Egyptian and Syrian turmoil. Even the Gulf states do nothing to foster regional peace or keep an eye on Islamic radicals; they abstain from security activities. Instead—as do all Arab nations—they leave peacekeeping to external actors, such as the United States and the UN. Israel has no allies in the region.

There might be opportunities for Israel to cooperate with Turkey, a stable Egypt, some Gulf states, Morocco, and Tunisia. If Israel could improve its international standing and increase the understanding of its security problems by, for instance, the BRICS countries and other important players, it could reduce its hazard.

If the renewal of the political process with Palestine gains momentum and a lasting peace between both actors is manageable, and if Israel's government could extend at least its cooperation with Sunni Arab states (Jordan and some Gulf states), Israel would be a safer place. Therefore, more Israeli soft power efforts (diplomacy, economic ties, scientific networks, cultural activities, etc.) in the region are necessary.

Israel's extra-regional partners are the United States (the hegemon that helps to secure the existence of Israel) and the EU (a rhetoric partner without much influence in the region). Although Israel's extra-regional links are highly important, they are nevertheless limited. With one friend and a few allies in Europe, Israel remains a lonely power. It lacks close partners and has no regional allies. In fact, it has more enemies than friends in the region.

Israel's outstanding economic performance spreads throughout the region. Jordanian and Egyptian value chains and trade with some Gulf states and Turkey, inter alia, are existent but not very strong. Nonetheless, its openness, human capital development, innovation, high-ranking universities, and structural transformation from an agrarian society to a modern industrialized country make Israel an attractive economic model. Its prominent economic power distinguishes it as an advanced nation among stagnating Arab countries.

Israel exercises significant hard power in the region. Its superior military and economic strength, allows it to use coercion, threats, rewards, and/or resources to get others to do what they would not otherwise do. Israel defines the regional security agenda to a great degree.

Israel has limited soft power. It is not well integrated into the region. Israel suffers from a severe lack of legitimacy within the region and is certainly not appreciated as a regional power. Sometimes it influences events through nonaction, negative action, and diplomatic passivity. But Israel has more than power to block. It can partly shape developments in the region through on the one side military power and economic power. Although the country has limited soft power in the region, it is a highly developed country that is admired in many Arab countries. In fact, Israel's economic success, diverse immigration (e.g., from Russia, South East Europe, Africa, and some Arab countries), attractive open society, modernity, and technological advancement all serve as a source for the country's rising soft power.

Israel is not well embedded in the crisis region—which is a strength, not a weakness. Israel takes advantage of close networks ties with the world's most important countries and therefore avoids the costs of being integrated in the Middle East.

Israel is a lonely power. It needs a more assertive regional foreign policy. Rather than a charm offensive, Israel requires a concept of cooperation

with neighboring countries—something that does more than just show military strength.

In sum, Israel is an important partial power that can use its military and economic power, vertical networks, and extra-regional allies to minimize the threat of attacks against it and its inhabitants. Israel is beset by various enemies, such as Iran and a number of terrorist groups in neighboring countries. It is understandable that in such a political and military environment, Israel seeks to play different countries against each other. There is a certain danger that the whole Middle East will face more severe problems in the future, which will have repercussions for Israel's security and political situation: further social and political unrest (also in the oil-rich Gulf states in the medium term), the declining role of the Gulf monarchies, the partial withdrawal of the United States from the region, further neglect by the EU, the diminished influence of Turkey, and reduced economic development. The Middle East is missing a stable regional power. Neither Egypt nor Iran nor Saudi Arabia nor Turkey will play the role of a civil power to unite and stabilize the Middle East and bring peace to the region. Israel's nonembeddedness in the region is not a source of weakness. But certain Arab countries' step-by-step renunciation of the West is a real danger for Israel that can be tackled partially by strengthening Israel's economic, political, and diplomatic network ties to the OECD countries and Russia.

Israel's economic growth, technological prowess, military preparedness, and tight relationship with the United States have put it in a league apart from its Arab adversaries. However, Israel's regional perspectives could be enhanced if Israel were to cooperate with at least some Arab countries.

Notes

1. The author would like to thank Henner Fürtig and Babette Never for their comments on a first draft of this chapter.
2. I follow Joseph Nye's criteria. For Nye, power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes you want. There are several ways one can achieve this: (i) coercion, (ii) payments, or (iii) attraction and co-optation. *Soft power* resources are the assets that produce attraction which often leads to acquiescence. *Hard power* means the use of coercion and payment; *smart power* strategy denotes the ability to combine hard and soft power depending on whether hard or soft power would be more effective in a given situation. Nye states that many situations require soft power; however, hard power might be more effective than soft power. Smart power addresses multilateralism and enhances foreign policy. A successful smart power

strategy will provide answers to the following questions (see Nye 2010 and 2011):

1. What goals or outcomes are preferred?
2. What resources are available and in which contexts?
3. What are the positions and preferences of the targets of attempts at influence?
4. Which forms of power behavior are most likely to succeed?
5. What is the probability of success?

3. Although Israel is seen as a strategic political, military, and economic partner, Israeli-US relations came under increased strain during the second. President Obama made achieving a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians a major goal, and pressured Prime Minister Netanyahu into accepting a Palestinian state and entering negotiations. In 2011, President Obama called for a return to the pre-1967 Israel borders with mutually agreed land swaps. The US government's proposals were widely rejected by the Israeli government and the public, see Heller 2011.
4. The literature on the leader-follower approach (Nabers 2010; Keohane 2005) extracts important aspects, which can be summarized as follows: (1) Leadership is an activity; (2) Leadership requires an institutionalized context; (3) Leadership is always issue specific; (4) Leaders act under constraints; (5) Leaders are coalition builders; and (6) Leadership has a normative dimension.
5. A detailed literature list and the results of descriptive and regression analyses of regional power can be found in Kappel 2011a and 2011b.
6. See http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/sti_scoreboard-2011-en/02/05/index.html?itemId=/content/chapter/sti_scoreboard-2011–16-en.
7. On the other hand, although productivity and living standards in Israel have been rising, there are also growing concerns about the growing unskilled population, poverty, and increasing income inequality. The Arab-Israeli population and ultraorthodox Jewish communities account for about 60 percent of poor households. Arab-Israelis make up about 20 percent of the population and ultraorthodox about 10 percent, but high fertility among both groups means that combined they account for about half of the children entering primary school (see OECD 2011).
8. United States-Israel Free Trade Area Implementation Act; Designation of Qualifying Industrial Zones. Federal Register 01/26/2009. https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2009/01/26/E9-1589/united-states-israel-free-trade-area-implementation-act-designation-of-qualifying-industrial-zones
9. Israel's military power and its intelligence-gathering capacities are assessed as very high (Heller 2011: 230): "Israel undeniably disposes of serious military power with the capacity to project that power over

considerable distances, inflict immense damage on those that would harm it, and to protect the security of its society (if not every single citizen)."

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CHAPTER 9

Israel as a Regional Power: Prospects and Problems

Mark A. Heller

1 Introduction

Right after the fall of the Bastille in 1789, a French revolutionary with pretensions at leadership is reputed to have heard an uproar outside his window one day and said to his companion, "Quick, which way is the mob heading? I'm its leader and I have to get to the front." The story is almost certainly apocryphal and it betrays a peculiar notion of leadership, but it does imply something significant about one condition enabling leadership, which is that while a political entity, even one so inchoate as a "mob," may not have a coherent sense of direction, it must at least exist before a leader can presume to shape the direction in which it heads.

For pretenders to regional leadership in the Middle East, the problem is that there is no regional entity waiting to be led. Unlike even a revolutionary mob, the components of the regional system are not moving along any particular course and are not focusing their aspirations or even their wrath on one single target. Instead, they are scattering in a variety of directions and focusing their animus on one another, and even on themselves. This is not a new phenomenon. Even before the outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring, the constituent parts of the region were constantly at loggerheads with one another, resisting or trying to balance the efforts of any single one of them to stake out a hegemonial or "leadership" role. Since the heyday of Gamal Abd al-Nasser's populist pan-Arab appeal in the mid-1960s, there have been a few individuals (Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Saddam Hussein, Hassan Nasrallah, to name the most prominent) who enjoyed brief moments of exhilarating region-wide popularity, but none has had the sustained charisma needed to go over the heads of

other governments and mobilize populations against their own regimes in order to serve his national, regime or personal ambitions.

It is not altogether inconceivable that some new, all-embracing idea might be elaborated and articulated with sufficient force to enable someone to recreate the success with which Nasser was able, if not to dominate the region, then at least to dominate its political discourse and define its agenda. But the prospect for that happening seems remote. For much of the post–World War II era, authoritarian leaders tried to build their legitimacy and regional appeal on the basis of defiance of various external "others"—European colonialists, American imperialists, and particularly Israeli Zionists—in order to create a common focus for political mobilization. More recently, such leaders have come under increasing domestic pressure to abandon efforts to distract attention from their own failures of governance. However, only the minority of liberal democrats have promoted an alternative agenda based on universal values. Most of the popular forces (sectarian and/or Islamist) unleashed by the events of the "Arab Spring" appear no less committed to postures of defiance—primarily, this time, of internal "others" (although hostility to Israel remains a useful vehicle for political mobilization). That hardly seems designed to accelerate the emergence of any comprehensive regional identity or framework for political organization.

Indeed, since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, only forced intellectual constructs have been able to impose some kind of ideational identity over the region as a whole. That explains why, of all the regions studied by analysts, only this one has nothing in its name apart from geography, that is, from its physical location in reference to other parts of the world. A name that might come closer to capturing some ideational content underpinning the notion of region might be "The Arab World" or "The Islamic World," though such terms—particularly the latter—would include major Muslim-populated political entities not normally associated with the Middle East, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, or even Pakistan, and both terms *ipso facto* exclude Israel. There are, of course, institutions that do presume to capture some ideational or identity content—the League of Arab States and the Islamic Conference Organization—but Israel, for obvious reasons, belongs to neither of them. That is the major obstacle to any hypothetical Israeli candidacy for leadership in this region. It also explains why the Middle East is alone in having no comprehensive regional institutions.

2 Regional Disintegration, Subregional Integration?

The emergence of many new, post-Ottoman entities can be properly understood as a process of regional fragmentation. In the century since

the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, that process has ebbed and flowed, as some entities have formally merged, for example, the United Arab Republic (though only for a few years), North and South Yemen, or the sheikhdoms comprising the United Arab Emirates, and some have broken up into constituent parts, for example, Sudan, or the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. By most reckoning, developments before and especially since the outbreak of the upheavals in the Arab world have accelerated the process of fragmentation. No other states have as yet formally dissolved, but several no longer function as coherent entities through which the writ of a central government effectively runs. Examples from the pre-Arab Spring period include Iraq following the First Gulf War (a process further intensified first by the American invasion in 2003 and then by the American withdrawal in 2012), the Palestinian Authority (following the Hamas coup in Gaza in 2007) and Lebanon (for all intents and purposes, since the outbreak of the civil war in 1975); since 2010, Libya has joined the ranks of quasi–failed states, and Syria is certainly the most graphic example of all.

In practice, this means the proliferation of effective, if not necessarily recognized, actors in the system, giving rise to speculation that the Sykes-Picot order in the Middle East is on the verge of collapse.[1] As a result, some ostensible borders (e.g., the one separating eastern Syria from western Iraq) lose much of their practical significance while some "internal" borders (e.g., those of the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq) assume practical meaning, and the population of states in the region is joined by a growing population of quasi-states, pseudo-states, and proto-states. This undoubtedly complicates further any efforts by pretenders to leadership to organize the region in order to promote either their own interests or some hypothetical common good (whose definition becomes increasingly elusive). Indeed, the popular uprisings in some Middle East states and the more vociferous if nonviolent expression of discontent in others imply a further devolution of power in the region, eroding even more the ability of central governments to make arbitrary decisions about the regional and international alignments of their countries and further multiplying the number of actors whose support needs to be cultivated—to the point where leadership of region-wide organization and structure becomes virtually impossible.

For these reasons, some analysts have begun to describe the Middle East as entirely leaderless, a kind of regional equivalent of the emerging "G-Zero" or "non-polar" international order sometimes attributed to America's declining interest and activism in global affairs.[2] This image of virtual anarchy slightly oversimplifies the reality. True, there may be no comprehensive region-wide organization or alignment, but that does not preclude the existence of various subregional groupings, each of which is the domain of a leading power or at least a pretender to the role of leader.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, there are at least three such camps within the region, based on a combination of regime ideology and popular identity that together produce some sense of common interest.[3] The first is the familiar "axis of resistance." Iran—a large, richly endowed state with an imperial tradition onto which has been grafted revolutionary Islamic fervor—is the natural leader and engine of this essentially Shiite bloc, which also includes Syria (or at least those parts of it under regime control) and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iraq, with some reservations, can be added to this list. Since the effective withdrawal of American forces, that country—to the extent that its Shiite-dominated government speaks on its behalf—has grown progressively more responsive to Iranian preferences in regional affairs. On the other hand, the Palestinian Hamas movement, until the outbreak of the civil war in Syria, was also aligned with this camp, but the increasingly blatant sectarian nature of that war made it difficult for Hamas to justify to its own largely Sunni constituency its continued identification with a Shiite/Alawite grouping, especially when a Sunni Islamist alternative, in the form of a Muslim Brotherhood-dominated government in Egypt under President Muhammad Morsi, appeared to present itself. Still, with the collapse of Morsi's presidency, even Hamas—under severe economic distress in Gaza—began to show some interest in reopening lines of communication to Tehran.

The other two camps are still less coherent. Both are identifiable as Sunni in character but differ from each other in terms of their approach to political Islam and relations with the West. One is the conservative bloc, consisting of most of the monarchies and sheikhdoms of the Gulf Cooperation Council, together with Jordan. By dint of its size and financial resources, Saudi Arabia is the most prominent and influential member of this grouping.

The other camp is an even looser association of states. They are more tolerant and even supportive of Islamist assertiveness in domestic and regional affairs and more indulgent of the most well-known incarnation of political Islam—the Muslim Brotherhood. Turkey, like Iran, has inherited an imperial history, and its pretensions at leadership of this group seemed, for a time, to be sustained by its size, political stability, economic progress, and the apparent attractiveness of the model of Islamic democracy it purported to embody. But the very sweep of its activity prompted some, suspicious of Turkish ambitions, to denounce its approach as "neo-Ottomanism," and evident setbacks in its declared policy of "no problems with neighbors," coupled with growing unease at signs of authoritarian tendencies on the party of AK Party leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and incipient economic vulnerabilities, have tarnished some of the luster on the Turkish model.

As in the so-called resistance axis, membership in these two Sunni groupings has also fluctuated over time in response to changing circumstances and, especially, domestic upheavals. The most dramatic example involves Egypt. Egypt's size, self-image (*umm a-dunya*—"mother of the world") and historical and cultural salience encourage the assumption that it should lead, or at least be first among equals, in any Middle Eastern grouping to which it adheres. The realities of Egypt's power metrics, however, force it to coordinate with other prominent regional actors. Which of those it chooses depends upon the orientation of the effective government at any given time. Under Hosni Mubarak, Egypt was identified more with the conservative bloc; during the brief tenure of Morsi, Egypt closed ranks (at least rhetorically) with other Sunni Islamists, especially Turkey, and even hesitantly flirted with the idea of some reconciliation with Iran; following the outbreak of widespread popular Egyptian opposition to the Brotherhood-controlled government in 2013 and the reinstitution of military rule, Egypt reverted to an alignment with Saudi Arabia and the UAE (which agreed to underwrite efforts to rehabilitate Egypt's crumbling economy). A less tumultuous reorientation involved Qatar, which used its abundant resources to back Islamist causes during the reign of Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, but seemed to temper its enthusiasm for such ventures following Hamad's abdication in favor of his son, Sheikh Tamim, in 2013. Even that shift, however, betrayed considerable ambivalence, and Qatar's unwillingness to abandon the temptation to exploit Islamist movements in order to enhance its own prominence led to a renewed eruption of tensions between Qatar and its five "partners" in the GCC and the withdrawal of the Saudi, UAE, and Bahraini ambassadors from Doha.[4]

Thus, it can be argued that the demarcation lines between these camps are not impermeable. It is undoubtedly the case that identity plays a major and growing role in the inclination of people to align with any of the putative bloc leaders. This is graphically illustrated, for example, by polls contrasting attitudes toward Saudi Arabia in Lebanon. Among Lebanese Sunnis, 82 percent reportedly hold positive views of Saudi Arabia, and 71 percent believe that Saudi influence in the Middle East is a good thing. Among Shiites, on the other hand, only 6 percent view Saudi Arabia positively, and 87 percent believe that Saudi regional influence is a bad thing. Nevertheless, these communitarian walls are not totally impermeable. Even sectarian identity does not always and completely overwhelm geopolitics or geoeconomics in determining a political entity's regional orientation. As a result, breaches in the Sunni-Shiite divide remain conceivable (as the example of Hamas demonstrates), as does behavior that might be considered anomalous by the standards of either identity politics or ideological determinism. Perhaps the only rule of regional bloc-formation immune to any serious violation is that in

none of these subregional alignments is Israel a member, much less a putative leader. And that is because Israel cannot serve as an axis around which others coalesce, only a focus against which others coalesce (as the example of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's brief moment of region-wide adulation in 2006 demonstrates).

3 Israel in the Middle East: Odd Man Out

From a purely instrumental point of view, there is no reason why this should be the case. After all, though relatively small in terms of size and population and poorly endowed in natural resources, Israel nevertheless possesses many of the conventional metrics of state power, and it could be seen as having the potential capacity to coerce, persuade, or assist others and, in return, to receive the assistance of others in promoting either its own immediate interests or any broader vision it might have of a desirable regional order. First, it is one of the strongest military powers in the region, and certainly the strongest in its own immediate neighborhood.[5] Second, it has developed an economy that is vibrant, advanced, and more diversified than those of other regional powerhouses whose material well-being is based disproportionately on hydrocarbons; Israel's accomplishments were symbolized by its admission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (the so-called Rich Countries' Club). Third, Israel's educational system and entrepreneurial culture have brought it to the leading edge of technology and sustain a public health and medical system and an advanced agricultural sector that compare favorably with almost any other country.[6] Fourth, Israel enjoys domestic stability resting on the legitimacy of the polity and has been able to maintain a democratic political system based on open elections, an independent judiciary, and free media. Though not without many flaws, this system could be an object of admiration and emulation, that is, an element of "soft power," at least for those Middle Eastern publics striving for more liberal, democratic political outcomes to the upheavals in their own countries. Finally, Israel's intimate relations with the United States endow it with some input into the decision making of the most influential extra-regional power operating in the Middle East and with a tool that can be utilized to facilitate access to Washington for others in the region interested in pursuing that course.[7]

In practice, however, none of these assets has been readily convertible into the kind of positive political leverage that can be used to shape patterns of regional development, that is, to influence either the policies or the composition of other Middle Eastern governments. They have, to be sure, been useful as instruments of denial, that is, to contain damage to Israeli security or other political interests. This has been particularly evident in the military sphere. But it is also apparent in the political arena,

where close ties with the United States have helped block hostile initiatives by others in various international fora. By the same token, economic and technological resources have helped Israel enhance its extra-regional appeal as a commercial and trading partner, thereby blunting efforts by regional adversaries to deepen its international isolation.

Nevertheless, these assets have not served to enlist positive support, alignment, or cooperation from within the region itself. The most obvious reason for this is Israel's status as a regional outsider in terms of the most commonly understood identifiers of "Middle Eastern-ness," Arabism and/or Islam. Notwithstanding the existence of interests that overlap or converge with those of Israel, most Middle Eastern actors view Israel, which consciously identifies itself as the state of the Jewish people, as the quintessential "other." And there is no characterization of the region, apart from the purely geographical, that sees Israel as an intrinsic part of it. To cite just one journalistic example, in 2013, an analyst in a UAE-based publication advocated a regional military alliance to deal with the threat posed by the possible escalation of the civil war in Syria due to support for the Assad regime by Iran and Hezbollah. Other things being equal, a detached observer might have expected that the objective of containing Iran would be enthusiastically shared by Israel. And yet the only non-Shiite Middle Eastern actor not mentioned by the author as a possible partner in this enterprise was the one that could potentially contribute more to it than any other—Israel.[8]

Needless to say, the perspective that Israel may be in the region but not of the region also prevails in Israel, itself. Perhaps one of the crudest expressions of this sentiment came from a former defense minister, who once described Israel as a "villa in the jungle." A more nuanced formulation, something along the lines of "an island of tranquility in a sea of turbulence," might have seemed less condescending, but it, too, would have communicated the idea that the Middle East is an environment to which Israel does not feel that it truly belongs. For the fact is that most of Israel's interactions, except in the military/security sphere, are with other regions of the world. Its cultural referents are in the west, its students and tourists go mostly to Europe or North America, and its economic exchanges are largely with the west and, increasingly, with East Asia. These patterns are, at least in part, an historical outgrowth of a decades-long Arab cultural and economic boycott, but they have taken on a self-sustaining dynamic. Even in Arab countries which do legally trade with Israel, opportunities for niche Israeli goods and services are limited and consumer resistance persists (though Palestinians have little option but to interact economically, and for others, especially Jordan, necessity also sometimes overcomes inhibitions, e.g., in the purchase of Israeli natural gas). In Egypt, for example, cultural and economic interaction is severely constrained, not just by official discouragement, but

also by consumer resistance. In the words of one Egyptian businessman engaged in commercial relations, "...an Israeli commodity on say the shelf of a supermarket would not be picked up except by a few people—if we assume than any supermarket would dare at all to carry, say, Israeli fruit juice."[9] Furthermore, to the extent that Israel sees itself as belonging to or leading some supra-state system, it is the system of Jewish peoplehood around the world. In terms of its normative relationship to the geographical region in which it is located, there is nothing remotely comparable to Nasser's famous conception of Egypt standing at the center of three concentric circles: the Arab, the African, and the Islamic.

As a result, Israel neither seeks nor is it capable of seeking a role as a regional or subregional leader—certainly with respect to regional institutions and organizations. Of course, such institutions and organizations do not have a truly significant impact on developments in the Middle East, and organizational/institutional exclusion has not, in the past, precluded interaction with other regional parties to promote interests that converge with theirs. This was particularly evident in military support extended to minorities in conflict with parties deemed threatening or hostile to Israel (e.g., the Kurds in Iraq, the Maronites in Lebanon, even the southern Sudanese factions during the Sudanese civil war). Indeed, some in Israel advocate continued Israeli support for elements on the margins of Middle East geography and/or identity.[10] Still, such policies amount to little more than actions to reinforce the periphery of the region; they have no relevance to any conquest of the "center" of regional gravity, which is what one would expect from an aspirant to regional leadership. By the same token, there has been and continues to be some official but unacknowledged *ad hoc* cooperation with the Gulf States and Egypt on matters of mutual interest, such as exchanges of assessments and intelligence concerning terrorist threats or Iranian activities in the region. And some Israeli goods apparently make their way to Arab markets, Israeli businessmen are said to be present in some of the Gulf economies, and Arab patients do reportedly travel to Israel for advanced medical treatment.

None of this, however, amounts to overt coalition-building or visible alignments. In this sense, Israel practices a form of "strategic modesty," primarily because it has no other real option but also, in some circumstances, because it consciously chooses to avoid entanglement. Any illusion that Israel may have had in the past about its ability to indulge in productive regional political engineering was dispelled by its negative experience in the Lebanese civil war, and the consequence has been reticence on regional matters not pertaining directly to its own military security. Perhaps the most prominent contemporary manifestation of that relates to Israeli attitudes to the civil war in Syria. As an immediate neighbor, one potentially exposed to spillover from the Syrian conflict

and affected by the outcome of the regional proxy war being waged there, Israel might have been expected to apply some of its capabilities to influence the course of the struggle. Yet apart from some limited humanitarian assistance and some measures to shield itself from undesirable actions by any of the belligerents (e.g., direct retaliation in response to cross-border firing and actions to prevent the transfer of certain classes of weaponry to Hezbollah), Israel, unlike almost every other actor in the region (and many outside of it) has played virtually no role in the conflict, not even a declaratory one, despite its undoubted potential ability to influence events (especially in terms of military capabilities, i.e., intelligence, materiel, even direct intervention).

In part, this passivity stems from uncertainty about which faction in the Syrian conflict is a more "natural" ally or partner, particularly as Islamist elements assume a more prominent role in the anti-regime camp. Israel, alone, has no affinity with any other Middle Eastern constituencies, almost all of which are represented in the Syrian theater, and it therefore feels no emotional preference for any of them. Still, a dispassionate analysis might have led Israel to conclude that its interest lies, if not in promoting the victory of any of the belligerents, then at least in preventing the defeat of any of them and therefore supporting whichever one is at a disadvantage at any particular point in time. Even through this prism, however, Israel's view is informed by the understanding that its toxic reputation in the region would incline all of the belligerents to decline Israeli support (except, perhaps, *in extremis*), and that even if such support were extended, any public exposure of Israeli involvement would boomerang to the detriment of its intended beneficiaries; after all, most of the belligerents are already constantly accusing their adversaries of collaborating with Israel, in the obvious belief that such charges erode their political legitimacy.

This reality neatly encapsulates the contradiction of Israeli power with respect to regional leadership: Israel is unquestionably strong enough to defend itself, but as the quintessential "other" in an environment increasingly dominated by identity politics, it lacks the ability to translate its power assets into usable political currency, that is, to shape the orientations of others. As a result, it cannot reasonably aspire to a leadership role in the region, even if it were inclined to do so.

4 Israeli Regional Leadership in a Truly New Middle East

This does not mean that Israel cannot continue to promote mutual interests with other regional actors. Thus, Israel has pursued productive working relations with Egyptian security authorities, both before and after the fall of Mubarak, in order to undermine common adversaries such as Hamas and Hezbollah as well as to counter the presence of jihadi

militants in Sinai.[11] Attesting to a similar dynamic are persistent rumors of intensifying coordination between Israel and the Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in light of common concerns about the Iranian threat and about the American approach to the military-dominated government in Egypt.[12] But converting instrumental cooperation into structured partnerships in which Israel is a recognized member, and even perhaps a leader, is unlikely barring a fundamental change in the way that actors qualify as legitimate partners.

One possible catalyst of such a change, indeed, perhaps the only possible catalyst, would be a transformation in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. For all of their other differences, most Middle Easterners tend to identify reflexively with the Palestinians in their conflict with Israel. Almost regardless of the merits of positions, this kind of alignment in intense or even just high-profile conflicts might be considered a kind of "tribalistic" response, similar to the responses of various populations elsewhere in the region to the civil war in Syria.[13]

As long as primordial identities persist and the Israeli-Palestinian does not come to some agreed resolution or even just a serious reduction in its salience, Israel will almost certainly remain on the margins of regional alignments. To the extent that such things are foreseeable, Israeli power will remain but its utility will be limited to defense and denial, including the denial of regional or subregional hegemony to other, more viable aspirants to that role.

If, however, the conflict is resolved or somehow is managed to the point where its intensity is defused, it is conceivable that other regional actors, in pursuit of their own interests, will become less resistant to Israeli incentives and disincentives to align themselves in ways more congenial to Israeli physical and psychic well-being, that is, to the sticks and carrots, "hard" and "soft," that are generally found in the toolkit necessary for leadership of any kind. Even then, the kind of kindred feeling that makes many Australians, Canadians, and Britons fairly comfortable with the United States and that gives some eastern European Slavs a sense of affinity with Russia is highly unlikely to emerge. But even a muting of the emotional resistance to the idea of openly associating with Israel might well generate opportunities, if not for American-, Russian-, or even Iranian-, Turkish-, and Saudi-style leadership, then at least for the kind of beneficial institutionalized participation in regional or subregional frameworks that has eluded Israel for all of its independent existence.

Notes

1. See, for example, David W. Lesch, "Will Syria War Mean End of Sykes-Picot?" *Al-Monitor*, August 12, 2013, http://www.al-monitor.

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2. Daniel Laken, "The Leaderless Middle East," *The National Interest*, September 13, 2013, http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-leaderless-middle-east-9036
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   Israel is the world leader in startups per capita.
   Israel is the world leader in patents per capita.
   Israel has the third-highest rate of entrepreneurship in the world.
   Israel is 17th in the total number of Nobel laureates (though only 96th in population).
   Israel is the only country that entered the twenty-first century with a net gain in the number of trees.
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10. See, for example, Gallia Lindenstrauss and Oded Eran, "The Kurdish Awakening and the Implications for Israel," *Strategic Assessment*, vol. 17, no.1 (April 2014).
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13. Lest this be dismissed as an example of Middle Eastern "exceptionalism," it is worth recalling that similar patterns were observable during the Yugoslavian civil war, not just in the form of Muslim identification with Bosnians and Kosovars but also in the form of sympathy among Orthodox Russians and Greeks for Serbian coreligionists.

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PART V

Saudi Arabia—More than Petrodollars

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CHAPTER 10

Saudi Arabia: A Conservative P(l)ayer on the Retreat?

Thomas Richter

1 Introduction

As major events since the beginning of the Arab uprisings in 2011 have shown, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has started to regain a more active; some would even call it an aggressive role as a regional player in the Middle East. In relative contrast to the first decade of the twenty-first century, when many observers have lamented about a largely stagnant foreign policy decision-making process in Riyadh, pointing to the overly gerontocratic structure of the top members of the ruling Al Saud family, the timing and scope of recent core foreign policy decisions provide strong evidence that the Kingdom wants to be perceived as a regional actor shaping the Middle East power arenas according to own preferences and interests. To name just a few significant events: In early 2011 shortly after waves of social protests started to spread over large parts of the Arab world, the Saudi leadership promised to support Bahrain and Oman with an amount of up to USD 20 billion of emergency aid. This Saudi cash infusion was intended to maintain the traditional monarchical power base within these two Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states. In mid-March 2011, Saudi-led GCC military convoys crossed the King Fahd Causeway offering military support to the ruling Al Khalifa family by backing up national Bahraini forces, which were starting to quell social unrest. On May 10, 2011, then, a possible GCC membership was offered to Jordan and Morocco, the two remaining resource-poor monarchies in the Middle East, upon a major initiative of the Saudi King Abdullah. In 2012, Saudi Arabia became one of the most outspoken diplomatic supporters of the anti-regime forces in Syria, even though it

took until the summer of 2013 that Riyadh officially announced its open support of specific Syrian rebel groups. In July 2013, one week after the coup in Egypt, in which the first ever elected Egyptian president Muhammad Mursi was toppled by the military, the Saudi government declared a financial emergency package promising about USD 5 billion to the junta in Cairo. On December 29 the same year, a USD 3 billion Saudi support package was made public to equip the Lebanese army with fresh French weapons and military equipment. In March 2014, Riyadh provided Pakistan with a grant of about USD 1.5 billion, which in all likelihood will pay off for the Saudis in some not yet officially announced strategic support by the Pakistani government. Taken together, can this self-instauration of a more active regional policy be interpreted as part of a Saudi strategy to grasp some kind of regional leadership in the near future? Or are these policy actions only part of a final burst by a conservative monarchical p(l)ayer on the retreat?

According to standard definitions (Nolte 2010: 893), a regional power has to fulfill at least three necessary conditions: The articulation of the pretension to be in a leading regional position, the display of the material and ideological resources for regional power protection, and the exercise of true influence in regional affairs. Over the last few years and especially since 2011, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has shown tremendous investments in all of these dimensions. The Kingdom regularly formulates its willingness for taking the lead in important regional political initiatives. Blessed by a plenty of additional oil revenues due to the increase of world energy prices since the mid-2000s, the Saudi government has effectively demonstrated its fiscal potency by distributing material resources to its allies all over the Middle East. And, last but not least, the Saudi king continues to exercise a unique role within the region and the broader Muslim world as the custodian of the two holiest places of Islam, Mecca and Medina. Ideally, these aspects would suffice to qualify for being considered to be in a regional leadership position.

After a short summary on the status of Saudi foreign policy strategies based on the reading of some of the most important accounts in the existing literature (section 2), this article assesses some structural conditions of the potential of Saudi Arabia to be a regional power (section 3). This section concludes that Saudi Arabia has a considerable potential for regional powership in the Middle East. However, both the lack of endogenous military capabilities and the religious tradition of Wahhabism as a historical form of puritanical interpretation of Islam have and will further constrain the Kingdom's eventual rise to regional leadership. Section 4 studies in more detail the Kingdom's modern military power structures showing that in addition to the layering of different segments the Saudi military forces most often lack the necessary capability to convincingly fight or threaten to fight a major interstate war. Section 5 discusses the

historical background which led to the political coincidence of the emergence of Wahhabism and Al Saud's political rule highlighting the religious and normative constraints, which result from this alliance for the Saudi claim to regional leadership. The sixth and final section concludes and points to some of the ongoing and future developments in regard to the Kingdom's active role in regional Middle East politics after the Arab uprisings.

2 Characteristics of Saudi Foreign Policy

Until the mid-1950s, Saudi Arabia was more or less inactive in both regional and international politics. The Kingdom's main concern at that time was "to consolidate a territorially and socially expanding habitat and thereby to become an Arab state equal in scope with the Arabian peninsula" (Sullivan 1970: 436). It was only in the 1960s that Saudi Arabia emerged as a regional leader of the group of conservative states, trying to balance the waves of Arab nationalists' rhetoric and actions led by the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser and other pan-Arab figures. Sullivan for instance argues that *Einkreisung*—the myth of threatening encirclement—became a major psychological factor determining Saudi foreign policy since that time. This motivation was also at the heart of the Kingdom's interest in stabilizing the regional system's equilibrium by maintaining its existing balance of power (438).

More recent accounts describe Saudi Arabia as an omni-balancer, trying to counterweight between threats and challenges within the domestic, the regional, as well as the global level simultaneously.[1] Nonneman for instance argues that part of this behavior is a strategy of managed multi-dependency as a major policy preference (2005: 351). Or put differently, as Aarts has argued, Saudi foreign policy maintains polygamous relations walking on a tightrope (Aarts 2007). Being interested in the domestic long-term power maintenance by the Al Saud ruling family, the two major foreign policy goals of the Kingdom were to prevent the emergence of hegemons in the Middle East subregion as well as to maintain the Saudi claim toward a hegemonic role on the Arabian Peninsula by "asserting the right to be the dominant foreign partner for Yemen and the smaller monarchical states that with it make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)" (Gause III 2002: 196). Gause continues to argue that

> when faced with situations where conventional power measures would dictate one kind of balancing policy, and regime security considerations would dictate another, Riyadh has tended to balance against the potential source of domestic threat and support the more conventionally "power" but not obviously threatening actor in regional disputes. (Gause III 2002: 197)

3 The Potential of Saudi Regional Leadership

With an official population of 27.1 million inhabitants,[2] Saudi Arabia is after Egypt (92 million in 2012), Iran (73.6 million in 2010), Turkey (76.6 million in 2013), and Iraq (31.7 million estimated in 2009)[3] the fifth largest country in the Middle East. In 2012 the Saudi Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was reported to be the second largest in the region reaching a level of over USD 497.6 billion constant 2005 behind Turkey with USD 628.4 billion (The World Bank, 2014).[4] The Saudi GDP per capita, also in constant 2005 USD, was at 17,591 in 2012. Only Israel had a higher GDP per capita among regional power contenders in the same year (23,091 constant 2005 USD).

The major source of the Kingdom's economic power stems from its unique and massive reservoirs of hydrocarbon resources. While it has large natural gas reserves, gas production is still very limited. The majority of Saudi hydrocarbons consist of crude oil. The Kingdom maintains the world's largest oil production capacity. Oil export revenues typically comprise between 80 to 90 percent of fiscal earnings for the government. In 2013, Saudi crude oil production was almost 9,700,000 barrels a day, leading to an annual amount of export revenues of over current USD 270 billion (Economist Intelligence Unit 2014). Actually, the Kingdom controls almost one quarter of global oil production and roughly 20 percent of proven world oil reserves. Riyadh is the world's major swing producer, being able to either shrink or expand the production of crude oil in order to control prices upon a certain degree or to meet additional demand. Mainly due to the favorable developments of world energy prices, the Kingdom has actually stocked an amount of over current USD 730 billion as international reserves at its central bank. This is an amount, which would exceed 300 percent of all planned state expenditures for the current (2014) government budget.

Due to its economic strength the Kingdom is member of the G20, an informal gathering of the finance ministers and central bank governors of the 20 largest world economies, who regularly meet in order to cooperate and consult on matters pertaining to the global financial system. Riyadh is a founding member and the largest producer of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Since the 1960s, Riyadh has given large amounts of money not only to the Arab frontline states, that is those states that share direct boarders with Israel, but also to many other resource-poor members of the Arab League. The Kingdom has also generously supported nonstate movements like the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and fiscally backed up Iraq during the war with the Islamic Republic of Iran in the 1980s. The policy of donating money for political and social purpose to other regimes or social and

political groups throughout the Middle East has been a major tradition of a Saudi *riyalpolitik*.

In addition to material wealth and economic strength Riyadh's regional and to a certain degree also global importance rests upon its unique role as the host of the two holiest sites of Islam in Mecca and Medina. The Hejaz, where both cities are located, is a landscape in the Western part of Saudi Arabia. Being the cradle of Islam, it was eventually conquered by Saudi forces shortly after World War I in 1925. Since then it makes up for an important regional and symbolic entity of the Saudi state and its monarchical regime. In 1986, the then Saudi king, Fahd, began to make more specific use of this historic-religious role by adapting the official majestic title of the *custodian of the two holy mosques*, which is a traditional term usually taken by the political ruler, who controls access to the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet's mosque in Medina. As one of the five pillars of Islam prescribes, every Muslim should once in a lifetime conduct a pilgrimage (Hajj, in Arabic) during the last month of the Islamic calendar. Over 3 million Muslims have performed this religious ceremony in 2012, the absolute majority of them were non-Saudi citizens.[5] Saudi ambitions to promote the Kingdom as the center and leader of Islam are also demonstrated by looking at major initiatives of founding and funding global Islamic organizations like the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Muslim World League or the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (Gause III 2011).

Last but not least, the foundation of the GCC,[6] a supranational body with an exclusive membership by all Gulf monarchies (these are, in addition to the Saudi Kingdom, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, and the State of Kuwait), more than 30 years ago in May 1981, was one of the single most important regional policy achievements of Riyadh throughout the twentieth century (Fürtig, 1993). Despite recurrent conflicts between its members[7] and lasting periods of stagnancy, the GCC is among the most effective regional organizations outside of Europe and North America (Legrenzi 2011; Richter 2011). Under the lead of Riyadh, security concerns were among the major founding motivations due to a changing regional power balance at the end of the 1970s. The intention was to build up a symbolic and more formalized collective security structure balancing new regional threats, which originated in the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan (both in 1979), and the beginning of the War between Iran and Iraq in September 1980. During the late 1990s the GCC developed, again under the leadership of Saudi Arabia, toward an ambiguous project of economic and social regional integration. This latest wave of regional integration was based in principle on the idea of free movements of goods and persons within and among GCC member states.

Despite tremendous amounts of fiscal resources in addition to recurrent efforts by Riyadh to pretend a leading regional position the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia still fails to be considered as a leading regional power. If at all, Riyadh exercises a true degree of hegemony over the Arabian Peninsula. Its historical domination of the GCC might be a good indicator of this spatially limited power status, even though the Saudis are periodically challenged by some of the smaller monarchies depending on the issue area. In December 2013, for instance, the Sultanate of Oman disagreed to the Saudi suggestions of further integrating the GCC.

While the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia depicts great potential to be considered a regional power, however, it seems to be more appropriate to call Riyadh a defensive power, most often only reacting rather than proactively starting new initiatives in regional affairs. As the potential for regional leadership is concerned, most experts on Saudi foreign policy would unanimously agree that the Kingdom is relatively weak militarily, lacks the population base as well as the ideological disposition to play a hegemonic role in the Middle East (e.g., Gause III 2011).

Looking at the potential for Saudi regional leadership in the current Middle East, there are two interesting aspects worth to be discussed more specifically. Both are able to shed light on some of the historical and actual limitations of Riyadh's regional power status. First, despite unmatchable amounts of Saudi money spend for defense systems and military equipment, the Kingdom lacks military strength due to the failure of not utilizing its official military capabilities. Second, Wahhabism, a specific Saudi version of a puritanical Islamic reform movement dating back to developments in the eighteenth-century central Arabian Najd region, which at its core includes a very strict and largely exclusive interpretation of Islam, hampers the acceptance of a large number of Saudi policy decisions by many relevant political actors throughout the Middle East. If at least one of these two major constraints could be overcome, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would be possibly capable to take a lead as a more proactive Middle East regional power.

4 The Kingdom's Lack of Endogenous Military Capabilities

At the end of April 2014, Saudi military forces, which according to press reports have involved over 130,000 troops, conducted a unique military exercise code-named "Abdullah's Shield" in the Northwestern part of the country. At this occasion Riyadh for the first time ever publicly displayed its aging intermediate-range ballistic missiles, bought from China during the 1980s (Riedel 2014). The event was just one among many recent signs that the Saudi leadership has started to increasingly

conceive regional developments as a matter of simultaneous but multiple security threats from different angles. In addition to domestic opposition groups, who potentially could initiate social unrest, like for instance Shiite communities in the Eastern province, potential threats are considered to especially emanate from inside Syria and the Islamist fighting groups like Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), from Iraqi Shiite militias and from Yemen-based armed groups associated with either the Houthis in the north or Al-Qaida in the south (al-Buluwi 2014). The ongoing nuclear talks with the Islamic Republic of Iran and the potential recognition of Iranian nuclear power puts additional pressure on Saudi Arabia, which Riyadh tries to deter by demonstrating its own military capabilities including the potential to acquire nuclear warheads through Pakistan (Urban 2013).

A significant structural reaction to recent regional developments has been a massive expansion of the Saudi defense budget. As recent estimates of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) show looking at annual military expenditures worldwide, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is now fourth in line after the United States, China, and Russia as military spending is concerned (Sam Perlo-Freeman and Carina Solmirano, 2014). Lacking an advanced domestic defense industry, the Saudi Kingdom is the biggest de facto buyer of foreign weapons and security systems on the globe. Riyadh's military spending has more than doubled over the last decade reaching an amount of current USD 67 billion in 2013. Among the major recent military investments were for instance the purchase of 72 Eurofighter Typhoon and 84 American F-15 fighter jets, in addition to 100 German patrol and border control boats as well as Canadian-manufactured armored vehicles.

Despite Riyadh's obvious willingness to massively improve its military capacities and possibly also to acquire a nuclear deterrence capability, there remain major doubts concerning the efficiency and effectiveness of the majority of Saudi military forces. The latest event of Saudi militaries fighting under combat conditions relates back to an armed confrontation with Houthi rebels at the Saudi-Yemeni border in December 2009 and January 2010. The evolution of a series of combats is a telling example of the continuous deficiencies of the Saudi armed forces. As existing reports indicate, the Saudi government declared the direct military confrontations over only after Houthi rebel groups ceded Saudi territory they had previously occupied. Despite massive air raids, Saudi land forces were apparently unable to take Saudi territory back by force fighting against war-experienced Yemeni-based rebels.

Traditionally, an important aspect in explaining the current weakness of the Saudi armed forces was the interest of the Al Saud family to avoid the establishment of a strong and united national army as the potential backbone of social and later political modernization processes. During

past decades, Saudi military and paramilitary forces were therefore mainly built up as an instrument of political legitimation. The co-optation of important tribal elements and the funneling of material resources toward them has been a major function of Saudi armed forces development right from the beginning of modern state building after World War II. An unconventional national army structured around important members of the Al Saud or other loyal families and tribes has especially throughout the 1960s and 1970s helped to reduce the likelihood of coups. It therefore contributed as an important factor to the survival of the existing Al Saud regime. This special role of the Saudi armed forces is also reflected by the fact that the Kingdom has no general conscription:

> Saudi Arabia has had to be cautious about recruiting from regions, such as the Hejaz, which opposed the Saudi conquest in the 1920s and 1930s, and from rival tribes. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism among the poorer and more tribal Saudis, coupled with long-standing hostility among a number of tribes and the Hejaz, have placed additional limits on the Saudi recruiting base and the groups it can conscript from. As a result, the armed forces drew heavily on most of the tribal and regional groupings on which they can count for political support. (A. Cordesman 2003: 52)

A second major reason for the weak endogenous capabilities of the Saudi armed forces relates back to the social habits underlying the Saudi political system and its society.[8] These habits relate to the overarching influence of informal structures and personal fiefdoms. Even though the level of education and experience of military forces has improved strikingly during the last three or four decades, the military remains mainly an instrument of co-optation and privilege in which command structures are highly personalized: "...informal relationships often define real authority and promotion, and the Saudi Royal family maintains tight control over operations, deployments, procurement, and all other aspects of Saudi military spending" (2003: 47). What therefore most often lacks is a consistent military command structure "...to translate strategic ideas into operational and mission-oriented war fighting capability" (A. Cordesman 2003: 48). These deficits are reinforced by the typical social behavior predominant in Saudi society, which is also prevalent within the army: "...no Saudi officer will ever fail another Saudi officer, and that to reject the son or nephew of a friend is an insult" (A. Cordesman 2003: 61). Overall the Saudi armed forces suffer from similar problems of manpower quality and motivation as has been known from other sectors of the Saudi labor market and has previously described to be a major problem for most Arab armies (Atkine 1999).

Eventually this led to what Cordesman calls a compensation strategy (2003: 52–53). The operation of the Saudi military is heavily dependent on foreign support and technicians. There were, and still are, small elements of foreign forces employed in key military specialties and technical areas within the Kingdom. The Saudi defense strategy concentrates mainly on a fully effective air force as a first line of deterrence in addition to a de facto reliance on over-the-horizon reinforcement by the United States and Western allies to deal with high-level or enduring regional conflicts. The problem of force development exists throughout all military forces in Saudi Arabia. As Cordesman et al. explain in their latest version of the Gulf Military Balance:

> Saudi purchase of equipment are not yet matched by effective training, exercise, and sustainability…The problems are compounded by a lack of combined arms and joint warfare training and the truly effective battle management capabilities and related command, control, communications, computers, intelligence/battle management (C4I/BM) and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (IS&R) systems. (A. H. Cordesman et al. 2014: 99)

5 Wahhabism as an Impediment to Acceptance as a Regional Leader in the Middle East

Saudi state building is largely based on the association between the political power of the Al Saud family on the one hand and the religious legitimacy of Wahhabism on the other. Built on the political alliance between the founder of the puritanical reforming Muwahhidun movement Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the chief of the Saud clan Muhammad ibn Saud in the mid-1800s, Wahhabism and Al Saud political rule have transformed into one of the most tightly knit social coalitions within contemporary Arab regimes. Today, this historical constellation constitutes a major factor for the explanation of the long-term monarchical survival of the Saudi regime.[9] In contrast to the stabilizing function of Wahhabism as a puritanical way of interpreting Islam, many aspects of the traditional Wahhabi mission have been a handicap for Riyadh's contemporary regional ambitions. A central element in this context relates to a very strong exclusionary and missionary tendency of the central Wahhabi belief system. Historically speaking this combination was instrumental for outward state expansion starting from the Najd, the Arabian region, where Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud originally confirmed their political alliance. Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud, the founder of the modern Saudi state, was eager to find his political ambitions fulfilled by relying upon Wahhabi tribal forces, known as the Ikhwan, which were motivated by exactly these missionary expansionist beliefs.

Looking at the wider Middle East region, however, the normative reference to a puritanical and exclusionary version of Islam bears a number of inherent discrepancies. While domestically grown transnational Islamic terrorism is only part of the problem—the resilient hostility among parts of the Wahhabi establishment toward the strategic alliance of the Al Saud with the United States and other Western forces was for instance one of the reasons that groups like Al-Qaida found so much resonance among the Saudi society, even though, most senior Wahhabi scholars have always been willing to legitimize major foreign policy decisions by the Al Saud family—the major challenge for the potential of Saudi leadership, however, relates to the acceptance of an extremely exclusionary religiously legitimized claim used to explain, understand, and legitimize political action by other, non-Wahhabi regional political and social actors. As the core of this problem stands the takfirist paradigm (Steinberg 2005: 14; Determann 2013: 27), which is prominently featured in Wahhabi texts dating back to the earliest historiographical writings from the Najd in the late seventeenth century. As a principle of excommunication, recurrently used by Saudi ulama until today, it potentially labels all non-Wahhabi believers as infidels. Based on such a strict and inflexible religious standard, Wahhabism becomes a contradictory and unstable basis for a transnational normative frame of reference. As a state-building belief system it therefore seems to lack the necessary pragmatic openness to support the role of a potential regional leader in such a religiously and ethnically fragmented and politicized region as the Middle East. Especially among Shia groups, it is absolutely inconceivable that such an exclusionary belief system could emerge as an alternative and acceptable worldview. But also among Sunni orthodox social segments, its use as a normative frame of reference is highly contested, pointing to a far-ranging normative and theological dissent as the discussions and political conflicts between the ruling faction of the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood (Muhammad Mursi was Egyptian president between June 2012 and July 2013) and the Al Saud have demonstrated. The historical attempt by King Faisal to use pan-Islamism as an alliance-building tool in the Arab cold war between Egypt and Saudi Arabia during the 1950s and 1960s, designed mainly as an answer to Nasser's secular Arab nationalism, was therefore largely misleading as Hegghammer explains: "…the promotion of pan-Islamism under King Faisal was somewhat ironic given the Wahhabi ulama's historical hostility towards non-Wahhabi Muslims. Up until the early twentieth century, Wahhabi scholars often did not consider non-Wahhabis as Muslims at all" (Hegghammer 2010: 17).

6 Conclusion

What lessons can be drawn from the previous discussion of the potentials as well as the constraints of Saudi regional leadership? The new activism of

the Saudi leadership post–Arab uprisings is striking. It points to the Saudi policy makers' perception of multiple security threats, which increasingly get to seen as surrounding the Kingdom. Armed anti-Saudi rebel groups operate in weak or failed states at the northern and southern frontiers. A potential Shiite nuclear power to the east will create a novel challenge for Saudi regional ambitions. Equipped with plenty of fresh oil revenues, the Saudi leadership has fallen back to well-known patterns of managing regional affairs. On the one hand, the fortification of *Riyalpolitik*, feeding Middle East confederates with oil money has risen to new heights. On the other hand, the securitization of regional affairs by demonstrating military strength, increasing measures of frontier defense, and an intensified domestic discourse on security issues constitutes a second component of Riyadh's reactions to the recent changes in the Middle East. Also, the reactivation of close contact to old extra-regional partners like Pakistan rests on historical patterns. Pakistani security forces were crucial during the 1980s shielding the Kingdom from potential threats due to the Iran-Iraq War.

However, to therefore call Riyadh to be in a regional leadership position would be a grave misinterpretation of recent events. What the Saudi strategy sadly lacks is a collective and developmentalist vision for the Middle East, which, at the same time, would be acceptable by as many regional actors as possible. Even for the Arabian Peninsula, the existing ideas of Saudi regional policies are still fragmentary. Among GCC members, for instance, state sovereignty is by far not the only reason, why a further integration of the Union is so deeply contested. As the recent confrontation about the status of the Muslim Brotherhood has shown, conflicts about the existence and role of non-Wahhabi religious groups are a matter of increasing concerns. This is as important for Shia communities in Kuwait and Bahrain as well as for the Ibadi majority in Oman.

Oil-based fiscal potency and a focused improvement of military deterrence may eventually only delay the retreat of the Saudi Kingdom as a conservative p(l)ayer in the Middle East. Only a much more collectivist stance based on an integrative normative and institutional frame will, in the end, provide a lasting base for the rise and acceptance of Riyadh as a true regional power.

Notes

1. See as a most recent example Ennis and Momani (2013).
2. Data are official data from 2010 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014). The World Development Indicators report 28.3 million inhabitants for the Saudi Kingdom in 2013. The average degree of population growth between 2000 and 2012 has been above 3 percent a year (The World Bank 2014).

3. All data are from the respective Economist Intelligence Unit country report as of April 2014.
4. All data are in constant 2005 US Dollars. GDP levels for the other regional power candidates are: Iran 245.2, Israel 182.6, and Egypt 125.8 billion (The World Bank 2014).
5. http://www.saudiembassy.net/latest_news/news10271201.aspx. Retrieved April 4, 2014.
6. The official name is The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, see http://www.gcc-sg.org/. Retrieved April 28, 2014.
7. The withdrawal of Bahraini, Saudi, and UAE ambassadors from Doha in early March 2014 due to the conflict about Qatar's role in supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and possibly in other Middle East countries is one of the most severe examples for a frequent pattern demonstrating the absence of an institutionalized conflict management system among GCC member states.
8. See for instance Mayton (1977) for an historical and interesting inside analysis of some of these aspects.
9. See for a most recent explanation of monarchical survival throughout the Middle East, which also looks at additional explanatory conditions of monarchical rule Bank, Richter, and Sunik (2013).

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CHAPTER 11

Saudi Arabia and the Arab Spring: Opportunities and Challenges of Security

Saud Mousaed Al Tamamy

1 Introduction

In the era of the Arab Spring,[1] Saudi Arabia has been one of a very small group of relatively unaffected Arab countries. Although there is increasing economic, social, and political pressure on the state, the Kingdom remains immune from the surprisingly widespread political upheavals; this immunity reveals mainly that the Saudi state's sources of legitimacy are deeper than is usually conceived abroad. To put things into a wider context, changes within the domestic Saudi environment, which take the form of pressures, demands, and responses, were beginning gradually to occur long before the Arab Spring (having followed the 1990–1991 Gulf War). To this extent, we can speak about Saudi Arabia before the Arab Spring as "a kingdom in transition through evolution, not revolution." In fact, the Arab Spring is merely a milestone, like many others that the Kingdom has previously had to contend with. However, it may just be the most important milestone so far, since it represents an intensification and accumulation of the previous milestones that may result in certain long-term though conditional changes within the domestic Saudi environment. The impact of the Arab Spring on Saudi Arabia's domestic environment requires a separate and detailed analysis, and therefore will not be part of this chapter's inquiry.

The intention of this chapter is to examine the impact of the Arab Spring on Saudi Arabia's geopolitical environment. Not only has the Arab Spring affected the domestic environment of nations in the Arab World

and the wider Middle East; it has also been changing the dynamics and alignments within the region, although some aspects of these changes had already occurred before the events of the Arab Spring. Therefore, while there have been no immediate consequences for the Kingdom, changes within the strategic (regional and international) environment represent the real effects of the Arab Spring on Saudi Arabia, mainly the form of challenges and opportunities at the regional level. I argue that the stability enjoyed by Saudi Arabia should enable Riyadh to play a pivotal role in Middle East politics and enhance its status at the head of the fragile regional order.[2] Such a pivotal role and status does, however, require the Kingdom to choose the best opportunities for tackling the regional challenges by exercising its influence and being more assertive in the conduct of its foreign policy.

On the theoretical front, this chapter shows that the Realist-Westphalian narrative[3] can provide a credible explanation for the dynamics of Saudi relations within a geopolitical environment during the post–Arab Spring era over the dominant narrative of the "Saudi counter-revolution" policy. The latter narrative ignores the complexity of the Saudi response vis-à-vis the impact of the Arab Spring. For example, while the Kingdom has contained the impact of the Arab Spring in some of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries such as Bahrain and Oman, it also invited Jordan and Morocco, which are moving toward their own interpretation of constitutional monarchy, to join that regional bloc in May 2011. This invitation challenges and refutes the accusations leveled at Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, the Kingdom has accepted, and adapted to, the new post–Arab Spring emerging political systems in certain other cases such as Tunisia and Egypt. In other cases, Riyadh has worked (or is working) for regime change in Libya and Syria. In Yemen, Saudi Arabia facilitated a peaceful transition of power that changed the status quo. In all these cases, the bottom line in determining the dynamics of the Saudi response toward the impact of the Arab Spring has been exclusively the political realities on ground and the security and interests of the Saudi state. Thus it is clear that the Kingdom's response to the Arab Spring was determined by the need to preserve the regional status quo, or alter it toward a more favorable direction. This shows that overcoming the simplistic ideological narrative of Saudi counterrevolutionism in favor of a deeper examination based on the Realist-Westphalian narrative of Saudi foreign policy is needed, as this chapter will show in detail.

This chapter is divided into three parts, the first of which deals with pre-Arab Spring changes within the Kingdom's international and regional environments, including an outline of the main changes within Saudi foreign policy patterns; these had their roots prior to the Arab Spring, and are expected to continue in the coming years. The second is a detailed discussion of Saudi Arabia's post–Arab Spring strategic challenges and

opportunities. The third part is devoted to general remarks on Saudi foreign policy in an era of greater challenges and threats.

2 Pre-Arab Spring Changes in International and Regional Environments

2.1 Changes within Saudi-US Relations

Although the United States is the only superpower capable of providing an ultimate security guarantee to the Kingdom through training and equipping the Saudi armed forces, there has always been a Saudi desire to establish and enhance ties with other global powers (Nonneman 2005: 328, 334). This has intensified during the last decade as a result of growing mistrust between the Kingdom and the United States caused by two developments. First, the attacks on US soil in 2001 (known as 9/11) disrupted many aspects of the bilateral relationship. Second, the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 triggered a number of strategic and internal challenges for the Saudi government (see: Branson 2006: 248–262; also: Foley 2010: 141–142). In 2007, the United States did not welcome King Abdullah's statement that "Iraq is under an illegitimate occupation."[4] Furthermore, Riyadh is still resisting American demands to accommodate the Iraqi prime minister Nori al-Maliki.

2.2 Growing Iranian Influence since 2003

Since the Islamic revolution of 1979, Iran has presented a symbolic, strategic, and internal challenge to Saudi Arabia. Such challenges originate from Iran's growing influence in the region, and are enhanced by the ideological, sectarian, ethnic, and historic differences between the two neighbors. Much of recent Saudi regional and international politics has been undertaken because of the need to counter perceived Iranian hegemony.

Iran's symbolic challenge is represented by the country's claim to Islamic leadership and its pursuit of delegitimizing the Saudi regime. More importantly, although representing a minority within the Islamic Ummah, Iran has repeatedly challenged Saudi sovereignty over the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina, and its sole administration of Islamic rituals. In the mid-1980s these challenges prompted the late King Fahd to issue a decree establishing the title "the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques" as the official title for Saudi kings.

Iran's strategic threat to Saudi Arabia has four forms. The first is that Iran presents itself as the hegemonic power in the Gulf. This is expressed by dozens of statements by high-ranking officials and military commanders. Iran's strategic threat to the Gulf is demonstrated by Tehran's

continuous threat to block the Straits of Hormuz when it feels in danger (Mostafavi 2011). The second aspect of Iran's strategic threat is its growing ability to influence war and peace decisions in the Middle East. Iran is now able decisively to influence war and peace decisions throughout the Middle East because of its control over Hezbollah in Lebanon and its strong ties to Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza. This was best demonstrated by the 2006 Lebanon war, described officially by Saudi Arabia as an "adventure." The fact that Riyadh has far less influence on Middle Eastern war and peace issues poses serious strategic threats to its stability and welfare.

The third form is Iran's decisive influence over Iraqi politics after the fall of Saddam. From a Saudi point of view Iraq, which borders the Kingdom, has become a platform for Iran's influence in the Fertile Crescent and in the Gulf. The fourth is the Iranian nuclear program. There is a commonly held belief that Iranian nuclear capability will not be targeting the already existing and far more capable nuclear powers, such as the Western powers or even Israel. Rather, it is aimed on the one hand at providing a security umbrella for the current Iranian regime and on the other, at consolidating Iranian hegemony over its Arab neighbors. With the current symbolic challenges and strategic threats by Iran, an Iranian nuclear bomb is viewed as an existential threat to Saudi Arabia.

The internal Iranian threat comes from its alleged ties with the Shia of the Gulf. Potentially, Iran could employ its prestigious theological and cultural position as a stronghold of Shiʿism to mobilize Shia activists politically within Saudi Arabia and other GCC member states (Cordesman 2009: 20). Iran's ability to achieve its goals by this method has proved to be limited. However, it is still able to use and heighten the atmosphere of distrust between Shia minorities in Saudi Arabia and the other members of the GCC, and the wider Sunni communities and governments surrounding them, to its advantage.[5]

2.3 Changes within Saudi Foreign Policy's Patterns

The pre-Arab Spring changes in the Kingdom's international and regional environments have produced four changes within Saudi foreign policy patterns. These changes show a level of flexibility and adaptability that has enabled the Kingdom to face the negative consequences of the changes in its international and regional environments. The first of these changes relates to its decision- making process. Saudi foreign policy has moved from what can be called an "oasis decision- making process" to an increasingly representative decision-making process. The current process, related to foreign affairs, is an evolution of the decision-making process of the pre-state Najdi oasis, like Dirʿiyyah, the oasis that was ruled by the House of Saud before their expansion in Arabia. According

to Al-Nuʿaim, the oasis decision-making process reflects the dominant and tributary character of pre-state socioeconomic arrangements, which centralized power in the hands of the Sheikhs of the Najdi oasis and their inner circles (Al-Nuʿaim 2000: 96). It means that although broader society, including clerics, was assimilated within the broader decision-making process, and its interests were protected, managing relations with the outside world was in the hands of a selected minority of the ruling elite. In this case, the political regime works as a buffer between society and the outside world (Nonnemann (2005): 318).

Although exclusive and lacking transparency, the oasis decision-making process has given Saudi foreign policy two important characteristics that distinguish it from the decision-making processes of its neighbors' foreign policy. These characteristics are pragmatism and accumulation of experience. The fact that designing foreign policy has been in the hands of a few selected members of the ruling elite enables the Kingdom to conduct a pragmatic and consistent foreign policy, in contrast to the ideologically inspired foreign affairs of most of its neighbors.

However, Saudi foreign policy is becoming more representative due to influence from an increasingly sophisticated society and the need for multidimensional relations with the outside world, increasingly institutionalized decision-making process, a growing national conciseness, and new media (Nonnemann 2005: 336). One example of this is the Kingdom's current rhetoric arguing against a potential US veto against the Palestinian bid for statehood status at the United Nations.

The second of the changes in patterns is that Saudi foreign policy has moved from vague to solid institutionalism. Saudi Arabia situates itself as a central force within a number of regional and international institutions, such as the GCC, the Arab League (AL), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. This leading position allows Riyadh to mobilize many countries within a fragile institutional framework that does not force clear and definite responsibilities on the member states. This situation is in the Kingdom's favor, since it employs its leading position with these institutions to compensate for institutional gaps by employing rhetoric that serves its interests, such as Arab brotherhood, Islamic solidarity, or oil price stability, depending on the institution and/or situation.

Among these regional institutions, the GCC has acquired special importance as an exclusively Saudi-led regional institution. Some recent developments suggest that the GCC is moving toward becoming a coherent economic, political, and military bloc, based on a solid institutionalized framework. The GCC's united initiative in Yemen, its collective role in Bahrain, and the ongoing attempt for monetary union are examples of the GCC becoming a solid institution. The peak of these developments was the recent call of the Saudi king to transform

the GCC into a "single entity" (Alsharif and McDowall 2011). In general, solidifying Saudi leadership over the GCC through further institutionalization shows that Riyadh is enthusiastic about playing a far more vital role in regional affairs on one hand, and the acceptance of the other GCC members to that role on the other, in what might be called "hegemonic cooperation" (Nolte 2010: 894–896; also see Destradi 2010: 907).[6] The existence of a common strategic competitor such as Iran, plays an important role in this enthusiasm and acceptance (Hurrell 1995: 342).

The third pattern change is that Saudi foreign policy moved from consensual foreign policy to confrontation. Since ensuring regional stability is a priority for Saudi foreign policy, Riyadh often avoids open confrontation with its adversaries, and tends to adopt more accommodating policies toward them. Riyadh, for example, received the Iranian president, Ahmadinejad, three times in the Kingdom during the first term of his presidency, and the Saudi king walked hand in hand with him at a GCC summit. However, the Kingdom appears to have changed this approach and nowadays is conducting an increasingly assertive agenda. A recent example was the tough rhetoric employed against Syria, and Riyadh's isolationist policy toward the Iraqi government led by Nouri al-Maliki. More importantly, in 2011, the late Saudi Crown Prince Naif bin ʿAbdulaziz ruled out any possibility of compromise with Iran.[7] More remarkably, and in an unprecedented move, Saudi Arabia rejected a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council, and some analysts suggested that Riyadh might be planning to conduct a foreign policy that aims at protecting itself and its allies. This transformation of Saudi foreign policy from consensus toward confrontation is caused by three interlinked factors: the high level of polarization within the Kingdom's geopolitical environment; Riyadh's decreasing confidence in the US commitment to preserving stability and security in the region, especially after the US invasion of Iraq; and the growing self-confidence in the Kingdom's domestic capabilities.

These three factors have also contributed to the fourth pattern change, that is, Saudi foreign policy's move from extensive use of long-term soft power to the use of hard power. The Kingdom's regional and international role used to be based exclusively on extensive diplomatic and personal ties, controlling the Arab media in addition to its prestigious position as the cradle of Islam, side-by-side with employing its economic and financial muscles. However, the Kingdom has recently showed a tendency to use its armed forces to achieve foreign policy-related goals. This has happened twice within the past two years: in 2009 against the Houthis of Yemen, and in 2011 in Bahrain. This indicates the high level of tension within Saudi Arabia's regional environment, even before the Arab Spring.[8]

3 Saudi Arabia's Post–Arab Spring Strategic Challenges and Opportunities

Changes within the strategic (regional and international) environment constitute the real consequences of the Arab Spring which has been altering the dynamics and the alignments within the Middle East, although some aspects of these changes had already occurred before the Arab Spring.[9] Saudi Arabia's post–Arab Spring geostrategic environment creates a mixture of challenges and opportunities. There are five sources of strategic challenges and opportunities. These are the ambiguous relations with pre-Mubarak Egypt and the possibility of an Arab-Israeli war, Saudi leadership of the GCC, potential opportunities in the Fertile Crescent, tactical cooperation with Turkey, and small opportunities and great challenges in Yemen.

3.1 A Conditional Opportunity in Egypt

Post-Mubarak Saudi-Egyptian relations are ambiguous. This is the result of the ambiguous political situation in Egypt itself. When Egypt fell under the Muslim Brotherhood's direct control, as it was the case between June 2012 to July 2012, Egypt posed a serious symbolic and strategic challenge to the Kingdom. Symbolically, there is an opportunity for Egypt to present itself as a competent stronghold of Sunni Islam, a position that Saudi Arabia itself claims. Furthermore, Egypt potentially could have adopted belligerent rhetoric against Israel and the Western powers, which would appeal to the wider Arab public, including Saudis (who are unenthusiastic about Iranian rhetoric for sectarian reasons). This, in a way, might position post-Mubarak Egypt as a threat to Saudi Arabia's internal stability.

Strategically, there was one main source of threats presented by a Muslim Brotherhood-controlled Egypt: the possibility of an Egyptian-Iranian alignment that included Iraq, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas. Such an alignment would not only target Israel and/or Western interests in the region, but would also marginalize Saudi interests regarding any proposed regional arrangements. However, the possibility of such an Egyptian-Iranian alignment was been remarkably reduced as Egyptian president, Muhammad Morsi, seemed to give his country's relations with Saudi Arabia priority over Egypt's relations with any other country in the region by paying his first official visit to the Kingdom. Furthermore, the developments in Syria have worsened Hamas-Iran and Hamas-Syria relations. This situation has led Egypt to become the magnet for Hamas that is expected to replace the old Hamas alliance with Damascus and Tehran.

The military action that led to the overthrown of Morsi provided an opportunity for the Kingdom. It remarkably enhances the status of the

Egyptian Army within that country's political structure. The Army is seen by Riyadh as the only solid institution in Egypt that is capable of providing the minimum requirements of political stability in Egypt, and to regulate its foreign policy. In addition to that, and from purely Saudi perspective, the Army is perceived as the most serious opponent of the restoration of Egyptian-Iranian relations, which ultimately prevents any possibility for extending Tehran's influence. This opportunity, however, is conditional by the Army's ability to lead the transitional period toward a more comprehensive and sustainable political framework that enhances long-run political stability.

3.2 Saudi Leadership of the GCC

As stated earlier, the increased regional challenges and threats to other Arab Gulf states mean that Saudi Arabia has consolidated its status as the undisputed leader of the GCC. This Saudi leadership was demonstrated by the GCC's consensus on sending "Peninsula Shield" to Bahrain and by the GCC initiative in Yemen. Furthermore, within intra-GCC relations, the Kingdom plays a unique role as Equilibrium. For example, while the bilateral relations of Qatar and United Arab Emirates have been going through some difficulties caused by their contrasting policies toward the Muslim Brotherhood ascendency in various Arab countries, Saudi role in coordinating with Doha over the developments in Syria, and with Abu Dhabi over the developments in Egypt mitigates intra-GCC differences and ensures the pioneering role of the GCC in various issues.

Saudi leadership of the GCC does not dispute the fact that Qatar is an important player, and there are signs that the Kingdom has made some progress in accommodating Doha's international and regional role. Furthermore, it is expected that for two reasons Qatar's influence and political initiatives will decline in the long term. First, they are not based on any sort of ideological insight; nor do they reflect the genuine interest of a large sector of society. Rather, the architecture of the Qatari foreign policy is in the hands of a few ambitious and skillful members of the royal family and diplomats, showing that current Qatari foreign policy is dependent on the small group of people who implement it.

The second reason is the expected decline of Qatar's role as a neutral and disinterested mediator in the coming years. During the past decade, Qatar was viewed by most major regional and international players as a small player with no significant political agenda; this resulted in Doha being accepted as a mediator. However, over time Qatar has revealed that it has become a player with an agenda, and it appears that it will be difficult to preserve the same level of trust that Qatar used to enjoy with all other regional and international players. Doha's open support for the Arab Spring has resulted in the Qatari government losing some

of its old allies, such as Hezbollah and pro-Syrian powers in Lebanon, in a way that now makes any future Qatari-style "2008 Doha Accord" interference in Lebanon's domestic policies unthinkable. The more that Qatar expresses its own agenda and promotes its foreign policy, the less likely it is that, as a small state, it will be able either to sustain or afford to continue its current foreign policy increases.[10] Starting from the second half of 2013, Doha seems to follow a far more conservative approach toward regional issues, particularly vis-à-vis developments in Egypt and Syria. This "new character" of Qatari foreign policy is combined with, and probably resulted by, the transfer of power that occurred in June 2013 within the political elite toward a younger generation of leadership. In conclusion, Qatar will lose its ability to launch initiatives in the long term, while Saudi Arabia is becoming more able to accommodate Qatar within the framework of the GCC.

3.3 Potential Opportunities in the Fertile Crescent

The Saudi pre-Arab Spring Fertile Crescent geostrategic front consists of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Iraq currently poses no threat of any kind to Riyadh, at least for the foreseeable future. The exception is Iraq's current position as a platform for Iranian hegemonic influence in the Fertile Crescent and Gulf. Although Riyadh is in contact with certain figures who are influential within the post-Saddam regime, Saudi Arabia refuses to accommodate the current Iraqi government. Therefore, Riyadh's continuous pressure on the new and fragile Iraq has created a sense of solidarity between the new Iraqi political elite and Iran against what they perceive as a common challenge. Such solidarity did not allow the Iraqis to rediscover the elements that differentiate them from their Eastern neighbor; namely the theological, historical, ethnic, and political elements of their national identity. In principle, these differences may lead to a weakening of the Iranian-Iraqi alliance, particularly if the Iraqi Sunni Arabs become more involved in the dynamics of Iraqi politics and gain more influence. A secular, democratic, dominantly Shia, but diverse Iraq will eventually prove to be beneficial to Riyadh. This is because Baghdad then will lack the ability to formulate any hegemonic and expansionist foreign policy agenda, a characteristic of pre-2003 Iraqi foreign policy.

Syria's geopolitical position makes it one of the most important players in the region. Syria borders Israel, which gives it a significant say on matters of war and peace. In addition, it is the only Arab country that borders Lebanon, which makes its influence on that country inevitable. Furthermore, the Syrian desert borders the two main Sunni Iraqi provinces, al-Mousel and al-Anbar. Syria's pre–Arab Spring relationship with the regime of Baghdad was improving. Thus, Syria's good relationships

with both the Iraqi government and the opposition, which are unique to the region, increase Syria's pre-Arab Spring importance.

As the Syrian regime has intensified its ties with Iran, and has jeopardized Saudi Arabia's allies in Lebanon, the Kingdom appears to see an opportunity created by the consequences of the Arab Spring in Syria. A favorable opportunity has arisen to shift the strategic alignment and political arrangements in favor of Saudi Arabia. At the beginning of the uprising in Syria, it seemed that Saudi Arabia had chosen to exercise greater diplomatic and public pressure on the current Syrian regime in order to increase domestic pressure on the regime, thereby depriving it of any credibility. The Kingdom also put some effort into creating a unified Syrian opposition front. The creation of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces under the leadership of Ahmad Jarba is a sign that Riyadh is making efforts to organize the Syrian opposition.

Later on, with the increasing cruelty of the Syrian regime and as a sign of conducting a more representative foreign policy to reflect growing public sympathy with the Syrian public, Riyadh's policy developed toward an open and direct attempt to topple the current regime and replace it with a Sunni-led regime friendlier to Saudi Arabia. Saudi efforts in this regard were exemplified by receiving Mnaf Tlāss, one of the most senior Syrian generals to have defected, in July 2012. However, such an attempt could produce two risks. First there is no guarantee that a Sunni-led regime will substantially alter the current regime's strategic choices; second there is the looming possibility that extremist groups will take control of the country.

The deterioration in Saudi-Syrian relations has jeopardized Saudi influence in Lebanon, at a time when Saudi Arabia has little influence in Iraq. Hence, Saudi influence on the political arrangements of the Fertile Crescent is challenged, including war and peace issues with regard to Israel (Lebanon war 2006; Gaza war 2009). As noted, the fact that Saudi Arabia has little ability to influence vital events in the Middle East poses a strategic threat to Saudi Arabia itself.

Apart from trying to shift the political balance in its favor in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, Saudi Arabia has proposed an expansion of the GCC that would include Jordan. This proposal indicates an adjustment in Saudi's strategic thinking. While Saudi Arabia used to interfere indirectly in the Palestinian cause by means of financial and diplomatic support, it appears that the Kingdom has taken an open and direct role in the conflict. By including Jordan in a Saudi-led bloc, vital issues related to the Palestinian cause will be included in Riyadh's remit. Furthermore, Jordan will be the first and only state that has diplomatic relations with Israel. More importantly Jordan will no longer be a buffer state between Saudi Arabia on one hand, and Israel and the radical Arabs on the other. This

shows that Saudi Arabia has decided to conduct a more assertive foreign policy regarding vital regional issues. Currently, enthusiasm for including Jordan and Morocco in the GCC seems somehow to have been lost, although the matter has not been fully or officially put aside. However, one should not underestimate the significance of the Saudi call in itself.

3.4 Tactical Cooperation with Turkey

Saudi Arabia appears for three reasons to have welcomed Turkey's active policy in the Middle East. First is the geographical sphere of Turkey's active foreign policy. Turkey refrains from being active within the Saudi sphere of influence, namely in the Gulf and in Yemen, but instead is heavily involved in the Fertile Crescent, and in Iraq in particular, where Saudi Arabia's adversary, Iran has the upper hand. Thus, from a Saudi point of view, Turkish influence balances Iranian influence both geographically and politically.

The second reason is that Ankara's policies are exclusively state-to-state relations based on diplomacy, trade, and cultural exchanges. There is no sign that Turkey has tried to interfere in the domestic affairs of other Arab nations (apart from the civil war in Libya and continuing turmoil in Syria). Senior Saudi and Turkish officials have exchanged many bilateral visits during the last few years, and the Saudi media has been responsible for broadcasting hugely popular Turkish television dramas to millions of Arab viewers.

The third reason is symbolic. Turkey is a secular non-Arab republic, which discourages it from mobilizing any group within Saudi Arabia for its own sake. Furthermore, it significantly reduces Turkey's ability to compete with Saudi Arabia over the latter's claim to Islamic leadership. The Saudi media has repeatedly highlighted Erdogan's statement in Egypt about the necessity of creating a secular Egyptian republic. In conclusion, Turkey has been the only regional power with which Saudi Arabia has been able to cooperate since the advent of the Arab Spring in January 2011.

Even so, such cooperation is not without its difficulties and shortfalls. The first of these is Turkish political rhetoric. Turkey exaggerates its political rhetoric in support of Palestinian rights. To a major Arab state such as Saudi Arabia, this gives the impression that Turkey is attempting to hijack the Palestinian cause. For this reason, it is worth remembering that this issue was one of the factors that led to a marked deterioration in Saudi-Iranian relations. Second, the ongoing Turkish-PKK war could be exploited by another regional power to weaken Turkey economically and politically, thus, threatening its security. This could reduce Turkey's ability to act and maneuver effectively within the region. Third, Turkish foreign policy appears to suffer from a lack of consistency, as can be seen

by its two-dimensional character. The first is the gap between rhetoric and action, which is exemplified by the tough Turkish rhetoric against the Al-Assad regime without taking any meaningful action against it. Second, current Turkish–Middle East policy is the policy of a specific government. Thus, the whole region, including Saudi Arabia, needs to observe and wait to see whether any changes will occur in Turkish politics should another party with a different ideology and outlook come to power.

Fourth, although it is more likely that active Turkish policy in the Middle East represents a genuine shift in Turkish strategic thinking toward a more balanced foreign policy, there is still a possibility that any active policy in the Middle East is aimed ultimately at enhancing Turkey's European and international position. According to this theory, Turkey seeks to demonstrate its ability to lead, regulate, and rationalize regional interactions (Aras 2011). This helps Turkey to present itself as one of the major international players, side-by-side with other major European counterparts. Such an instrumental approach toward Middle Eastern politics, if proved true, could hinder the establishing of long-term relations between Turkey and any of the regional powers, such as Saudi Arabia. Fifth, it is obvious that Turkey and Saudi Arabia do not agree on certain vital Middle Eastern issues. Erdogan's immediate reaction to Saudi interference in Bahrain was "We do not want a new Karbala incident."[11] His deliberate employment of Karbala was enough to annoy his Saudi counterparts. Also, the two countries held completely different views vis-à-vis the development in Egypt and over Ankara's support to the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab World.

For all these reasons, Saudi-Turkish relations are not yet strategic, but remain tactical.

3.5 Yemen: Little Opportunities, Great Challenges

Yemen is the source of three internal and strategic threats to Saudi Arabia. The first is that the political vacuum in Yemen continues to weaken Saudi counterterrorism endeavors. Although Saudi counterterrorism efforts have proved successful in the Kingdom itself, a few members of the Saudi branch of al-Qaida quickly found a safe haven in Yemen. From their Yemeni bases al-Qaida continue to plan attacks on Saudi soil and interests, such as the failed assassination attempt against a senior Saudi official in August 2009.

The second of these sources is the inability of the Yemeni government to maintain territorial integrity. Its lack of penetrative capability has allowed some groups to build their own autonomous domains that have dismembered territorial integrity and challenged its sovereignty. The best example is the Houthis: a militarized sectarian movement based in North Yemen which borders on the Kingdom's southern provinces. This

group provides a unique geopolitical opportunity for Riyadh's adversaries to exploit, as it constitutes an advanced base that challenges Saudi national security. In 2009, escalated tensions between the Houthis and the Yemeni government led to a rare use of military force by Saudi Arabia against the Houthis.

Through pushing for the GCC initiative, Riyadh has made a vital step toward providing the necessary means to build and consolidate a strong and efficient central government in Yemen. This would be capable of controlling all Yemeni territories and penetrating all local groups, along with being able to control its 1,000 km border with Saudi Arabia. However, in the event of economic hardship, Sunni extremism within the majority Sunni provinces in Yemen's central, south, east, and western regions will pose a serious threat to Saudi Arabia. Riyadh could reduce the possibility of such a threat by meeting the cultural and economic demands of the non-Sunni Zaidis, and by enhancing their position in their historic strongholds in the northern provinces of Yemen. Such a move would create a natural demographic buffer region between the Sunni majority provinces in central, south, east, and west of Yemen and the southern borders of the Kingdom and will reduce the threat to the Kingdom from the possibility of an increase in Sunni extremism.

The third of these sources is the challenge originating from the issue of the restoration of the now defunct South Yemen Republic. The Southern separatist movement, whose ideology is based on past political identity and rising economic demands, presents a latent strategic and often neglected challenge to Saudi Arabia. This is because if the separatists achieve their goal of restoring the former South Yemen Republic, the reborn state will probably control some 62 percent of united Yemen, but with only 26 percent of the total population.[12] In addition, South Yemen will control most of the Yemeni oil fields; it is also the home of well-connected merchants and businessmen, for example, the Hadhramis. This means that although a reestablished Southern Yemen Republic would most likely be a natural ally of Saudi Arabia, it would leave the remainder of Yemen, that is, the highly populated North Yemen Republic, deprived of the necessary natural and human resources to sustain itself. Extremely poor, overpopulated, discontented North Yemen will never act to Saudi Arabia's advantage.

The separation of South Yemen will deprive the populated North of the contribution of the merchant elite of Hadhramawt in the decision-making process of a post-Salih united Yemen. This step will prevent the creation of a business-friendly environment in Yemen that is necessary for future prosperity. Most importantly, the influence of the merchant elite of Hadhramawt regarding Yemen's relations with the outside world is expected to influence the country's foreign policy, that is, strong ties with Saudi Arabia based on mutual trade and interests.

The lack of institutionalization in Saudi-Yemeni relations, whether on bilateral grounds or within the framework of the GCC, has led to three particular problems. One, it prevents the regulating of bilateral relations between Riyadh and Sanaʿa. This situation reduces opportunities for regional stability. Secondly the lack of institutionalization in Saudi-Yemeni relations is that it does not help to create a reliable channel for economic and financial aid to Yemen. Third, it provides a slight chance for the Kingdom's adversaries to bring Yemen into their sphere of influence.

4 General Remarks on Saudi Foreign Policy in an Era of Greater Challenges and Threats

As shown earlier, Saudi Arabia is among a very small group of Arab Middle Eastern countries left unaffected by the events of the Arab Spring. With the absence of any immediate consequences for the Kingdom, changes in the regional and international strategic environment represent the real influence of the Arab Spring on Saudi Arabia. The stability enjoyed by Saudi Arabia should enable Riyadh to play a pivotal role in Middle East politics and enhance its status at the top of the fragile regional order. However, this requires the Kingdom to obtain the best of the opportunities and tackle the challenges on the regional level by exercising influence and conducting a more assertive foreign policy. In order to face current challenges and profit from the available opportunities the Kingdom needs to take four measures.

First, Riyadh needs to continue to pursue its representative foreign policy decision-making process, which will enable the Kingdom to mobilize the Saudi public effectively behind clearer foreign policy objectives that address a growing national awareness and serve the national agenda. Furthermore, a representative foreign policy will prevent its adversaries from viewing Riyadh's goals negatively. For example, while Saudi Arabia is frequently accused of hindering democratic demands within the GCC and the broader region, Jordan and Morocco have been invited to join the Council, as two countries that are moving steadily toward their own interpretation of constitutional monarchy. This invitation challenges and refutes the accusations leveled at Saudi Arabia.

The second measure is that effective foreign policy requires continuation of the domestic reforms that target education, enhance the rule of law, assimilate minorities in a comprehensive national framework, and increase the number and the role of elected institutions. The internal, regional, and international Saudi environments are interdependent. However, this interdependence is asymmetrical since the internal environment is the most important. The stability, security, and welfare of the

domestic environment determine the shape of, and the enthusiasm for Saudi involvement on the regional and international stages (Nonnemann 2005: 317). Therefore, these reforms will help consolidate internal stability and increase the internal environment's immunity from shocks originating from the regional environment on the one hand, while on the other, adding to the credibility and the weight of Saudi foreign policy initiatives.

The third measure requires, among other things, reconstructing the pillars of the symbolic status of the Kingdom. An intellectual framework that legitimizes Saudi actions is necessary. Unlike its counterparts in the region, the Kingdom has potentially a far wider constituency in the region: it is the cradle of Arabism in an Arab-dominated region, the cradle of Islam in a Muslim-dominated region, a stronghold of Sunnism in a Sunni-dominated region. A revived, but reformed Arab nationalism, reconsolidated with Islam and grounded in the basic idea that the existence of Saudi Arabia itself is the result of a unification process based on pure Arab-Islamic values, will allow Riyadh to be seen as representing Arab interests in the Arab World and the wider Middle East as the Arab player.

The fourth measure is that Saudi Arabia should continue its efforts to transform the GCC into a cohesive and unified entity.[13] The Kingdom should also work toward including Yemen within the GCC. Furthermore, substantially reforming the AL will be to Riyadh's advantage since it will not only regulate regional dynamics but also help to preserve the Arab character of regional affairs.

5 Conclusion

Although there are increasing pressures on the government, Saudi Arabia has proved to be immune from the turmoil caused by the so-called Arab Spring. This is because of several reasons that relate to Saudi contexts and others that relate to the Arab Spring itself. However, the real consequences of the Arab Spring on the Kingdom are, as noted, the changes within the strategic (regional and international) environment. These changes require the Kingdom to maximize its opportunities and tackle regional challenges by exercising influence and conducting a more assertive foreign policy.

On the theoretical front, this chapter has two main findings. First the Kingdom's response to the Arab Spring has been complex and determined by the need to preserve the regional status quo in some cases, or to change it toward a more favorable direction in others. Such a complex response, side-by-side with the dynamics of Saudi-US and Saudi-Iranian relations, has given more credit to the Realist-Westphalian narrative over certain simplistic but dominant narratives, such as Saudi

counterrevolutionism, the sectarian narrative (Sunni vs. Shia), and the cultural narrative (Clash of Civilizations). As this chapter suggests, during the last decade, Saudi-US relations have fluctuated between mistrust and strong friendship and cooperation, while Saudi-Iranian relations have swung between accommodations to cold war attitudes. In all cases, however, the bottom line in determining the dynamics of the relations has been exclusively political realities on the ground and the Saudi state's security and interests.

The second finding is that while Saudi Arabia is working toward solidifying its leadership over the Gulf countries through further institutionalization of the GCC, it is important to understand two fundamental and related points. The first is how this process will influence, or be influenced by, a parallel process of further institutionalization of the Saudi foreign affairs decision-making process, as part of a further institutionalization of the Saudi state as a whole. The second is whether solidifying the GCC will help in consolidating Saudi influence in the Arab World and the wider Middle East.

Notes

1. Use of the term "Arab Spring" to describe current events within the Arab World is controversial. The term is ideologically loaded; it also originates from different cultural and political contexts and experiences. Thus, using it seems to determine the demands, dynamics, and consequences of the current Arab upheavals in an incorrect way. However, the expression is utilized in this chapter since it has become too common to be challenged. For a similar argument, see: ʿAbdullah, "Al-rabīʿ al-ʿArabī: wijhāt naz. ar min al-Khalīj al-ʿArabī ," Al-mustaqbal al-ʿArabi, 391 (2011): 117.
2. I call it a "fragile regional order" for three reasons. First, defining exactly what constitutes the Middle East is problematic. Unlike regions such as South America and South East Asia, deciding which countries comprise the Middle East and which do not is controversial. In addition, the overlap between the Middle East and the Arab World creates ideological and cultural aspects to add to the problem. Second, the Middle East has a long history of interference by superpowers. This has prevented the rise of any regional power as the undisputed regional leader of the entire Middle East. Third, the distribution of power among the principal countries in the region makes it difficult for a single country to exercise a hegemonic agenda over the entire region, and gives rise to the formation of power clusters among them.
3. By "Realist-Westphalian narrative," I mean viewing Middle East regional politics as generally characterized by political, economic, and military competition, with the goal of each regional actor being

power and survival. This power is based primarily on hard power: that is economic and military capabilities.

4. Saudi: US Iraq Presence Illegal, BBC News, March 29, 2007.
5. For an analysis of the history of the Saudi-Iranian relations, see: Anthony, "Strategic Dynamics of Iran-GCC Relations," in Seznec and Kirk (eds.), *Industrialization in the Gulf: A Socioeconomic Revolution* (2011), New York: Routledge, 78–102. For future scenarios of the relations based on the ongoing efforts of economic diversification and changes within global environment, see: Aarts and Van Duijne, "The Political Economy of Saudi-Iranian Relations: Present and Future," in Seznec and Kirk (eds.), *Industrialization in the Gulf: A Socioeconomic Revolution* (2011), New York: Routledge, 57–77.
6. For more on the Saudi role as the backbone of the GCC security system, see: Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia: National Security in a Troubled Region* (2009). This runs against the argument provided by some that increasing institutionalization shows the inability of the hegemonic power to manage the regional system by its own capabilities. See Hurrell, "Explaining the Resurgence of Regionalism in World Politics," *Review of International Studies.* 21 (1995), 343.
7. Prince Naif: No Compromise with Iran, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, November 2, 2011.
8. Although it should be noted that exaggerating the use of hard power, even by countries with a military edge and for a short time, might create negative political consequences for regional long-term stability as a whole. However, the threat of using military power, without its actual use, has proved to be more effective. See: Park, "Concluding Remarks: Coercion and Regional Power," *Defence Studies,* 9, no. 2 (2009): 261–268.
9. Some argue correctly that the Lebanon War of 2006 has revived the Arab Cold War of the 1950s and the 1960s, although certain substantial changes have taken place in terms of actors, tools, and the members of each camp. See: Valbjorn and Bank, "The New Arab Cold War: Rediscovering the Arab Dimension of Middle East Regional Politics," *Review of International Studies,* 38 (2012): 3–24. Although it might be too early to judge, it seems that the Middle East has entered a new phase of the Cold War, caused by the Arab Spring.
10. This contradicts the argument presented in: ʿAbdullah, "Al-rabīʿ al-ʿArabī," 123–133.
11. Erdogan: We Do Not Want a New Karbala Incident, *Hurriet Daily News*, March 20, 2011.
12. These figures are based on preunification estimations.
13. Some argue that the lack of institutionalization is inherent in GCC culture, which makes this organization no more than "a loose forum on the diplomatic scene." See: Legrenzi, "Gulf Cooperation Council Diplomatic Coordination: The Limited Role of Institutionalization,"

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CHAPTER 12

Prospects for New Regional Powers in the Middle East

Henner Fürtig

The Middle East is often perceived as being an exceptional region. This exceptionality is not least due to its extraordinary global strategic importance. No other region in the world harbors as much of the single-most important natural resource of modern times—liquid hydrocarbons—as the Middle East does, no other region is situated on the borderlines of three different continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe), and no other region is the cradle of all Abrahamic religions. Therefore, during most of the twentieth century and in particular during the Cold War era, no international great power—and least of all superpower—was able to afford a genuine competitor arising in this exceptional region. What they did instead was to install and/or to support regional partner countries, who were furthermore regularly played off against each other.

Thus, when the Cold War came to an end the Middle East saw the emergence of a group of these former partner states full of regional leadership aspirations—but each of them was also laden with its own specific constraints and with a history of partisanship due to the events of the last 50 years. No surprise, then, that when compared with Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, or East Asia, regions that have spawned/acknowledged regional powers such as Brazil, South Africa, and China since the end of the Cold War, the Middle East seems to represent a "deviant" case, because here only several contenders for regional leadership—namely Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, and Turkey—have aspired to such a leadership role.

After the end of the Cold War, however, the Middle East lost only superpower interference—but not a single one of the attributes giving it a global strategic importance. As such, the region has remained at the

center of world politics to this day. The terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001 subsequently led to a broad "War on Terror," and to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in particular. The problem of Iran's ongoing nuclear ambitions has kept the UN Security Council occupied for more than a decade, not to speak of the deteriorating Arab-Israeli peace process or the increasing regional tensions ever since (Popp 2011: 36). Consequently, the need now for a balancing and pacifying regional power in the Middle East has become even more obvious. On the other hand, though, one might ask why we should adopt regional power theories and concepts if there is no recognized leader nation in a region? Martin Beck gave a fitting answer to this question in the first chapter, by stating that the fact of it simply not having yet produced a regional power by no means is a justification for abandoning the concept of regional power in analyzing the regional affairs of the Middle East altogether. On the contrary, he has emphasized that by analyzing the failure thus far of potential regional powers to take up a dominant position in the Middle East, the concept actually proves to be a very fruitful one for better comprehending regional politics. And this statement can be even easily extended. Are all future attempts to establish a regional power in the Middle East inherently doomed?

This question is particularly relevant when related to the recent breathtaking upheavals in the Middle East that began in December 2010, which swept away long-standing autocracies in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya and which are currently still challenging a number of so far rather stable autocratic regimes. Although the final outcome of these upheavals is scarcely predictable, political transformations and conflicts in some countries have been so severe that they have already significantly influenced the regional power balance. Might the so-called Arab Spring therefore likely lead to a situation in which a single actor will be able to assume or reassume a regional leadership role? Will the region eventually return to "normality" with regard to other world regions?

Here it might be useful to remember an "anomaly" existing in the midst of the exceptionality. Between the Suez Crisis of 1956 and its devastating defeat in the Six-Day War of 1967, Egypt came very close to assuming the position of a regional power. This position did not affect Turkey, Israel, and Iran, but within the Arab world at least Egypt's hegemony experienced its ultimate demise only with President Nasser's death in 1970. Thus, as history teaches, if once a regional power of sorts has existed a new one might emerge in its place if circumstances allow. Therefore, a closer look at the chances for success of the aforementioned pretenders to regional hegemony was definitely useful, all the more so given the unique "pairing" perspective of the book—that is, presenting both an external and an internal view of each case produced a remarkable wealth of insight. When one scholar from each

of the analyzed countries contrasted his or her findings with those of researchers from the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), one of the leading German research institutes and think tanks, the assessment became more profound and complex: Middle Eastern politics were presented through an integrated analysis of a globally embedded region.

Many contributors to the book referred, as the starting point for their analysis, to Detlef Nolte's definition of a regional power. According to Nolte (2010), a regional power has to fulfill at least three basic conditions: it has to articulate the aspiration to being in a leading regional position; it has to display that it has the material and ideological resources for regional power projection; and, it has to exercise a genuine influence in regional affairs. To fulfill all three of these preconditions, a favorable mixture of hard and soft power capabilities is necessary. Hard power factors are easy to explain: geographical size, population size, and economic and military strength, whereas the soft power notion was only first introduced into the discourse by Joseph Nye Jr. in his 1990 book *Bound to Lead*—being then further developed in his 2004 work *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics.*

Since then, soft power has become one of the most intensively used concepts and terms by foreign policy analysts and officials. Although a range of definitions and uses of this concept have come into existence in the meantime, soft power is still generally understood as the ability to accomplish a foreign policy objective by means of attraction rather than by coercion or by offering financial support (Rubin 2010: 7). The main idea behind this is that contrary to hard power—which influences developments and decisions by using incentives and threats based primarily on economic and military capabilities—soft power gets "others to want the outcomes that you want" (Nye 2004: 6). All in all, soft power therefore rests on the ability to shape others' preferences through the power of attraction to a state's culture, political values, and foreign policies (Rubin 2010: 7).

The appliance of Nolte's definition of a regional power to the Middle East and the consideration of relevant hard and soft power capabilities of the respective candidates for regional leadership there has—in combination with the pairing perspective—produced remarkable results for each country case

Starting with hard power facts, **Iran** fulfills many of the preconditions for being a regional leader. With almost 1.7 million square kilometers it has a huge land mass, with 75 million inhabitants a large population, with a GDP of USD 496 billion a relatively strong economy, with 18 billion tons of proven capacity it possesses the third-largest oil reserves in the world, and with more than half a million men belonging to the country's military it is a force to be reckoned with.

However, at least since the Islamic revolution of 1979, the new regime has primarily not referred to its hard power capabilities when attempting to influence regional developments but to utilize revolutionary fervor as a soft power element instead. Iran wants to be recognized as a "natural" Muslim leader. Iranian foreign policy is therefore built on the ideological premise of *velayat-e-faqih* (guardianship or rule of the jurisprudent), which should be spread to and adopted by other Muslim societies. Consequently, Tehran's foreign policy incorporates sustained opposition to the West in general and to the United States and Israel in particular (Pletka and Kagan 2014: 5). Against these enemies it formed an "axis of resistance"—made up of itself, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, and the "oppressed Arab masses"—that has also acted against pro-Western dictatorial "puppet regimes" in the region. In this way Iran's hard power capacity is designed to primarily serve as an enabler and defender of its main line of operation—its expansion of soft power (Pletka and Kagan 2014: 5).

Yet, the core hard power capacities of Iran have eroded over time. International sanctions as well as internal mismanagement have harmed the country's economy tremendously, and Iran's military capabilities have also turned out to be rather limited: while still impressive in size, its army is insufficiently led and poorly equipped. Iran's air force's fighter planes are outdated and its air defense capabilities limited. Iran practically possesses no power projection capabilities. With an allocated budget of about USD 9 billion Iran still spends less than 3 percent of its GDP on defense, while Saudi Arabia with its much smaller population, for example, spends over USD 40 billion thereon—about 9 percent of its GDP. Indeed, over the last decade the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), where Saudi Arabia plays the role of a primus inter pares, have altogether spent about 15 times more on arms than Iran has (Popp 2011: 50–51).

In both chapters of this book that addressed the Iranian case, the denominational limits of Iran's quest for leadership were mentioned. There is an obvious discrepancy between Iran's self-perception as a representative pan-Islamic actor and the inherent Iranian/Shiite identity associated with that concept, something that has continued to deny the Islamic Republic its sought-after role as the avant-garde of an Islamic movement—as Arshin Adib-Moghaddam rightfully stressed in his chapter. Even the Arab Spring did not come close to meeting Iranian expectations. On the contrary, the longer the crisis in Syria lasts the greater the alienation becomes between Iran and its former allies on the one side and the Arab street on the other. In the meantime, more and more of the "oppressed masses" are coming to see Iran as an ally of a brutally repressive regime and thus as being on the wrong side of history. This is a far

cry from previous times—ones not so long ago—when Iran enjoyed wide support in the Arab streets and was seen as the most significant leader of the non–status quo forces in the Middle East (Brom 2012: 40–41).

Another contender that always comes to mind when considering a probable new regional power in the Middle East is **Turkey**. Interestingly enough, however, this allegedly "mainstream" assessment did not feature much in the literature prior to the Arab Spring. Until 2010 Turkey was mainly perceived in the region as somehow being a Western country, as a NATO member—one with a secular political system. New Turkish foreign policy initiatives after the end of the Cold War were primarily directed at "Turan," the traditionally Turkish-speaking areas of the Caucasus and of Central Asia. These initiatives were seen in the Arab neighborhood as being undertaken in conjunction with Western—namely US—interests, as Washington was clearly trying to gain access to this oil-rich post-Soviet region. This changed slightly when the Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002 and rediscovered the Middle East as a promising arena for its foreign policy. Yet, initially at least, the Arab response remained low. The Arab autocratic regimes mainly referred to Turkey's past as the Ottoman hegemonic power and to Turkey's pragmatic policy toward Israel as a way to produce disinterest if not rejection of the former's policies in their respective countries.

This perception would change practically overnight when the same Arab autocrats were toppled or severely alienated by the Arab Spring. A new generation of Arab politicians has since arisen that now sees Turkey with fresh eyes. On the one side, there are the undeniable hard power facts: a big country (785,000 square kilometers), with a large population (80 million), a strong (410,000 soldiers) and well-equipped army, and last but not least a successful and growing economy (a GDP of USD 1.36 billion). However, all these facts were well known before and therefore cannot have been what made the difference after 2010. What caused Turkey's immediately improved attractiveness thereafter were, rather, soft power factors.

To begin with, Turkey mostly placed itself on the right side of events as the Arab Spring unfolded. Prime Minister Erdogan was the first foreign leader to ask the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, to resign and he eventually turned also on Muammar Qaddafi in Libya and Bashar al-Assad in Syria in favor of their opponents in the street. Even more importantly besides, most of the moderate Islamist parties that won the first round of elections after the downfall of the respective tyrants—such as Tunisia's an-Nahda party and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood—claimed that the combination of Islam, democracy, and economic success implemented by Turkey's ruling "sister" party, the AKP, was also their own goal. Thus, by appearing to simultaneously be modern, Islamic, and democratic, Turkey grew into a role model for

these countries; all the more significant was that Turkey could accomplish this while apparently being able to independently follow its own interests, free of the need to appease extra-regional superpowers—or at least less so than other relevant regional players such as Israel or Saudi Arabia, as Andre Bank and Roy Karadag stated in their chapter. Although this finding also applies for Iran, its proposed program for the future of the region was much less attractive to its neighbors. Turkey's model initially clearly won the competition for the hearts and minds of the Arab protesters.

Yet, the honeymoon period lasted little more than a year. Political Islam soon came under attack in the region, while the Muslim Brotherhood lost its power in Egypt in the summer of 2013. This and other post–Arab Spring developments began to demonstrate the limits of Turkey's capacities to act as a regional power, as Meliha Altunişik wrote in her chapter. Contrary to its own claims, Turkey was clearly unable to bring order and stability to the region. Ankara's policies were successfully challenged and undermined by other pretenders to a leading role in the Middle East, and especially by Iran in Syria and by Saudi Arabia in Egypt—and even at times in Syria itself. Turkey's acceptance within the region began to decline, and the country was increasingly seen as a part of regional divisions and not as their balancer. Further, of course, the problems in Turkey's own exercising of democracy have also undermined its image in the Arab world. The Gezi protests and the police crackdown on them were followed closely in the region. After Iran, Turkey became the second pretender to a leading role in the region to be made aware of its own limits by events on the ground.

One additional reason for the lack of a distinct regional power in the Middle East seems to have already become clear at this point. Although it can be rightfully stated that the balance between using hard and soft power factors to win recognition as a regional power turned in favor of the soft power side after the end of the Cold War, that finding as such is not, however, always applicable to the various different contenders for regional leadership. What if soft power capacities are not sufficient, or they cancel each other out? In such a situation the bell might toll instead in favor of a contender with almost an exclusively hard power bestowed by superior capacities: **Israel**. Although small in size and population, Israel commands the most sophisticated and best-trained army in the region, while its economy is well structured and performing on a relatively high level. In economic terms, Israel could serve as a role model for the region. Insofar Robert Kappel is right when he emphasized in his chapter that even if the criteria and the combination of factors that would enable states to qualify as regional powers may not be sufficiently clear, the economic power of a country is still evidently of paramount importance in this regard.

Israel might support the idea of becoming some sort of an economic role model, but it definitely lacks any "ideological" or comparable "missionary" concept. In this sense, Israel does not pretend to lead. Due to its specific history, it has been primarily concerned to—more reactively—care for its security than to—more actively—look for a regional leadership position. In this regard, the initial outcome of the Arab Spring turned out to be Janus-faced: in the immediate neighborhood one of its "archenemies"—the dictatorial Assad regime—got into serious trouble, while the overthrow of its main Arab partner in securing peace and regional stability, Hosni Mubarak, caused major concerns. It was not only that the Muslim Brotherhood being in power might lead to a serious reevaluation of the peace treaty of 1979, but that the entire regional power structure might consequently skew out of balance. Israel looks at this structure primarily through the lens of the competition between the two major axes in the Middle East: the radical, "resistance" one led by Iran and the one of the pragmatic Arab states, led by Mubarak-ruled Egypt and by Saudi Arabia. Not surprisingly, the intuitive assumption was that the fall of a regime such as Mubarak's in Egypt would weaken the pragmatic axis and strengthen the radical one (Brom 2012: 39).

The toppling of the Muslim Brotherhood president, Muhammad Mursi, after roughly one year in power in Egypt and the obvious Iranian failure to install its program for the future of the region would alleviate Israeli concerns for the time being though. But as Robert Malley from the International Crisis Group explained regarding the long-term perspective, "Israel's strategic outlook has historically been one of 'preempting threats', which has required having a good sense of what the threats are. That approach, however, is harder to apply after the Arab upheavals when the unpredictable and uncertainty of the masses enters the equation. It's impossible to know what the threat will be in a year's time" (quoted in Feuerberg 2012: 2). Yet, this uncertainty will ultimately rather strengthen Israel's reactive strategy than instigate an active policy to lead on its part.

In **Saudi Arabia** we find a rare case within the group of pretenders for a leadership role in the Middle East where the balance between hard power and soft power capacities is "healthy" indeed, but where nevertheless both kinds of power capacities are in themselves insufficient as such. As the world's largest oil exporter (10 million bpd/2013), and with proven reserves of 267 billion barrels (the largest in the world), Saudi Arabia is one of the richest nations in the region. This allows the ruling Saud family to pursue a "welfare" program for its population that has literally "bought off" any serious domestic opposition so far and has enabled it furthermore to support its foreign policy interests by conspicuous checkbook diplomacy. Added to the country's favorable hard power capacity is also the sheer size of Saudi Arabia, stretching over an

area of 2.2 million square kilometers. Yet, at this point the impressiveness of enumeration stops abruptly: this large country has only 25 million inhabitants (of which only 15 million have a Saudi passport) and Saudi Arabia operates an army of altogether 230,000 soldiers and officers. Riyadh was neither able to defend itself when the Grand Mosque in Mecca was seized and occupied in 1979 nor when the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein threatened to conquer Saudi Arabia in 1990–1991. Notwithstanding huge imports of weaponry over the years, the misuse of arms spending as a result of corruption and nepotism meant that the country could not ease these military weaknesses. A deeply rooted conviction about its military inferiority has caused a specific behavior to take hold in Saudi foreign policy: the pursuit of a reactive, defensive stance.

The most valuable soft power asset of Saudi Arabia is religious in nature. The Kingdom is the birthplace of Islam and is home to Mecca and Medina, Islam's two holiest sites. In addition Saudi Arabia administers the hajj, which brings each year millions of Muslims from all over the world to the Kingdom—thereby reinforcing Saudi Arabia's leadership aspirations in the Islamic world (Rubin 2010: 10). Moreover, Saudi kings founded the Mecca-based Muslim World League (WML) in 1962 and the Riyadh-based Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1969 as instruments of a pan-Islamic strategy. Yet, the type of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia limits the effectiveness of these activities and the claim of being the symbolic center of the Islamic world tremendously. Saudi Wahhabism, an ultraconservative variant of Hanbali Sunnism, may appear to some believers to be the most authentic and pure type of Islam, but among the vast majority of Sunni adherents it is extremely unpopular—not to speak of Shiism, its antipode. Consequently, the impact of this theoretically striking soft power factor has remained limited.

Interestingly enough, what has brought Saudi Arabia some validation and sympathy in the region are the emancipatory acts it has taken vis-à-vis the United States, ordinarily a kind of behavior associated with members of the "resistance front." Given the involvement of so many Saudis in the terror attacks of 9/11, the previously extremely close relationship between Washington and Riyadh has since cooled. In this climate, Riyadh has considered a strategic reorientation—or, at least, a diversification—of its foreign relations to widen its room for manoeuver. China, for instance, has proven several times that it is ready to pay almost any price to satisfy its oil needs; it is also a nuclear power as well as a permanent member of the UN security council and has never attacked an Arab country. King Abdullah condemned the United States for its "indifference" to saving its proven ally Hosni Mubarak from being toppled. In order to demonstrate its increased self-confidence, the Saudi government apparently did not inform its US counterpart in advance that it was planning to send troops into Bahrain in March 2011, and also cancelled

planned visits by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and later by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates (Milstein 2011: 12). In light of the prevailing political uncertainty in Egypt, Saudi Arabia currently views itself as the uncontested leader of the moderate Arab camp. This pretension stems at least partially from its current immunity to the "winds of change" blowing through the region since the end of 2010, as Saud Al Tamamy observed in his chapter.

That said, US president Barak Obama did visit Saudi Arabia in March 2014—signaling serious attempts to return to "normality." And, indeed, no other country has so far been able to take over the American security guarantee for Saudi Arabia, and so the latter has in return for its protection invested roughly USD 700 billion not in China or in Russia but in the United States. With its investments in mind, Saudi Arabia is directly interested in the well-being of the US economy; the situation is reminiscent of a cartel of producers and consumers. Therefore, all in all, Saudi Arabia has neither gained nor lost significantly in stature in the years since the Arab Spring. With regard to its regional power aspirations, where the Saudi strategy falls short—in addition to the mentioned soft and hard power constraints—is, as formulated by Thomas Richter in his chapter, the lack of a collective and development-oriented vision for the Middle East in general and the Arabian Peninsula in particular—one that should, at the same time, be recognized by as many different regional actors as possible. To date all Saudi regional policies have been fragmentary indeed.

Not by accident **Egypt** is saved as the final case study to be discussed. Since Egypt is the only country in the Arab world that has at least come close to assuming the position of regional leadership in the past, it might now have a better chance to reconquer that position than the other contenders for it do. And, indeed, Egypt is the only territorial nation-state in the Arab world. As such, it is also the only Arab state that has had more than fleeting visions for the future of the regional neighborhood. Modern Egypt's claim to leadership in the Middle East extends back to the early nineteenth century, when the Ottoman "viceroy" Muhammad Ali (ruled 1805–1848) fought the Wahhabis on the Arabian Peninsula, conquered Sudan, sent his troops into Syria, and at one point even threatened to invade the Ottoman heartland in Anatolia. Any pretense that Egypt was just another Ottoman province evaporated. It had exerted itself as a dominant regional power. With the Ottoman sultan's acquiescence, Muhammad Ali's family assumed hereditary rule—holding the mantle of leadership in Cairo until British colonial dominance buried that prospect for almost a century. Yet, while Gamal Abdel Nasser's 1952 revolution ended the monarchy it also reawakened the intention to lead. After Nasser's political success in the Suez Crisis of 1956, very few other Arab states dared to openly question Egypt's position as the leading regional

power. Only after Nasser's devastating defeat in the Six-Day War of June 1967 would his regional appeal begin to wane.

The secret behind Nasser's temporary success was a favorable mixture of hard and soft power factors. Egypt is a large country (1 million square kilometers) with a current population of 86 million people, and is furthermore situated in the center of the Arab world while simultaneously bridging the continents of Africa and Asia. During Nasser's presidency, the majority of the population followed his economic experiments while Egypt also developed a capable army. Yet, the most important and influential instrument that Nasser used to enforce his leadership aspirations was a truly soft power factor: the ideology of pan-Arabism. Although Cairo-centered, millions of non-Egyptian Arabs could sometimes be found adhering—even enthusiastically—to the vision of a united, strong, and internationally admired Arab state.

After Nasser's death, however, his successors lost this soft power capability almost completely. It also became more than obvious that hard power factors were far away from being able to compensate for this. Both Sadat and Mubarak still cherished lofty regional ambitions, but they stood quite in contrast to the sad reality of the country's economic circumstances. Although Egypt has the second-largest African economy after South Africa and by far the largest economy in North Africa, and despite ranking—among Arab states—only behind Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in terms of GDP, it ranks near the bottom of Arab states in terms of its per capita income. Economic growth rates have been low and unemployment traditionally high. Additionally, Egypt has been in possession of an external trade deficit for more than half a century, almost without interruption. In short, while Cairo may have still dreamed of regional political domination economic reality undermined such pretensions between 1970 and 2011.

This shortfall is similarly true for the country in military terms. Numerically speaking, Egypt maintains the strongest army both on the African continent and in the Arab world. In addition, Egypt previously developed a relatively sophisticated arms industry and is steadily exporting weaponry. Alas, while a sizeable army was one of Egypt's main strategic assets in the past, the post–Cold War environment has demonstrated the declining importance of large military forces. Nowadays, it is not size that matters most but quality. In this regard, Egypt is in a distant second position to Israel for instance. Furthermore, aside from the light armaments that Egypt is manufacturing on its own, all of its "strategic" weaponry has to be imported.

Taking soft power factors into consideration, though, the picture might change. Indeed, Egypt commands a large reservoir of soft power "tools." These are composed of a rich cultural, intellectual, and political legacy as the birthplace of and launching pad for Arab nationalism,

political Islam, liberal Islamic political thought, as well as Islamic extremism. Egypt hosts the Sunni world's oldest institution of religious education, the al-Azhar University, and the headquarters of the Arab League. These important institutions give Egypt a certain authority to define both Arab and Islamic collective interests (Rubin 2010: 9). Yet, these factors have existed for many decades without actually yet making a difference. Therefore, many experts argued after the Arab Spring that Egypt had regained a golden opportunity to become the leading power in the Arab world for a second time, to be fulfilled by proving that political Islam can now be successfully married to democratic republicanism. Egypt hereby could provide a blueprint for the transition of other autocratically ruled Middle Eastern countries with a Muslim majority to stable democracies. This would definitely equate in importance with the previous impact of pan-Arabism.

Alas, although President Mursi took over this role with good grace he nevertheless made the capital mistake of forgetting about Egypt itself in his ambition to build up an Islamic role model. For many of his compatriots he thus placed "Islamic causes over the interests and policies of nation-state governments" (Mandaville 2013: 173) such as the Egyptian one. Interestingly enough, while many non-Egyptians forgave Nasser for his Egypt-centering the Egyptians themselves did not excuse Mursi's perceived disregard of his home country. In this way, Elizabeth Monier and Annette Ranko were right when in their chapter they emphasized that Egypt can only reemerge as a major player and leader in the region when its leaders rest more ostensibly on "Egyptianism"—as a legitimizing source for domestic power, and through this resecuring its role as defender of Arab world stability.

At least three immediate lessons can be learned from the analysis of the case studies presented in this book: First, although Egypt might still have some advantages over the other contenders for regional leadership, there is still no single country in the Middle East that commands a sufficient mixture of both hard and soft power capabilities to significantly outmuscle its rivals in this regard. Second, as Martin Beck repeatedly stressed in his chapter, the Middle East is still of such strategic importance for the West in general and the United States in particular that the latter will emphatically do whatever it can to delay if not avert altogether the emergence of a dominant regional power there. Beck further rightfully added that the power capabilities of all potential regional powers in the Middle East are significantly less than those of the United States; in other words, the United States is—even if artificially so—itself a regional power in the Middle East. Third, and perhaps in recognition of the weaknesses outlined at the outset, all pretenders in the race for regional leadership were until now more concerned about preventing the advancement of competitors than they were intently focused on

pursuing their own plans for becoming the dominant regional power, as both Mustafa El-Labbad and Mark Heller asserted in their respective chapters.

Thus, a distinctive regional power is not likely to emerge in the Middle East in the foreseeable future. In any case, however, for the entire region it might ultimately be more important that a gradual reform process of economic integration and diplomatic compromise soon comes to supersede the current "theopolitical" understanding of the region (Duran and Yilmaz 2013: 139) than it is that the search for a clear-cut regional power intensifies.

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Contributors

Prof. Dr. Martin Beck is a Professor of Contemporary Middle East Studies at the University of Southern Denmark in Odense, Denmark.

Prof. Dr. Henner Fürtig is the Director of the GIGA Institute of Middle East Studies in Hamburg and a Professor at the History Department of the University of Hamburg, Germany.

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, PhD, is a Professor in Global Thought and Comparative Philosophies at SOAS, University of London and Chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute UK.

Elizabeth Monier, PhD, is a Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, University of Warwick, UK.

Dr. Annette Ranko is a Research Fellow at the GIGA Institute of Middle East Studies in Hamburg and currently substitute Professor for Islam Studies at the University of Hamburg, Germany.

Dr. Mustafa El-Labbad is the Director of the al Sharq Center for Regional and Strategic Studies in Cairo, Egypt.

Dr. André Bank is a Research Fellow at the GIGA Institute of Middle East Studies in Hamburg, Germany.

Dr. Roy Karadag is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Institute of Inter-Cultural and International Studies of the University of Bremen, Germany.

Meliha Benli Altunışık, PhD, is a Professor at the Department of International Relations, Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara, Turkey. She is currently also the Dean of Graduate School of Social Sciences at METU.

Prof. Dr. Robert Kappel, is a Senior Research Fellow at the GIGA, German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Hamburg, Germany.

Mark A. Heller, PhD, is Principal Research Associate at the Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Dr. Thomas Richter is a Senior Research Fellow at the GIGA Institute of Middle East Studies in Hamburg, Germany.

Saud Mousaed Al Tamamy, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Political Science at King Saud University (KSU) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He is also the Director of the "International Scientific Twinning Program" at KSU.

Index

Aarts, Paul, 179
Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, 105, 177, 193, 216
"Abdullah's Shield," 182
Achaemenid dynasty, 48–9
ad-Din Tusi, Nasir, 50
Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) (Justice and Development Party), 16, 71, 85–7, 94, 103–20, 123–4, 128–38, 213
Afghanistan, 26, 46, 65, 181, 210
Ahmadinejad, Mahmoud, 27, 89, 109, 196
AKP, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi
AL. *See* Arab League
al-Assad, Bashar, 15, 31, 34, 103–4, 109, 117, 136–7, 153, 169, 202, 213–15
al Azhar, Sheikh, 89
al-Azhar University, 219
al-Badi'a, Mohammad, 70
al-Banna, Hassan, 37, 68, 86
al-Catani, Mohamed, 84
al-Helbawy, Kamal, 29–30
Al Khalifa, 33, 177
al-Mahthoora (the prohibited group), 63
al-Maliki, Nori, 103, 113, 193, 196
al-Nasser, Gamal Abd, 163
al-Qaddafi, Muammar, 12
Al-Qaida, 183
al-Rashid, Madhawi, 33
Al-Saddat, Anwar. *See* Anwar Sadat
Al Saud, 33, 177, 179, 183–6
al-Sisi, Abdul Fattah, 67–8, 73
al-Thani, Hamad bin Khalifa, 167
al-Wafd party, 69
al-Wahhab, Muhammad ibn Abd, 185
al-e Ahmad, Jalal, 50
Ali, Muhammad, 10, 217
Ali Pasha, Mohammed, 82
Amoli Larijani, Ali Ardashir, 88
an-Nahda (Tunisia), 72, 116, 213
Ankara, 85–7, 94–5, 109–10, 114, 117, 127, 131, 133
Arab Gulf, 72, 82–3, 87–9, 198
Arab-Israeli peace process, 34, 128, 210
Arab-Israeli population, 158n7
Arab League (AL), 15–17, 86, 127, 155, 180, 195, 219
Arab nationalism/Arabism, 63–4, 73, 82, 186, 205, 218
Arab Public Opinion Polls of 2011 and 2012, 105
Arab Spring, 1–2, 4, 13–18, 23–4, 27–8, 32, 34–9, 71–2, 74, 85, 94, 95, 134–5, 145, 163–5, 191–205, 206n1, 207n9, 210, 212–15, 217, 219–20
  and Iran. *See* Iran, and Arab Spring
Arabian Peninsula, 31, 33–4, 179, 182, 187, 217
Arafat, Yasser, 90
Aryanism, 47
Australians, 172
authoritarianism, 12–15, 27, 36, 61–74, 111, 114–16, 134, 138, 154–5, 164, 166
autonomous regional powers, 7–9

"axis of moderation," 95
"Axis of Resistance," 83, 166, 212

Bahrain, 11, 14, 26, 32–4, 38, 54, 167, 177, 181, 187, 192, 195–6, 198, 202, 216–17
Bakir, Caner, 107
Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, 126
Balkans, 109, 125, 154
Balyoz case, 115
Bank, André, 133, 214
Barzani, Mas'ud, 109
Başbuğ, Ilker, 107
Battle of Karbala (680 AD), 52
Beck, Martin, 5–6, 8, 13, 17, 138, 146–7, 150–3, 155, 210, 219
Ben Ali, Zine El Abidine, 13, 23, 35–8, 72, 116
Ben-Eliezer, Benjamin, 90
bin ʿAbdulaziz, Naif, 196
"bio-ontological" politics, 47–51
Bonyad-e Mostafazan, 45
Bosnians, 174n13
Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS), 107, 150, 155
BRICS. *See* Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
Brinton, Crane, 24
British Petroleum, 11
British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), 43
Bush, George W., 65, 113

Camp David, 9, 30, 91
Canadians, 172
capitalism, 8–12, 107–8, 114
Carter Doctrine (1979), 7
Caspian region, 125–6
Caucasus, 6, 109, 125–7, 154, 213
Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, 39
Cem, Ismail, 125
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (US), 43
China, 5–7, 27, 49, 51, 107, 150, 152, 182–3, 209, 216–17
CHP. *See* Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*)
CIA. *See* Central Intelligence Agency
Clash of Civilizations, 205–6
Cold War, 1–2, 9, 25, 37, 62, 105, 124–8, 137, 206, 207n9, 209, 213–14, 218
contemporary history, and regional power, 10
"contracert," 5–6, 13, 18
Cordesman, Anthony, 184–5, 194
Corrie, Rachel Aliene, 56n6
coups d'état, 11, 32, 43, 119
  1953, 11, 43
  2013, 32, 119
Cyrus the Great, 54

Dahl, Robert, 146–7, 150
Davutoğlu, Ahmet, 94, 103–4, 108, 110, 117, 129–31, 133–7, 154
Democratic Left Party (DSP), 125
Derviş, Kemal, 107
Dink, Hrant, 115
Doha Accord (2008), 199
DSP. *See* Democratic Left Party

Ebtekar, Massoumeh, 53–4
Ecevit, Bülent, 112, 125
economics of regional power, 147
Economist Intelligence Unit, 180
Egypt, 1–18, 23, 29–36, 38, 49, 56n6, 61–74, 75n8, 81–96, 103, 105, 108, 110–11, 113, 116, 119, 133, 135–7, 139n11, 140n12, 145, 150–1, 153–7, 166–72, 173n7, 178–80, 186, 188n4n7, 192, 197–202, 209–10, 213–19
  as "regional reference." *See* "regional reference"
  and "second revolution" of June 30, 61–2, 67, 71–2
  and self-image, 167
  See Muslim Brotherhood

Egyptian-Iranian relations, 87–9, 95–6
Egyptian-Israel relations, 89–93, 96
Egyptian-Israeli peace agreements, 87, 91
Egyptian Revolution (1952), 1–2, 9, 14, 30, 91
Egyptian-Saudi relations, 82–5, 93–4
Egyptian-Turkish relations, 85–7, 94–5
"Egyptianism," 73, 219
Einkreisung (the myth of threatening encirclement), 179
El-Araby, Nabil, 88
El Shater, Khairat, 87
energy cooperation, 109, 154
Ennahda, 135
Erbakan, Necmettin, 106
Erdoğan, Tayyip, 86, 95, 103–5, 110, 116–18, 135, 137, 154, 166, 213
Ergenekon case, 115
Eshkevari, Hojatoleslam Hassan Yusef, 55
European Union (EU), 6, 105, 107, 112, 114, 130, 138, 146, 152–7
extremism, 63, 200, 203, 218–19
Ezzat, Mahmoud, 70

Fahd of Saudi Arabia, 181, 193
Faisal of Saudi Arabia, 186
Fallaci, Oriana, 49
Fatah, 91–2, 96
Fawcett, Louise, 145
FDI. *See* foreign direct investment
FJP. *See* Freedom and Justice Party
Flemes, Daniel, 124
foreign direct investment (FDI), 107, 130, 148–52
foreign policy, 24–30, 36–9, 43–7, 54–5, 62, 66–74, 75n8,12, 93, 104–12, 115, 124–32, 137–8, 152–6, 157n2, 177–9, 182, 186, 192–205, 211–16
 and Iran and the Arab Spring, 24–8
 culture, 44–7
"fragile regional order," 192, 204, 206n2
Free Syrian Army (FSA), 117, 136
Freedom House, 38
Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), 135
FSA. *See* Free Syrian Army

G20, 154–5, 180
"G-Zero"/"non-polar" international order, 165
Gaddafi, Muammar, 32, 109, 116–17
Gaza, 28, 56, 65–7, 70, 74, 86, 88, 91–4, 110–13, 131, 151, 154, 165–6, 194, 200
Gaza flotilla raid (*Mavi Marmara*), 110, 154
Gaza War (2008–2009), 65–6, 113, 131, 200
GCC. *See* Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP. *See* Gross domestic product
Gezi Park, 104, 115, 118–19, 134, 137, 214
Ghannouchi, Rached, 135
gharbzadegi (or westoxification), 51–2
Ghonim, Wael, 38–9
global value chains, 148, 151
Globalism, 8, 10, 17
GNP. *See* Gross National Product
Greater Middle East Initiative, 65
Greece, 3, 49
Green Movement, 24, 35–9, 88
Gross domestic product (GDP), 87, 107, 131, 133, 147, 149, 155, 180, 211–13, 218
Gross National Product (GNP), 6
Guevera, Che, 51
Gül, Abdullah, 86, 104, 110, 112, 115, 118–19

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), 14, 17, 133, 155, 167, 177–9, 181–2, 187, 192, 194–201, 203–6, 212
Gulf Military Balance, 185
Gulf War (1991), 125, 127, 165, 191

Haddad, Essam, 87
Halliday, Fred, 63
Hamas, 34–5, 63–4, 82–3, 90–6, 111, 113, 165–7, 171, 194, 197, 212
"hard power," 4–6, 10, 14–15, 18–19, 127–8, 147, 153, 156, 157n2, 172, 196, 207n8, 211–18
Hegghammer, Thomas, 186
Hejaz, 181, 184
Heller, Mark, 145, 150, 153, 155, 158, 158n9, 219–20
Hezbollah, 28, 34–5, 63–4, 83, 90, 113, 153, 155, 166–71, 194, 197–9, 212
Hitler, 47–8
Houdaiby, lbrahim EI, 75n8
Houthis, 183, 196, 202–3
Human Development Index (2012), 149
Hussein, Imam, 51–2
Hussein, Saddam, 9, 25–6, 28, 163, 216
hydrocarbons, 168, 180, 209

Ibn Saud, Abd al-Aziz, 185
IMF. *See* International Monetary Fund
Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), 15
India, 5–6, 39, 49, 107, 152
Indonesia, 3, 164
"Institutionalist"/"Institutionalis m" thinking, 7, 19, 207n13
International Monetary Fund (IMF), 65
international political economy (IPE), 147
international relations (IR) theory, 2, 7–8, 17, 43, 62, 105, 147
IPE. *See* international political economy
Iran, 1–2, 4–6, 8–11, 14–16, 18, 23–39, 43–56, 63, 65, 71–2, 81–3, 85–90, 92–3, 95–6, 103, 105–6, 109, 111, 113–14, 127, 130, 131–3, 137–8, 139n11, 145, 153–7, 166–7, 169–70, 172, 180–1, 183, 187, 188n4, 193–201, 205–6, 209–15
  and Arab Spring, 23–39
  and Arab world reactions, 28–9
  and claim to leadership, 24–8
  and Egypt, 29–32
  and foreign policy, 24–8
  and foreign policy culture, 44–7
  identity of, 43–56
  and Libya, 32–4
  and "lights of the Aryans," 47–9
  and power and reality, 54–6
  and the prerogative of interpretation, 35–7
  and signs of god, 50–4
  and Syria, 34–5
Iran in World Politics, 45
Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988), 6, 10, 34, 87, 89–90, 181, 187
Iranian Constitution, 30
Iranian Revolution (1979), 1–2, 8, 14, 23–7, 37
Iranian Twelver Shiism, 37
Iraq, 4–7, 9–11, 15, 18, 26–8, 34, 52, 54, 65–6, 83, 85–90, 94, 103–4, 109–11, 113, 118, 123–4, 127–8, 131, 133, 139n11, 145, 165–6, 170, 180–3, 187, 193–201, 210, 216
Iraq war (2003), 65–6, 113, 123–4, 131, 133, 165, 193
ISI. *See* Import Substitution Industrialization
ISIS. *See* Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham

Islamic Conference Organization
See Organization of the Islamic Conference
Islamic extremism, 219
See Islamism
Islamic Republic of Iran, 23–31, 35, 38–9, 43–56, 89, 109, 113, 180–3, 212
Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), 183
Islamism/Islamist, 15–16, 29, 32, 38, 44, 61–74, 75n12, 87, 106, 108, 113, 116, 131–5, 147, 164, 166–7, 171, 183, 213
Islamist Welfare Party, 106
Israel, 2, 4–6, 8–9, 14–18, 27–8, 30, 34, 44, 54, 64–7, 81–3, 85–96, 103, 110–11, 113, 127–8, 131–4, 145–59, 163–72, 180, 194, 197, 199–201, 209–15, 218
and capacity, 173n6
and economic power, 148–52
and economics of regional power, 147
and geography, 150
and Heron drones (2010), 110
and influence, 146–8
and military power, 158n9
as odd man out, 168–71
as partial regional power, 145–57
and political power, 152–5
and power related to other countries (table), 153
and regional disintegration, 164–8
as regional power, 163–72, 173n6
and relational and structural power approaches, 148
and "strategic modesty," 170
as truly new Middle East, 171–2
and vertical networks, 151–2

Japan, 5–6, 27
Jarba, Ahmad, 200
jihad (warfare), 52, 64, 155, 171, 194
Jordan, 14, 16, 36, 83, 91, 109–11, 113, 131–2, 139n11, 140n12, 150–1, 153, 156, 165–6, 169, 177, 192, 199–201, 204
June War (1967), 6, 9, 16
Justice and Development Party. *See* Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP)

Karadag, Roy, 103, 106, 114, 133, 152–3, 214
Karrubi, Mehdi, 24, 38
Kefaya, 66
Kemalist establishment, 104, 108, 111–12, 114, 118
Khamenei, Ali Hosseini (1989–present), 23, 25–7, 31, 35, 44–5
Khan, Reza, 47
Khartoum consensus (1967), 2
Khatami, Mohammad, 27, 87
Khomeini, Ruhollah, 15, 24–7, 37–8, 44–5, 52–4, 163
King Fahd Causeway, 177
Kosovars, 174n13
Kurdish problem, 115, 127
Kurdish Regional Government (northern Iraq), 165
Kurdistan Democratic Party, 109
Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), 106, 115, 118, 126–7, 139n3, 201
Kurds, 54, 106, 109, 115–18, 120n4, 126–30, 139n3, 165, 201
Kuwait, 5–6, 9–11, 71, 74–5, 88, 140n12, 181, 187
invasion of (1990), 9–10

leader-follower approach, 158n4
League of Arab States, 164
Lebanon, 5, 14, 26, 34–5, 38–9, 46, 65–6, 113, 131–2, 139n11, 140n12, 165–7, 170, 194, 199–200, 207n9

Lebanon-Israel war of 2006, 65–6, 113, 131, 207
Levant, 88, 96
Libya, 12, 17, 32–4, 36, 94, 103, 109, 111, 116–17, 135–7, 165, 192, 201, 210, 213
"Libyan Revolt," 116
Lily Revolution (Kyrgyzstan), 39
Lustick, Ian, 10

Malaysia, 164
Malek, Hassan, 87
Maliki, Nouri. *See* Nouri al-Maliki
Malley, Robert, 70–1, 215
Maronites, 170
Mashriq, 12
Mashur, Mustafa, 76n15
"Mavi Marmara Flotilla" in May 2010, 86
MB. *See* Muslim Brotherhood
MHP. *See* Milliyetci Hareket Partisi
MI6. *See* British Secret Intelligence Service
"Middle Eastern-ness," 169
Military expenditure (1988–2011) (Turkey) (table), 126
Milliyetci Hareket Partisi (MHP), 115
Morsi, Mohammed, 61–2, 67–8, 71, 73–4, 82, 84, 89, 91–5, 135–6, 166–7, 197–8
Mossadegh, Muhammad, 11, 43, 51
Mousavi, Mir Hossein, 24, 38, 88
Moussa, Amr, 86
Mubarak, Gamal, 66, 87, 90, 116
Mubarak, Hosni, 13, 17, 23, 29–32, 35–8, 61–70, 72–4, 75n8, 82–92, 96, 110–11, 116, 133, 167, 171, 197, 213, 215–16, 218
  and Iran, 87
  and Saudi Arabia, 83
  and Turkey, 85–6
muqawama posture, 113
Mursi, Muhammad, 16, 30–2, 178, 186, 215, 219
Muslim Brotherhood (MB) (Muslim Brothers), 61–74, 75n4,5,6,8,11,12, 76n15,17, 82, 84–96
  as *al-Mahthoora* (the prohibited group), 63
  end of, 72–3
  and foreign policy, 66–8
  and Iran, 89
  and Israel, 91–3
  and Mubarak, 62–6
  and national and transnational, 68–70
  and regional actors, 70–2
  and Saudi Arabia, 84–5
  and "security discourse," 64–6
  and Turkey, 86–7
Mussolini, Benito, 47
MÜSIAD. *See* Müstakil Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği
Müstakil Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği (MÜSIAD), 108
Muwahhidun movement, 185

Nahas, Maridi, 14–15
Najd region, 182
NAM. *See* Non-Aligned Movement
Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān (The International Journal of Ancient Iran Studies), 48
Nasrallah, Hassan, 163, 168
Nasser, Abdel, 9–10, 14–15, 63, 69, 82, 84, 89, 163–4, 170, 179, 186, 210, 217–19
National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, 200
national power, 147
National Security Council (NSC), 106–7, 112
nationalism, 28, 49, 54, 63–4, 82, 106, 141, 153, 186, 205, 218–19
NATO. *See* North Atlantic Treaty Organization
natural gas, 109, 126, 169, 180

Neighbors Initiative (Iraq), 131
Netanyahu, Benjamin, 110, 158n3
Nolte, Detlef, 4, 147, 178, 196, 211
Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), 31
Nonneman, Gerd, 179, 193, 195, 204–5
North Africa, 38
North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), 6
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 32, 109, 116–17, 125–6, 152–3, 213
North Yemen Republic, 202–3
NSC. *See* National Security Council
Nuremburg Race Laws, 48
Nye, Joseph, 147, 157n2, 211

Obama, Barack, 28, 45, 105, 158n3, 217
Öcalan, Abdullah, 115, 120
October War in 1973, 82
OECD. *See* Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC. *See* Organization of the Islamic Conference
oil, 3, 7–8, 10–14, 32, 82–3, 87, 109, 126, 154, 157, 178, 180, 187, 195, 203
Olmert, Ehud, 110
Oman, 54, 177, 181–2, 187, 192
OPEC, *See* Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
Operation Provide Comfort, 128
Orange Revolution in Ukraine, 39
Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 6, 149–50, 157, 158n7, 168
Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), 155, 164, 181, 216
Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 195
Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), 12, 154–5, 180, 195
Orientalism, 3
Ottoman Empire, 3, 13, 52–3, 86–7, 118, 129, 138, 139n6, 164–6, 213, 217
Özkök, Hilmi, 125

Pahlavi, Shah Mohammad Reza, 47
Pahlavi state, 47–9, 54
Pakistan, 164, 178, 183, 187
Palestine, 6, 15, 27, 32, 35, 44–6, 50–1, 63, 90–2, 110–11, 132, 139n11, 154–6, 180
Palestinian Authority, 90–2, 165
Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), 6, 180
Palestinian problem, 27
Palestinian refugees, 92
Palestinian territories, 132, 139n11
pan-Arabism, 1–2, 11, 14, 64, 218–19
pan-Islamism, 1–2, 14, 63, 186
Parti de la Justice et du Développement (PJD), 116
Peres, Shimon, 110
Persian Empire, 37
petrodollar recycling, 12
PKK. *See* Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLO. *See* Palestinian Liberation Organization
public goods, 145–8
"public-private partnerships," 108

Qatar, 6, 16–17, 72, 84–5, 91, 93, 95, 113, 117, 167, 181, 188n7, 198–9
QIZ. *See* Qualifying Industrial Zone
Qualifying Industrial Zone (QIZ), 90, 151
Qutb, Seyed, 37

R&D. *See* research and development
Rafsanjani, 27, 39

Realism, 7–10, 17
Realist-Westphalian narrative, 192, 205, 206n3
regional power concept, 7–13, 148
  in contemporary history, 10
  defined, 148
  and theory, 7–10
  and Western oil interests, 10–13
regional power in Middle East, 1–7, 209–20
  and Arab Spring, 13–18
  concept of, 7–13
  and contemporary history, 10
  as contraconcert of power, 5–6
  defining, 2–4
  as globally limited, 6–7
  identifying, 4–5
  as nonexistent, 2–13
  prospects for new, 209–20
  and Western oil interests, 10–13
"regional reference" (Egypt as), 81–96
  and Egyptian-Iranian relations, 87–9, 95–6
  and Egyptian-Israel relations, 89–93, 96
  and Egyptian-Saudi relations, 82–5, 93–4
  and Egyptian-Turkish relations, 85–7, 94–5
Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP), 112
research and development (R&D), 147–9
Revolutionary Guard, 34
revolutions, 1–2, 13, 23–4, 33
Reyhanli terrorist bombing (2013), 119
Rich Countries' Club, 168
  See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Riyadh, 16, 33, 177–83, 187, 192–200, 203–5, 216
Riyalpolitik, 181, 187
role identity, 56
Roy, Olivier, 72
Russia, 24, 103, 107, 150, 156–7, 172, 183, 217
Russian Revolution (1917), 24

Sadat, Anwar, 31, 56n6, 64, 69, 73, 82–3, 218
Sadjadpour, Karim, 38, 70–1
Safawi, Nawwab, 89
Salafists, 29, 31, 38, 71, 89, 96
Salehi, Ali Akbar, 29
Salt March (India), 39
Sands, Bobby, 50, 56n6
Saudi Arabia, 4–13, 15–18, 26, 33–4, 71, 74–5, 81–5, 87–9, 92–5, 103, 105, 111, 113–14, 132–3, 137, 139n11, 140n12, 145, 152–7, 166–7, 172, 177–87, 191–206, 209, 212, 214–18
  and Arab Spring, 191–206
  and custodian of the two holy mosques, 181
  and foreign policy, 204–5
  and foreign policy characteristics, 179–82
  and Mecca and Medina, 71, 84, 178, 181, 193, 216
  and military capabilities, 182–5
  as player, 177–87
  and post-Arab Spring, 197–204
  and pre-Arab Spring, 193–6
  and Saudi *riyalpolitik*, 181
  and Wahhabism, 185–6
Saudi Investment Authority, 83–4
SCAF. *See* Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), 46
Sezer, Necdet, 112
Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, 47–8
Shah, Reza (1921–1941), 43, 47–8
shahs, 9, 11, 26, 37, 43–55
Shalit, Gilad, 91
Shariati, Ali, 50–3
Sheikh Ali Ghallab, 31

Shia, 44–5, 52, 55, 186–7, 194, 199, 206
Shiite/Alawite grouping, 166
Shiites, 25–8, 31, 33–5, 55–6, 71, 87, 89, 95, 166–7, 169, 183, 187, 212
SIPRI. *See* Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
smart power, 145–6, 153, 157n2
SNC. *See* Syrian National Council
SOAS. *See* School of Oriental and African Studies
soft power, 4–7, 19, 86, 88, 105, 109–11, 116–17, 132–3, 138, 139n1, 145, 147, 153–6, 157n2, 168, 196, 211–19
Solidarity in Poland, 39
South Yemen Republic, 165, 203
Soviet Union, 7, 9, 25, 85
Spring Fertile Crescent, 199
Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 183
Strange, Susan, 147–8
structural power, 148
Sudanese civil war, 170
sudur-e enghelab (export of the revolution), 46
Suez Canal, 14–15, 88
Suleiman, Michel, 113
Sullivan, Robert R., 179
Sunni, 31, 34, 37, 45, 55, 71, 85, 89, 93, 95, 106, 131, 156, 166–7, 186, 194, 197–200, 203, 205–6, 216, 219
Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), 82–3, 86, 88–9, 91
Sykes-Picot, 165
Syria, 14–17, 31, 33–8, 83, 86, 89, 91, 94–5, 103–4, 106, 109–13, 116–19, 127, 131–3, 135–7, 145, 153–5, 165–6, 169–72, 177–8, 183, 192, 196–201, 212–14, 217
Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in the Council, 136
Syrian National Council (SNC), 136

TAF. *See* Turkish Armed Forces
Tamarrod campaign, 67
Tamim, Sheikh, 167
Taspinar, Omer, 71
Telhami, Shibley, 9
TESEV, 132
Third Ambassadors' Conference (2011), 131
Tlāss, Mnaf, 200
tourism, 84, 105, 109, 116, 169
Transparency International, 38, 195
Tujjar al-Din, 67
Tunisia, 4–5, 13–17, 23, 29, 32, 34–8, 72, 75n12, 103, 108, 115–16, 134–7, 149, 155, 192, 210, 213
Turkey, 2, 4–6, 8, 15–16, 18, 65–6, 71–2, 81–7, 89, 91–5, 103–20, 123–38, 145, 149, 152–7, 166–7, 180, 197, 201–2, 209–10, 213–14
  and AKP, 128–34
  and AKP Turkey, 106–11
  and Arab Spring, 115–19, 134–7
  and claim to leadership, 125, 128–9
  "cusp state," 124
  and domestic and regional dynamics, 111–15
  and foreign policy instruments, 131–2
  "Middle East policy," 109
  and "order setter country," 130
  and power resources, 125–6, 130
  and regional power, 103–19
  and "return" to Middle East, 123–38
  and state of the art, 104–6
  and third states, 127, 132
Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), 106–7

Turkish-Egyptian-Qatari axis, 95
"Turkish model," 71, 94, 110–11, 114, 154, 166
Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu (TUSKON), 108
TUSKON. *See* Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu
Twelver Shi'ism (*Ja'fari* school), 55

UAE. *See* United Arab Emirates
umma (nation), 25, 43–4, 48, 52–3, 55, 193, 220
UN Security Council, 32, 96, 109, 116, 196, 210, 216
  Resolution 1973, 32, 116
United Arab Emirates (UAE), 71, 74, 88, 111, 167, 169, 188n7
United Arab Republic, 14–15, 165
UNIFIL II, 131
US-Israel Free Trade Area Implementation Act (2008), 151

Velayat-e-faqih, 55, 212

Wahhabi kingdom, 11, 178–9, 182, 185–7, 216–17
West Bank, 92, 151
Western oil interests, 10–13
Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 3
World Bank, 38, 65, 130, 133, 180, 187n2
World Economic Forum (Davos) (2009), 110
World War I, 181
World War II, 1–2, 8, 10–11, 18, 63, 164, 184

Yemen, 6, 10, 15, 32–3, 36, 135–6, 165, 179, 183, 192, 195–8, 201–5
Yugoslavian civil war, 174n13

Zaidis, 203
"zero problems" doctrine (Turkey), 94, 103, 109, 111, 116, 129, 154
Zionism, 27–8
Zogby International (March–April 2002), 132

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