

Thus, Mearsheimer, in his article «The False Promises of International Institutions»³⁹, assesses the three theories that back up the role of international institutions in preventing interstate wars, namely: liberal institutionalism⁴⁰, collective security⁴¹ and critical theory⁴².

The author argues that institutions are a true reflection of the distribution of power, which are based upon the particular interests of the major powers. Therefore, they do not in themselves have an effect, as «independent variables», on their relations, especially those relations that affect relative power and the balance of power. His basic conclusion is that international institutions play only a marginal role and their influence in promoting peace and stability is minimal. At the present time, this would seem to be absolutely correct.

³⁹ John J. Mearsheimer. The False Promises of International Institutions, *International Security*, Winter 1994/95, Vol. 19, no. 3, Pages 5-49.

⁴⁰ «Liberal institutionalism is the least ambitious of the three theories. It does not directly address the important question of how to prevent war, but focuses instead on explaining why economic and environmental cooperation among states is more likely than realist recognize. Increased cooperation in those realms is presumed to reduce the likelihood of war, although liberal institutionalists do not explain how. The theory is predicated on the belief that cheating is the main inhibitor of international cooperation, and that institutions provide the key to overcoming that problem. The aim is to create rules that constrain states, but not to challenge the fundamental realist claim that states are self-interested actors». *Ibid.* John J. Mearsheimer, *The False Promises of International Institutions*, Page 14.

⁴¹ «Collective security directly confronts the issue of how to prevent war. The theory starts with the assumption that force will continue to matter in world politics, and that states will have to guard against potential aggressors. However, the threat of war can be greatly reduced, according to the theory, by challenging realist thinking about state behavior, and substituting in its place three anti-realist norms. First, states should reject the idea of using force to change the status quo. Second, to deal with states that violate that norm and threaten (or start) a war, responsible states must not act on the basis of their own narrow self-interest. Rather, they must suppress the temptation to respond in whatever way would maximize their individual gains, and instead automatically join together to present the aggressor with the threat of overwhelming force. Third, states must trust each other to renounce aggression and to mean that renunciation. They must also be confident that other states will come to their rescue, should they become the target of aggression». *Ibid.*, John J. Mearsheimer, *The False Promises of International Institutions*, Page 14.

⁴² «Critical theory is the most ambitious of the theories, as its ultimate aim is to transform the fundamental nature of international politics and to create a world where there is not just increased cooperation among states, but the possibility of genuine peace. Like collective security, but unlike liberal institutionalism, critical theory directly challenges realist thinking about the self-interested behavior of states. The theory is predicated on the assumption that ideas and discourse—how we think and talk about international politics—are the driving forces behind state behavior. It utterly rejects realism's claim that state behavior is largely a function of the given structure of the external world. For critical theorists, ideas shape the material world in important ways, and thus the way to revolutionize international politics is to change drastically the way individuals think and talk about world politics. Intellectuals, especially the critical theorists themselves, are believed to play a key role in that process». *Ibid.*, John J. Mearsheimer, *The False Promises of International Institutions*, Pages 14-15.

Conclusions and prospect

«The power of nations rests on four basic pillars:

1. Military force and the will to use it;
2. Sufficient economic capacity to enable a nation to provide other countries with aid and investments;
3. Ideological leadership that serves as a model for other nations; and
4. A society and a system of government that are united»⁴³.

«Second definitive article in the conditions for perpetual peace: «The Right of Nations shall be founded on a Federation of Free States» ... Every people for the sake of its own security, thus may and ought to demand from any other, that it shall enter along with it into a constitution, similar to the Civil Constitution, in which the Right of each shall be secured. Instead of this however, we rather find that every State founds its Majesty –for it is absurd to speak of the majesty of the people– on not being subject to any legal coercion; and the glory of its Ruler or Head is made to consist of the fact that without his requiring to encounter any danger himself, many thousands stand ready to be sacrificed at his command for a cause which may be no concern of theirs ... For states viewed in relation to each other, there can be only one way, according to reason, of emerging from that lawless condition which contains nothing but occasions of war, just as is the case of individual men, reason would drive them to give up their savage lawless freedom to accommodate themselves to public coercive laws, and thus to form an ever-growing State of Nations, such as would at last embrace all the Nations of the Earth –»*civitas gentium*»–. But as the Nations according to their ideas of international right, will not have such a positive rational system, and consequently reject in fact «*in thesi*» what is right in theory «*in hypothesi*», hence, instead of the positive idea of a universal republic –if all is not to be lost– we shall have as result only the negative surrogate of a Federation of the States averting war, subsisting in an external union, and always extending itself over the world. And thus the current of those inclinations and passions of men which are antagonistic to Right and productive of war, may be checked, although there will still be a danger of their breaking out betimes»⁴⁴.

On reading the preceding pages one could or should conclude that mankind is inevitably condemned to be involved, sooner or later, in a new armed confrontation between the major powers. Society would be unable to evolve, as if the Darwinian system of evolution and selection were to have reached its final state; the lion would forever be the lion, the bear, always the bear, the eagle, eagle, etc., and humanity a collection of states competing for survival

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Saul Bernard Cohen, Geopolitics. The Geography of International Relations, Page 2.

⁴⁴ Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace, Miguel de Cervantes Virtual Library (2003), Pages 8 and 9.

and power, in an eternal cycle of hegemonic powers, balances of power and wars of transition towards a new hegemonic power.

However, the evolution of the human species wants to show us something other than that «still life». Francis Fukuyama in his dense work on political-social evolution in two volumes: *The Origins of Political Order, from Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*; and *Political Order and Political Decay, from the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*⁴⁵; shows us a dynamic development, which is neither uniform nor invariable, yet constant from prehuman times up to the present to converge into what constitutes the paradigm of the balance of liberal socio-political institutions, in search of that natural end, which is none other than the personal quest for happiness. That culmination would be represented by a natural balance between: the State, sovereign and free; the concept of Law implemented by the Rule of Law; and social responsibility, the need for a constant legitimation of both powers, State and Law, before the citizens whence it emanates and before those who are responsible⁴⁶.

The realistic basis of the solitary and isolated individual portrayed by Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, is in opposition to the Greek perspective represented by Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, where the person is social by nature⁴⁷. Families, clans, tribes, peoples, nations, etc., bound by links of different kinds, from the most abstract ones such as religious ideas, to the most perceivable ones, such as genetic, racial or language links. A long and winding road, unevenly travelled along, with constant progressions and setbacks, seeking an ideal but never finding it, in the purest «Hegelian tradition, (through a) process of transformation in which two opposites, thesis and antithesis, are resolved in a superior form or synthesis»⁴⁸. An evolution in which the institutions that at any point in time have reached their maximum level of development, have unfailingly endeavoured to hold onto power and prevent change, refuting «historical reason»⁴⁹ as human beings' «vital reason».

⁴⁵ Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order, from Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*; and *Political Order and Political Decay, from the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*, Barcelona, Deusto, Grupo Planeta, translated by Jorge Paredes (2016).

⁴⁶ «The aim of this book is to fill in some of the gaps caused by historic amnesia, by explaining the origins of basic political institutions in society that are now taken for granted. The three categories of institutions in question are: 1. The State, 2. The origins of legality, 3. And responsible government». *Ibid.* Francis Fukuyama, *The origins of political order, from prehistoric times to the French Revolution*, Page 43.

⁴⁷ «In either vision of the human being: in his natural state, –as a person essentially free–, or social –the political animal, «zoon politikon»–, the power struggle will continue to dominate the passions of the human being until its utmost consequences». Ignacio Garcia Sanchez. *On power, the art of war and military capacities. The dilemma of perpetual peace*, Page 2.

⁴⁸ *Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Ignacio Garcia Sánchez. *Human Security and Historical Reason, for the justification of Regression, going through the state of hibernation*.

Kant is very clear in his essay on *Perpetual Peace*:

«If one considers the perversity of human nature, unabashedly manifested in the relations between free peoples –contained, on the other hand, and watched over in the civil and political state by the legal coercion of the Government–, it is amazing that the word «right» has still not been deleted from war policy as being pedantic and arbitrary. No State has yet dared to publically air this opinion... All in all, the homage that States pay to the concept of «right» –or at least pay lip-service to–, shows that there is a major leaning towards moral goodness. This leaning, which lies dormant at the moment, aims to overcome the evil principle –which undeniably exists–, and makes it possible to expect a similar victory in others. If this were not the case, it would never occur to States to speak of «right» when they are preparing to go to war.... For people to say: «I do not want there to be war between us; let's establish a State, i.e., subject all of us to a supreme power that legislates, governs and settles our differences peacefully»; for people to say that, and I repeat, is something that can be comprehended. But for a State to say: «I don't want there to be any more wars between me and the rest of the States; but that does not mean I am going to recognise a supreme power, legislator, that guarantees my right and that of all others», is something that is quite beyond comprehension»⁵⁰.

Michael Walzer, uses a very similar argument:

«The clearest evidence about the stability of values throughout history is the immutable nature of the lies that soldiers and statesmen tell... If we were all realists, like the Athenian generals (the dialogue with the inhabitants of Melos) or like the followers of Hobbes in a state of war, there would be a common objective for both, morality and hypocrisy. We would simply say to one another brutally and directly, what we wanted to do or had done. However, the truth is that what most of us want, even in war, is to act or to appear to act morally. And we want that, simply, because we know what morality means»⁵¹.

Nothing is determined in the future history of mankind, except our own death. As Nye argues about the consequences of the First and Second World Wars: if Kaiser Wilhelm, his cousin Tsar Nicholas II and the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Josef I had been able to look into crystal ball to see the outcome of the First World War Would it have been played out in the way it was? Would Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy with Hitler or the US deterrence policy with Japan without room for manoeuvre have been the same, if it had been possible to appreciate the seriousness of the conflict that was to follow? And finally Was the fact that the Cold War came to an end without hostilities breaking out due to the risk of there being

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, Pages 9 and 10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, Pages 19 and 20.

an escalation into a nuclear war and the most tragic possibility of «mutual assured destruction»?

Yet, idealism does not seek perpetual peace in the churchyard to which Kant sarcastically referred at the beginning of his essay:

«To the Perpetual Peace». These words were once put by a Dutch innkeeper on his signboard, as a satirical inscription over the representation of a churchyard, We need not enquire whether they told of men in general, or particularly of the governors or rulers of states who seem never to be satiated of war, or even only of the Philosophers who dream that sweet dream of peace. The question is left unanswered»⁵².

Idealism seeks the complicity of mankind in its commitment to «historical reason» and the socio-political evolution of society, so that never again may an author write:

«You are a citizen, and citizenship carries responsibilities. In the 1930s the world sleepwalked into the avoidable catastrophe of World War II because the electorates in the US and Europe were too lazy to think beyond the populist recipes of isolationism and pacifism. This error led to the sacrifice of their children. It is the citizens' responsibility to prevent our societies from sliding into another catastrophe, always preventable, that our children would have to face »⁵³.

⁵² *Ibid.* Kant, Perpetual Peace, Page 1.

⁵³ Paul Collier. The Bottom Billion, Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It, Oxford, University Press, 2007, Page 176.

Table of geopolitical indicators

GEOPOLITICAL INDICATOR TABLE (CHINA) ¹	
Surface area 9,596,960 km ² (4 th in the world ranking)	
GDP 19.39 trillion \$ (1 st in the world ranking)	
GDP structure	Agriculture 8.9 %
	Industry 42.7%
	Services 48.4%
GDP per capita 14,100 \$ (113 th in the world ranking) –World average: 15,800 \$–	
GDP growth rate 6.9% (18 th in the world ranking) –World average: 3%–	
Trade relations	
(Exports): 2.27 trillion \$ (1 st in the world ranking)	
Trade relations	
(Imports): 1,596 trillion \$ (3 rd in the world ranking)	
Population 1,367,485,388 (1 st in the world ranking)	
Age structure (66 th in the world ranking) – World average: 30.1– – Chinese average: 37.1–	0-14 17.08%
	15-64 72.89%
	Over 65 10.01%
Population growth rate 0.45% –World average: 1.08–	
Ethnic groups: Han (91.6%); Zhuang (1.3%); Hui, Manchu, Yugur, Miao, Yi, Mongolian, Dong, Bouyei, Yao, Bai, Korean, Hani, Li, Kazakh and Dai (7.1%)	
Religions: Buddhism (18.2%), Christians (5.1%), Moslem (1.8%), local religions (21.9%), Hinduism (0.1%), Judaism (0.1%), unclassified (52.2%)	
Literacy rate 96.4% –World average: 86.1%–	
Population below the poverty threshold 6.1%	
GINI index 46,9 (28 th in the world ranking) –World average: 38,1–	
Military expenditure. % of the GDP 1.99% (40 th in the world ranking) –World average: 2.42%–	

Interstate war? Balance of power and realistic logic?

GEOPOLITICAL INDICATOR TABLE (UNITED STATES)	
Surface area 9,833,517 km ² (3 rd in the world ranking)	
GDP 17.95 trillion \$ (3 rd in the world ranking)	
GDP structure	Agriculture 1.6%
	Industry 20.8%
	Services 77.6 %
GDP per capita 55,800 \$ (19 th in the world ranking) –World average: 15,800 \$–	
GDP growth rate 2.4% (127 th in the world ranking) –World average: 3%–	
Trade relations	
(Exports): 1,598 \$ (3 rd in the world ranking)	
Trade relations	
(Imports): 2.347 \$ (1 st in the world ranking)	
Population 321,368,864 (4 th in the world ranking)	
Age structure (62 nd in the world ranking) – World average: 30.1– – Average for the United States: 37.9–	0-14 18.99%
	15-64 66 %
	Over 65 14.8%
Population growth rate 0.78% –World average:1.08–	
Ethnic groups: Caucasian (79.96%), coloured (12.8%), Asian (4.4%), American Indian and natives (0.97%), Hawaiian and other island peoples (0.18%)	
Religions: Protestants (51.3%), Roman Catholics (23.9%), Mormons (1.7%), other Christians (1.6%), Jews (1.7%), Buddhists (0.7%), Moslems (0.6%), others unspecified (12.1%)	
Literacy rate –World average: 86.1%–	
Population below the poverty threshold 15.1%	
GINI index 45 (43 rd in the world ranking) –World average: 38.1–	
Military expenditure. % of the GDP 4.35% (9 th in the world ranking) –World average: 2.42%–	

GEOPOLITICAL INDICATOR TABLE (EUROPEAN UNION)	
Surface area 4,324,782 km ² (7 th in the world ranking)	
GDP 19.18 trillion \$ (2 nd in the world ranking)	
GDP structure	Agriculture 1.6%
	Industry 24.4%
	Services 71.3%
GDP per capita 37,800 \$ (45 th in the world ranking) –World average: 15.800 \$–	
GDP growth rate 1.9% (137 th in the world ranking) –World average: 3%–	
Trade relations	
(Exports): 2,259 trillion \$ (2 nd in the world ranking)	
Trade relations	
(Imports): 2,244 trillion \$ (2 nd in the world ranking)	
Population 513,949,445 (3 rd in the world ranking)	
Age structure (21 st in the world ranking) –World average: 30.1– –Average for the European Union: 42.7–	0-14 15.5%
	15-64 65.7%
	Over 65 18.8%
Population growth rate 0.25% –World average:1.08–	
Ethnic groups	
Religions: Roman Catholics (48%), Protestants (12%), Orthodox (8%), other Christian groups (4%), Moslems (2%), others including Jews, Buddhists and Hindus (1%)	
Literacy rate –World average: 86.1%–	
Population below the poverty threshold 9.8%	
GINI index 30.9 (115 th in the world ranking) –World average: 38.1–	
Military expenditure. % of the GDP 1.65% (56 th in the world ranking) –World average: 2.42%–	

Chapter two

Jihadist terrorism in Morocco

Ignacio Fuente Cobo

Abstract

In Morocco, Islam has almost always been peaceful, rejecting violence as a political tool for the Islamization of society. But that does not mean that the Alawite Kingdom is immune to the most radical Islamist trends that have been generated in other Arab countries in past decades. The attacks in Casablanca in 2003, changed the political landscape of the country and its attitude in the fight against Jihadist terrorism and ended the illusion of exceptionality of Morocco and its consideration as a bulwark against fundamentalism. Although the traditional form of Islam practised in the Kingdom is far from the vision defended by Jihadist groups, the participation of Moroccan citizens in national and international terrorism networks makes it necessary to study the Jihadist phenomenon in the Alawite Kingdom from its origins to present days. The aim is to understand why it has reached the current situation and what guidelines can be anticipated for Moroccan jihadism in the future. Therefore, in this paper Moroccan contemporary jihadism is analysed in order to pinpoint the keys of the success by Moroccan authorities in their fight against a phenomenon, Jihadist terrorism, which is so violently hitting other countries on both shores of the Mediterranean basin.

Keywords

Morocco, Jihadism, Maliki, Syria, Salafism, Takfirism, Casablanca.

Introduction

Until the start of the seventies last century, political Islamism was a phenomenon that was practically alien to Morocco. The Alawite Kingdom appeared to be immune to the Islamic movements that were taking place in other Arab countries. The existence of a monarchy since the end of the 17th century that proclaimed being direct descendants from the prophet Mohammed, with the subsequent religious legitimacy this conferred it, was a comparative advantage over the rest of the Arab countries, regardless of these operating under a monarchic or republican regime. The king appeared to stand as an unbreachable rock for the Islamist groups who were deprived of enough space to develop and prosper. The only viable option the Islamic militant movements were given, during the initial years of political radicalism was either through integration in the institutional political system, or absolute alienation relegating their activity to the most marginal segments of society.

This situation does not mean that significant terrorist actions were not perpetrated prior to the Casablanca bombings in May 2003, nor that activity by Jihadist groups was not a challenge for the security policies of the Moroccan authorities, but until then terrorism had never reached a particularly concerning level¹. The political and religious legitimacy the king sought to position himself above the demands and disputes between the different Moroccan Islamic sectors, was understood as one of the main strengths in terms of security in the Kingdom, although, as the 2003 Casablanca bombings proved, it also entailed symptoms of weakness.

On the other hand, and unlike Algeria, where prohibition of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) after suspension of the electoral process in 1992, fired the resistance against the authorities channelled through terrorist groups such as the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), in Morocco, tactical alliances between the monarch and the main Islamic party, the Justice and Development Party (PJD) subordinated to Royal Authority, was a very significant containing wall against Jihad terrorism arising internally. The PJD became an authorised, although limited, way of channelling aspirations of the most vulnerable popular areas, which avoided a possible assault against the power by groups affiliated to Jihadist Salafism.

Background to the conflict

The appearance of the first Islamic movements

It was in 1972 when the first Islamist movement in Morocco appeared, under the name of Shabiba al-Islamiya (Islamic Youth), which was created

¹ TOZY Mohamed. *Les Pronostics de Mohamed Tozy: Les Islamistes ne peuvent pas gagner*. Arabies. February 2001 Page 23.

by the nationalist Abdelkarim Moutiï, a former inspector of the Arabic language². This was a violent, clandestine, extremist Sunni association, whose objective was to establish an Islamic State in Morocco. Its ranks were full of professors and students who Moutiï taught a strongly radicalised «Islamic» education, following the footsteps of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, the founders of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, whose ideas had spread to Morocco by political leaders such as Allal El Fassi, the founder of the Moroccan Nationalist Party «*Istiqlal*»³. Its birth came about during a period where «Nasserism», that had been so widely preached in the Arab world in the sixties, had started to run out of steam and the new Islamic trends were starting to openly raise their voices.

The *Shabiba* movement was born as an objective alliance between Islamism and the power, in which the Moroccan authorities deliberately chose to «design religious policy based on promoting Islamism to counter the Arab nationalist dimension expressed through «Nasserism»⁴. *Shabiba* benefited from exacerbation of the internal contradictions in the traditional left-wing parties, which had favoured the appearance of a radical, revolutionary left-wing, which became its priority objective. Consequently, the Islamic militants started to recruit students at schools and universities who they indoctrinated with an ideological discourse based on considering Marxists / Leninists as «atheist groups».

This militant formation, whose members opposed the Alawite regime, was supported by a political branch known as Dawa (the call to Islam, spiritual education, the practice of religious rites, etc.) and also a military branch created in 1981 by Moutiï himself, with the name of *Fighting Faction*⁵, a group that was very active in the early eighties organising demonstrations against the Alawite monarchy, and illegal traffic of arms and explosives. Their main terrorist action was the assassination, on 18th December 1975, of Omar Benjelloun, the leader of USFP, a socialist in favour of secular Morocco, a vision that was the complete opposite of that held by the Islamists of *Shabiba*⁶.

² After being accused of being involved in the assassination on 18th December 1975 of Omar Benjelloun, a left-wing leader and journalist, Moutia fled to Saudi Arabia where he took part in the assault on the Great Mosque of Mecca in November 1979. He then fled to Libya, where it is believed he is living in exile. See EL AZIZI Abdellatif. «Qui a tué Omar Benjelloun?». MarocHebdo. 16.03.2001. <http://www.maghress.com/fr/marochebdo/45610>.

³ DARIF Mohamed. «L'expérience de la Chabiba Islamiya», La Gazette du Maroc. 16.06.2003. Available at <http://www.maghress.com/fr/lagazette/2780>. Consulted on 21.05.2016

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ SETTECASE, Gerardo. *Not so distant deserts: the Canary plot behind the 11-M*, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, IDEA, 2008, page 65.

⁶ Along with Noumani another three theorists were involved in the attacks: Miloudi Zakaria, 37 years old, head of the outlawed association Assirat al-Mustaqim; Abdelkrim Chadli, 45 years old, doctor in philosophy; and Omar Haddouchi, 44 years old, a travelling salesman. Zakaria was sentenced to life imprisonment and the other two to thirty years each. DALLE Ignace: «L'assassinat del Omar Benjelloun», *Les Trois Rois: La monarchie*

The *Shabiba* intended to copy the scenario in the Middle East, i.e. direct confrontation with the regime. Nevertheless, police repression and the lack of strategic success meant the remains of the organisation split into a number of small Jihadist organisations. A significant number of the surviving members dissented from the organisation, and to mark this rupture they founded a more political rather than activist movement under the name of the Jamaa Khayria Association to subsequently become «Reform and Renovation» (Al Islah Wattajdid)⁷. The dissidents decided to join the official political life in accordance with constitutional legality, which mean any armed activity was renounced. A new change of name came about in the nineties, becoming «Unity and Reform» (Attawhid Wal Islah), whose members joined up with the Popular Constitutional Democratic Movement (MPDC) created in 1967 by MD. Abdelkrim Al Khatib ultimately ending up in the moderate trend of the Justice and Development Party after 1998 (Hibz al-Ahdala wa tanmia), chaired by the Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane⁸.

Other Jihadist groups of fairly low relevance appeared as well in the north and east of Morocco during the eighties⁹ such as the Association for Islamic Research (Jam'iyat al-Ba'th al-islami) in Oujda and Tetouan, the so-called «Call to Goodness and Elevation of the Soul» (Da'wa ila al-Khayr wa al Tannazûh) in Oujda, The People of the Flag (Alh al-Liwâ) in Nador, or the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb al Tahrir al-Islami) in Tangier. Some of these groups created small Jihad cells in the cities of Berkane and Nador where they carried out several assassinations¹⁰ and years later were involved in the Casablanca bombings of 2003¹¹.

It could be said that the eighties made a very important period in the consolidation of an Islamist consciousness by part of certain sectors in Moroccan society. The success of the Iranian revolution played a big part in this, leading many Moroccans to believe, as was true in other Muslim countries, that an Islamic alternative to the political situation in Morocco was possible.

marocaine de l'indépendance à nos jours, Fayard 2004, google play. <https://books.google.es/books?id=lvN66tIPmv4C&pg=PT243&lpg=PT243&dq=Abdelaziz+Noumani&source=bl&ots=RjyphSINJi&sig=dDhwr-Fk9SvHV9SpRi2pKG8GGU0&hl=es&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjG8ZernsPMAhUB1BoKHQIMdQQQ6AEIMDAD#v=onepage&q=Abdelaziz%20Noumani&f=false>.

⁷ «La nébuleuse extrémiste», in *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, 30.08.2002. Available at <http://aujourd'hui.ma/focus/la-nebuleuse-extremiste-19827>. Consulted on 26.05.2016.

⁸ BENKHALLOUK Mohamed. «La genèse extrémiste: l'itinéraire marocain», *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*. 12.09.2003.

⁹ CHAARANI Ahmed. «La mouvance islamiste au Maroc: du 11 septembre 2001 aux attentats de Casablanca de 16 mai 2003». Karthala. 2004. Page 49.

¹⁰ As was the case of the assassination in Nador of Lahbib Oudaïf, a police informer. *Ibid.* Page 49.

¹¹ GUITTA Olivier. «Alive and Well and Living in London. Why won't Britain extradite Islamic extremists?». *The Weekly Standard*. 07.05.2007. Available at <http://www.weeklystandard.com/article/14697>. Consulted on 22.05.2016.

The influence of Wahhabism in Morocco

Starting in the seventies last century Morocco opened its gates up to Wahhabism from Saudi Arabia, a country it held close relations with ever since the Western Sahara conflict when the Saudi monarch channelled significant funds to finance Morocco's war effort and politically supported Morocco in the Arab world.

When the conflict was over, Saudi support was mainly directed at developing institutions that permitted dissemination of its own, more radical religious ideology among Moroccan society. That included opening Wahhabi Koranic schools and charity organisations that shared a Salafist outlook based on a return to original Islam from the times of the prophet Mohammed and his companions. They also financed the education of clerics in Saudi Arabia, which ended up producing a new generation of radical preachers, educated in a strict interpretation of Islam, far away from the Maliki school native to the Maghreb region.

Like this, and although the official, popular forms of Islam in Morocco, in their ideology, are incompatible with the Wahhabi doctrine, for political and financial reasons the country allowed Saudi religious personalities to finance up to 70% of the 35,000 mosques in the Kingdom¹² in cities such as Tangier, Casablanca, Fez, Rabat, Marrakesh and Tetouan, where they imposed their own preachers. These preachers used the religious centres to call Muslims to join the Jihad abroad, in countries such as Afghanistan, Bosnia or Chechnya.

The commitment by the Alawi monarchy to promoting such a strict outlook on Islam would become counter-productive after the first Gulf War (1990-91) when a certain number of those preachers started to separate from the official line of passive Salafism, which accepted the legitimacy of Arab monarchies, to take a much more violent approach to Jihadist Salafism driven by the leaders of Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri¹³. Those preachers started to openly criticise the Alawi monarchy and consequently they were forbidden from preaching in official mosques, and were arrested on numerous occasions.

Nevertheless, the repressive measures did not bring an end to activity by clerics, since they moved their activities to the suburbs and started to build improvised mosques in the poorer districts of the major Moroccan cities. Their influence started to spread among the poor residents and those who

¹² MAGHRAOUI Abdeslam. «After the Moroccan terrorist connection: state policies and Saudi Wahhabism» ARI No. 63/2004, Real Instituto Elcano, 07/04/2004. Available at http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/mediterraneo+y+mundo+arabe/ari+63-2004. Consulted on 19.05.2016.

¹³ PARGETER Alison. «The Islamist Movement in Morocco», in *Terrorism Monitor*. Volume 3 Issued: 10.05.2005. Pages 115-140.

had become disillusioned with the authorities due to a lack of social action, the latter seeing in their political message a dangerous alternative to the stability of the monarchy. Consequently, and under the guise of charity services, the Islamists wove a silent network of extremism through the different regions of the Kingdom, mainly targeting the districts and suburbs where poverty and despair were at their worst.

These were the seeds that blossomed in a mosaic of small groups somewhere between crime and religion, with names such as «Salafiya Jihadia», «Attakfir Wal Hijra», «wattabligh Addaâwa», «Assirate Almoustaqime»¹⁴. Most of their leaders, despite academic supervision by the self-appointed preachers, were illiterate or had very limited levels of instruction, being to a greater or lesser extent ideologically linked to the postulates that the terrorist organisation Al Qaeda defended.

The appearance of Takfir Salafism

But after the fall of the Soviet Union, a new model of fundamentalism started to emerge from the Arab world, mainly from Egypt, represented by the so-called Takfiri Salafists. The main difference with other Islamic groups is that the Takfiri were not prepared to compromise with the national authorities in legal political activity that allowed them to establish an Islamic state through the polls. For them, this objective had to be achieved through violence. The importance of the Takfir doctrine in Morocco did not only lie in refusing to acknowledge the king as the maximum religious authority, but above all in that it was deeply rooted in the suburbs of Moroccan cities where State action was practically non-existent and where poverty--stricken social masses victims of rural exodus had settled in the years following independence in 1956¹⁵. The destruction of the «*derb*», the traditional working class district, became a key factor for the growth of these districts of Takfir Jihadism, an ideology that in less than a decade was capable of mobilising part of the youth in the marginal areas, bringing them out of their isolation and committing them to political violence against the country's authorities.

After 1999 the Moroccan Takfir movement decided to move towards political violence with the appearance of groups such as «Rebaa» in Meknes or «The Community of the Straight Path» (jamâ'ata al-Sirât al-mustaqîm) in Casablanca. These groups benefited from the dismantling of the police security network established by the Hassan II's regime, as a result of liberalising measures approved on occasion of the ascent to the throne of

¹⁴ «La nébuleuse extrémiste». Aujourd'hui Le Maroc. 30.08.2002. Available at <http://aujourd'hui.ma/focus/la-nebuleuse-extremiste-19827>. Consulted on 24.05.2016.

¹⁵ In 2003 around 10% of the urban population lived in shacks. In Casablanca, this number was around 300,000, accounting for 8.6% of the population. www.bladi.com. Consulted on 17.05.2016.

his son and successor Mohammed VI. The consequences of this situation led to greater coercion of the inhabitants of the poorest districts, and a wave of attacks initially targeting *Mokadems* (a kind of local police force) and public servants, but which spread to other professions and to the social fabric as a whole.

Nevertheless, unlike the Algerian Jihadists of the Armed Islamic Group and its heir the Salafist Group for Preach and Combat (GSPC), the Moroccan Jihadists showed greater signs of weakness in the last decade of past century. While the Algerian Salafists of the GIA were capable of recruiting up to 500 young men per week in 1994¹⁶, the Moroccan activists were unable to reach some hundred, although that number was larger if sympathisers were counted¹⁷.

Some of these groups acted more as criminal organisations than Islamic institutions. The main one, namely the Community of the Straight Path, reached a certain level of relevance after 2002 as a result of the assassination of rivals considered to be infidels, and ended up settling in the suburbs of Casablanca, Sale, Tangier, Nador, Oujda, Fez and Marrakesh¹⁸. In the end it encompassed a nebula of small groups with no central coordination, but united by the idea that Morocco was a corrupt State that needed to be violently purified in order to focus on the Jihad against the infidels¹⁹.

The Community of the Straight Path ended up producing two different groups, although they were closely linked to each other²⁰. The first was directed by Zakaria Miloudi²¹, who converted his group in a true sect, controlling every aspect of its members' lives, which guaranteed blind obedience, this strong control being used to impose strict interpretation of Islam on the local population. The second group had a very limited number of members (there were never more than thirty members divided into cells of five people), but it was particularly active during the nineties. It was controlled by Youssef Fikri, a natural of Safi who ended up settling in Casablanca where he was eventually arrested by the police in July 2002 because of his links to

¹⁶ VRIENS Lauren. Armed Islamic Group (Algeria, Islamists). Council on Foreign Relations (27.04.2009). Available at <http://www.cfr.org/algeria/armed-islamic-group-algeria-islamists/p9154>. Consulted on 27.05.2016.

¹⁷ BELAALA Selma: *Op.cit.*

¹⁸ PARK Thomas K and BOUM Aomar. *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*. Scarecrow Press, (16.01.2006). Page 191.

¹⁹ Its main ideologist in Morocco was Khamlî Dâoud, a graduate in modern languages who founded the group in Douar Sekouila.

²⁰ MARTIN JONES David, LANE Ann, SCHULTE Paul. *Terrorism, Security and the Power of Informal Networks*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Massachusetts, Edward Edgard Publishing Ltd. (01.01.2010). Page 81

²¹ CHADI Taieb. «L'ange de la mort». MarocHebdo. (23.05.2003). Available at <http://www.maghress.com/fr/marochebdo/55909>. Consulted on 27.05.2016.

organised crime²². It was in this context of social marginality and Islamic radicalism, in conjunction with organised crime, that the perpetrators of the May 2003 Casablanca attacks arose²³.

Moroccan Jihadists in the Afghanistan war

While the aforementioned organisations were acting inside Morocco, some Islamic militants headed to Afghanistan (1979-88) as part of a contingent of 20,000 Arab fighters who decided to join the Jihad against Soviet occupation²⁴. Although only a very few «Afghan» Moroccans were committed to the Jihad in Afghanistan, and most of them played non-fighting roles. After the Soviet withdrawal, some of them remained in Afghanistan, whereas others chose to travel to Bosnia to be a part of the Jihadist nebulous participating in the ethnic, religious war that was taking place there at the time (1991-1995). Finally, most of them preferred to return home²⁵.

These former sympathisers and Mujahideen fighters who returned home, formed the organisation Harakat al-Islamiya al-al-Maghrebiya Mukatila (HASM) focussing on instigating violence with a view to political change in the country, where the king would be replaced by an Islamic Government. Nevertheless, their acting capability was very limited and was mainly aimed at ensuring a certain degree of solidarity and social support for the former fighters who had returned to Morocco from Afghanistan.

The number of Moroccan volunteers who had remained in Afghanistan was so scarce that they initially joined the most numerous group of Libyan Jihadists grouped together in the Libyan Islamic Combat Group (LCIG). The tension with their partners however led to the Moroccans finally establishing their own embryo of organisation and as time went by they became known as the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (GICM), following the example of the Libyan fighters. Nevertheless, their small size meant their political action was very limited until around the middle of the nineties when, inspired by radical preachers and driven on by a growing Jihad movement in Morocco,

²² «Je tue et je découpe les corps des mécréants», Maroc Hebdo, (03.08.2002). Available at <http://www.bladi.net/je-tue-et-je-decoupe-les-corps-des-mecreants.html>. Visited 22.05.2016.

²³ Fikri was involved in a total of six «Islamic» executions, and as was the case of Miloudi, he was sentenced to death for his participation in the bloody attacks of Casablanca in 2003.

²⁴ TEMPLE Dina: «Western Fighters Answer Mideast Extremists' Clarion Call», NPR, (28.06.2014). <http://www.npr.org/2014/06/28/326313364/western-fighters-answer-mideast-extremists-clarion-call>. Consulted on 26.06.2016. Other sources raise this number to up to 35,000 fighters. COMMINS David. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. London. I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006. page 174. Also RASHID Ahmed. *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. New Haven. Yale University Press. 2000. page 129.

²⁵ KARIM Sanaa. *Party Politics for Morocco's Salafis?* Carnegie Endowment for international Peace. (2.10.1012). Available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=49544>, Consulted on 26.05.2016.

Chapter three

Lybia: trying to «tie up loose ends» of the revolution

Emilio Sánchez de Rojas Díaz

Introduction

«...after the Iraq and Aghanistan wars, appetite for post-conflict deployments was very low in most western capitals. Europe was in the midst of a financial crisis and the United States just emerging from one. Electoral cycles likely also played a role, and the Obama administration was no doubt wary of the risk that a quagmire in Libya [...] during a presidential election year.» (Chivvis & Martini, 2014)

Almost six years have passed since the beginning of the revolution that toppled Muammar Qaddafi's regime; Libya is still divided into two rival regimes in Tripoli and in Tobruk, and submerged in a civil war that has destroyed the economy, and provoked the displacement of half its six million inhabitants.

Nearly 30 months of war have produced nearly static fronts. A cease-fire in November of 2015 practically ended the combats in the west of Libya. However, the Islamic State has taken advantage of the existing chaos to organize their bases in the country, expand their territory, and attract a large number of recruits. In December 2015, with the mediation of the UN, a unity government was reached, the Government of National Accord, in the hope that it would lead to an end to the civil war and involve the state forces and militias in neutralizing the Islamic State. Nevertheless, both the Islamic-

Government of unity

At the end of 2015, the UN negotiated an accord to form a «government of unity» led by Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj, but the Tripoli Administration as well as the Tobruk Administration were reluctant to admit his authority. Sarraj and some of his collaborators finally settled in Tripoli in March 2016 and established their headquarters in a naval base strongly guarded⁴⁴.

Although the creation of a government of unity composed of 32 members was announced on 19 January, there were still doubts about its capacity to govern, considering the erratic behavior of the signatories of the peace accord, and the unresolved conflicts among them. A demonstration of the difficulties were the protests that took place during Fayaz Sirraj's visit to western Libya on 8 January, imposed by the UN, which included the cities of Zliten, Misrata, and Tripoli. The emergence of new armed groups to confront the Islamic State, such as the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) and the Ajdabiya Border Division, caused a major political antagonism, and it reduced the possibility of achieving a united military force⁴⁵.

The Islamic State in Libya

The main headquarters of the Islamic State in Libya is Sirte, a mid-size coastal city, the birthplace of Qaddafi, and the stage of his execution. In Sirte, the Islamic State has found allies among Qaddafi's former supporters, who are reinforced by local volunteers and Islamists from Yemen, Mali, Syria, and Tunisia.

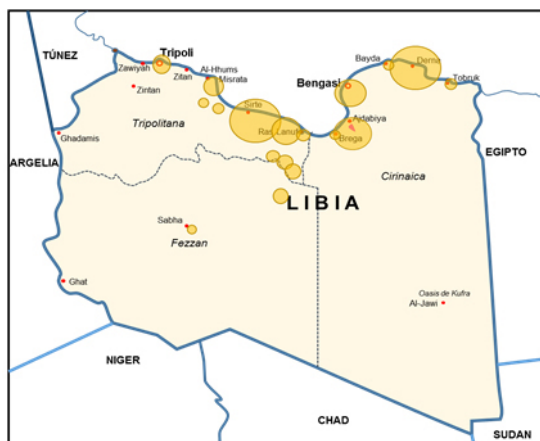


Fig. 3: activities of the Islamic State in 2015 and in January 2016 base on (MOODY J 2016)

⁴⁴ BBC. Libya country profile, *Op. cit.*

⁴⁵ MOODY, J. Libya, *Ibid.*, p.8.

For the Islamic State, Libya is the alternative war theater should the one in Syria-Iraq be destroyed. The efforts of the Islamic State to dominate the Libyan scene, from February 2015 to this date, have been favored by the internal rivalries. 2015 was a productive year for the Islamic State in Libya, which spread its actions along the east and west coasts and into the interior. The map illustrates the scope of its actions.

The Islamic State has exploited the empty areas between the parts in conflict in the civil war in Libya, and has settled on the front line, occupying the territory when there are no local forces in condition to defend it. This approach of the Islamic State is a reflection of the expansion in Syria and Yemen, which shows the threat that the adoption of a regional strategy by the Islamic State means. The group is now defending its bastion in Sirte, at the same that it spreads, imposing its domain on the population as it grows stronger, through the creation of government structures and the imposition of a very rigorous version of the Sharia⁴⁶.

The Islamic State will use its safe hideout in Libya to resist and project instability throughout the whole North of Africa and, potentially, in Europe. A stronghold in Libya allows the Islamic State to survive in case of a defeat in Iraq and Syria, providing two key attributes: a safe physical hideout for their main authorities, and a safeguard for the ideological legitimacy of the Islamic State, which depends on the territorial government of an Islamic State⁴⁷.

The Wall Street Journal published an article with the opinion of Jessica Lewis McFate and Harleen Gambhir in which they stated that the Islamic State was no longer a regional problem and was carrying out a complex strategy which it applied in three concentric geographic circles. Regarding Libya, they stated that:

«The recent incursion of the Islamic State in Libya, taking of hostages, and the executions of Jordanians and Egyptians, are a clear attempt to provoke offensive operations in these countries and, as such, they have largely succeeded. The objective is to polarize the local populations to dissuade their participation in the coalition led by the United States against the Islamic State. The long-term objective is to cause failure in the different states in the region that spread from within the inner circle⁴⁸.

The main mission of the Islamic State in the «near exterior» is territorial expansion. The Islamic State is also fomenting relations with local jihadist groups capable of carrying out simultaneous and independent military operations, particularly in Libya and the Sinai Peninsula.

⁴⁶ GAMBHIR, H. *Isis's Campaign in Libya: January 4-February 19, 2016*. Washington: The Institute for the Study of War, 2016.

⁴⁷ GAMBHIR, H. *Isis's Campaign in Libya*, *Op. cit.*

⁴⁸ MCFATE, J. y GAMBHIR, H., *Op. Cit.*

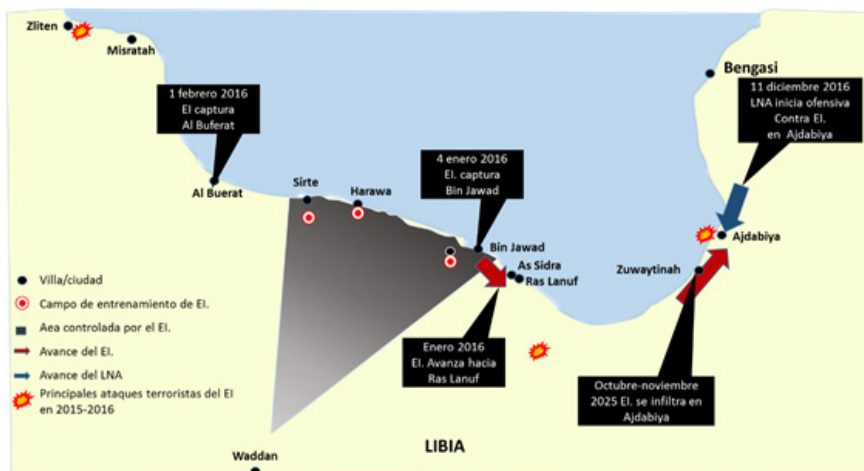


Fig. 4: Controlled areas and expansion of the Islamic State in January 2016

In February 2016, *Foreign Policy*⁴⁹ echoed the achievements of the group at that moment:

«Only after understanding its spread, size, and tactics can the international community develop a proper strategy for rolling back its recent gains. The group dominates a 120-mile stretch of territory extending east along the coast from the town of Sirte, seized almost entirely during 2015. This is its most significant achievement, because this territory provides it with a relatively safe base from which to attract new recruits and plan attacks elsewhere.»

At the same time, the Islamic State was present in Benghazi, but without the satisfaction of having territorial control, and it demonstrated its capacity to carry out guerrilla type attacks in the west, where they have a network of sleeper cells, including some in the capital, and it has probably absorbed elements from Ansar al-Sharia. The UN estimates its forces are between 2,000 and 3,000 combatants; in the opinion of the United States, between 5,000 and 6,000; while the French intelligence raises those figures to 10,000⁵⁰. The headquarters of the Islamic State in the west of Libya is Ajaylat, a former military site south of the coastal city of Sabratha, west of Tripoli.

At the end of June 2015, the Islamic State lost control of its first refuge, Derna. Residents of Derna, associated with the Islamic State in Syria, returned to Libya in 2014 and formed the Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam group, who took control of Derna. These activists administered the Sharia, and carried out public executions and supplied basic services to all areas of the city. The group publicly declared its loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

⁴⁹ AMRANI, I. «How Much of Libya Does the Islamic State Control?» *Foreign Policy*, 2016.

⁵⁰ AMRANI, I., *Op. cit.*

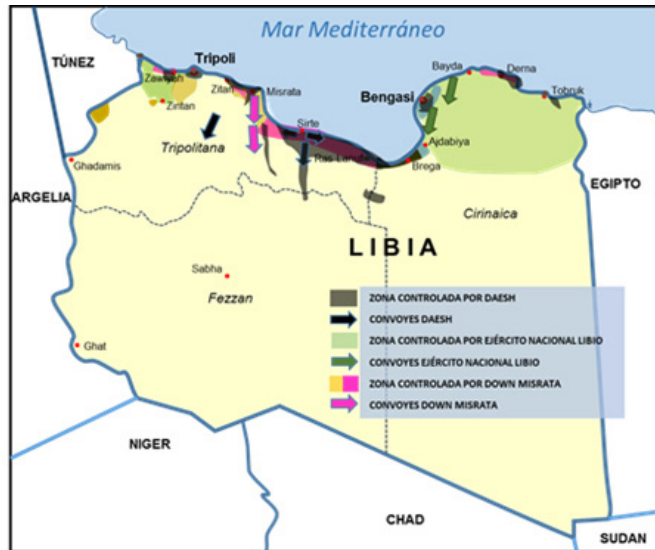


Fig. 5: Movements between January and April 2016

in October 2014, and the Islamic State admitted them as official affiliates in November 2014. The expulsion was undertaken by local Islamists after the assassination of Nasser al-Aker, leader of the Martyrs of Abu Salim Brigade, and a distinguished member of the defunct Libyan Combatant Islamic Group, member of al Qaeda⁵¹.

After losing the battle for Derna, the Islamic State strongly emerged in the city of Sirte. In August 2015, it had totally occupied Sirte, where it found no real resistance. The Islamic State was able to gain the loyalty of the former members of the Ansar al-Sharia group, quite weakened after the death of its leader, Mohammed al-Zahawi, at the beginning of 2015⁵². It was the greatest success of the Islamic State, as Sirte and the towns nearby formed an area dominated by tribes loyal to the *ancien régime*. The region was neglected by the authorities, in spite of the vast destruction it suffered during the uprising. Apart from Ansar al-Sharia, there were no rival local militias with a strong presence there⁵³.

In January 2016, and inspired by its success, the Islamic State adopted a more aggressive attitude towards its neighbors, and menaced the oil infrastructure in Libya. It led its military power towards the nearby city of Misrata, cradle of the most powerful militias in the west of Libya, and it simultaneously headed

⁵¹ ZOSCHAK, C. y GAMBHIR, H. *ISIS Loss Libyan Stronghold*. Washington: The Institute for the Study of War, 2015.

⁵² LEFÈVRE, R., «High stakes for the peace process in Libya» *The Journal of North African Studies*, 2016, 21:1, pp. 1-6, DOI: 10.1080/13629387.2015.1121949

⁵³ AMRANI, I., *Op. cit.*

towards the oil port of Sidra and the Ras Lanuf refinery. It also advanced towards the oil production fields in the southern desert, defying the militias in charge of protecting the area known as the «Crescent Petroleum». Thus, it threatened its main military rivals, and at the same time, it put the principal means of financing which Libya depends on at risk.

For the western world, a response to the Islamic State from a united Libya seems far off. On the one hand, the main Libyan militias try to avoid direct confrontation, due to the risk of an escalation of tribal violence. On the other hand, these militias give priority to the control of their own territory and are afraid to get too far away from their region. Furthermore, they feel that if they put all their efforts against the Islamic State, their defense against other more conventional enemies would be endangered. Finally, although the rival factions admit that the Islamic State means a threat on a long term basis, there is neither dialogue nor the necessary coordination to prepare a joint response⁵⁴.

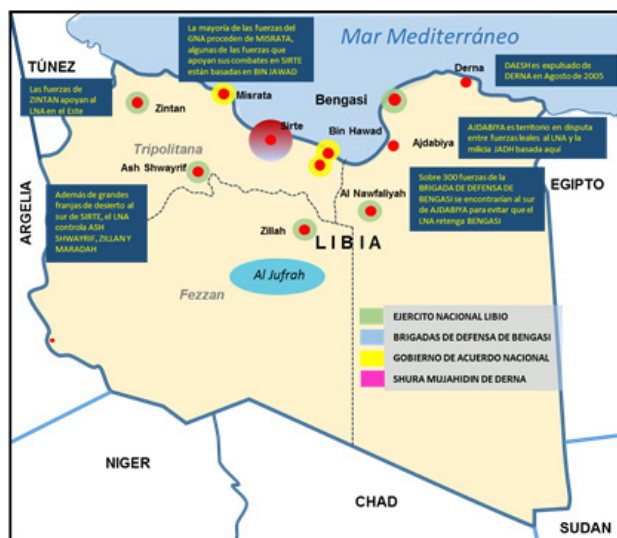


Fig. 6: Positions of the different actors in the middle of 2016

The international community's hope that a government of unity could take the initiative in the fight against the Islamic State is highly unrealistic on a short term basis. An efficient military strategy against the Islamic State, particularly in the area of Sirte, requires collaboration among the militias that are currently rivals. Doing nothing is not an option, but over-reacting would be more reckless, and it would endanger the hard work of a broad peace process in Libya just in order to please the promoters of the global

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

fight against the Islamic State. In the middle of such chaos, the Islamic State could emerge even stronger⁵⁵.

In May 2016, Libya entered a stage of transition where the political groups that separated got together again, returning to a bipolar and more stable situation. Two recent events that happened in Libya support the hypothesis of stabilization:

- The increase in military forces and in battles in which the territory was captured by the government forces.
- The increase of the contacts among the lower level militias in Tripoli, which suggests an attempt to be «included» in a possible accord⁵⁶.

These events, if combined, could indicate that the political forces on the ground might be taking measures leading towards the avoidance of a greater fragmentation.

Offensive against the Islamic State in Sirte

Armed Libyan Factions

In the middle of May 2016, three of the main armed factions in Libya initiated an offensive against the Islamic State in the city of Sirte. The different agendas of these factions and the possible strong resistance of the Islamic State gave the impression that the operation would be longer and would not be decisive⁵⁷.

The attacking forces were attached to four different general headquarters, and they had little coordination on the ground. The Government of National Accord (GNA), backed by the UN, had two different general headquarters affiliated in Tripoli. The first one led the offensive of the Misrata revolutionary brigades between Misrata and Sirte, while the second one did so with the «Oil Facilities Guard» militia of Ibrahim Jadhnan, the main force deployed against the Islamic State in the area of Sirte-Ajdabiya⁵⁸.

Despite the fact that some coordination in the air support provided by the MiG-23 in Misrata was noticeable, the two forces lacked real coordination on the ground. Ibrahim Jadhnan has warned that he will not allow the Misrata brigades to advance east of Sirte. For his part, the Libyan National Army, headed by General Khalifa Haftar, occupied positions in the city of Zillah, in

⁵⁵ AMRANI, I., *Op. cit.*

⁵⁶ MOODY, J. Libya, *Op. cit.*, p.8.

⁵⁷ COCHRANE, L. «Offensive against Islamic State in Sirte unlikely to be decisive in uprooting the group from Libya». s.l.: Jane's Intelligence Weekly, 2016. 2040-8315., p.1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p.2.

a totally independent operation, and was hostile to the Misrata brigades as well as to the «Oil Facilities Guard»⁵⁹.

It is highly unlikely that this situation will change until the rejection by Haftar of the GNA authority ends. The main objective of each group is to improve their respective positions after the civil war, and therefore it cannot be ruled out that this may be the reason why the elements of the three factions fight among one another, instead of combating the Islamic State. This risk has materialized in Zillah where combats among the forces pro and anti LNA took place at the beginning of May 2016⁶⁰.

The Islamic State

The Islamic State's political rhetoric focuses on the fact that the legitimacy of its caliphate derives, among other things, from its capability of enforcing the Sharia in the territories where it rules and, in spite of the message of the late spokesman of the group, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani⁶¹, of saying that the caliphate would be maintained, even if all its territory was lost, without mentioning Sirte by name⁶².

Libya is the only place – apart from Syria and Iraq – in the whole MENA region where the Islamic State can show it has control of the whole territory; thus, it may be said that the main effort of the Islamic State is the defense of Sirte. The plans for the offensive of the Misrata brigades in Sirte were announced at the beginning of April, and the Islamic State had enough time to reinforce its positions in the surroundings of the city by placing improvised mines and explosives in the outskirts, fortifying the sniper positions in and around Sirte⁶³.

Any force that tries to enter Sirte is vulnerable to these defenses and to the urban guerrilla tactics that the jihadists use to prevent the enemy from capturing and controlling the city. This may lead to an impasse of the situation in Sirte, as the will to win of the irregular combatants, who represent a large majority of the forces that combat the Islamic State, may become eroded⁶⁴.

Current situation

The four-month campaign to recover the coastal city is now in its last stages. The Islamic State exploited the divisions to seize Sirte and rule it for over a

⁵⁹ COCHRANE, L., *Op. cit.*, p.2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3

⁶¹ Assassinated while inspecting the battle front in the northern province of Aleppo, near the Syrian-Turkish border, where the Islamic State is fighting its most important battle.

⁶² COCHRANE, L., *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ COCHRANE, L. *Op. cit.* p.3

year without any problems. However, after a bloody campaign, the Misrata brigades are on the verge of recovering what represents the most important site of the Islamic State outside the Middle East⁶⁵.

The Sirte campaign has been unstable, with attacks followed by long pauses while the forces regrouped and the hospitals struggled to take care of the wounded. The brigades operate depending on the command centers in Sirte and Misrata, aligned with the government backed by the UN in Tripoli, but on the ground, the formations vary, the combatants are poorly equipped, and the advance has been difficult⁶⁶.

The air strikes from the United States, which started 1st August helped to clear the snipers, and to avoid suicidal attacks and the movements of the Islamic State. However, these attacks came too late and they were not intensive enough. As far as the civilian population, most of the 90,000 estimated inhabitants fled the city after the Islamic State took control of it, and before the battles. The families that stayed in the city are those of the Islamic State combatants. Some of the Islamic State combatants escaped before the campaign started, and hundreds of them died, although there are no reliable figures. Only fifteen combatants have been captured, but none is a relevant person⁶⁷.

The forces aligned with the UN-backed government of Libya attacked some of the last redoubts of the Islamic State in Sirte; upon resumption of combat, and after several days of a relative calm, we could find ourselves in the final



Fig. 7: BBC image control and crucifixions: Life in Libya under IS

⁶⁵ LEWIS, A. «Libyan forces prepare for last push against Islamic State in Sirte». Reuters. 31 August 2016.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ LEWIS, A. Libyan forces, *Op. cit.*

stages of the campaign to expel the Islamic State from its former bastion in the North of Africa. However, there was strong resistance from the militants, who were entrenched in a residential area in the center of the coastal city. The forces seized several buildings between neighborhoods one and three in Sirte. The loss of Sirte was a hard blow for the Islamic State, which had kept complete control of the city for over a year, using it as an important stronghold for Libyan and foreign combatants⁶⁸.

Nevertheless, old habits do not change and internal conflicts were reactivated. On 11 September, the Libyan National Army (LNA), under the command of General Khalifa Hifter, seized control of the four main oil export terminals in the center of Libya. The LNA aligned with the enemy government in the east of Libya, and expected to use the oil fields to reach an accord with the rival government in the west, and thus consolidate its position in the command structure of the future government of unity of Libya. The most likely accord that Hifter is trying to negotiate is a military council similar to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt, a country that significantly supports Hifter already, and will probably support his future moves. In order to gain control of the ports, Hifter was aided by 2,000 combatants from the Sudanese rebel group, Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).

Conclusions

The Future of the Islamic State

Thinking that in spite of an eventual defeat, the problem of the Islamic State will be resolved is unreal. The resilience shown in previous experiences in Iraq allows us to predict that the Islamic State will submerge in some areas, at the same time that it will try to create a new sanctuary in Libya, taking advantage of the existing unending rivalries.

Among the places considered by the experts as a future stronghold is Kufra, and also the region of Fezzan (declared Wilayat Fezzan), with places like Ghat, Sebha, Ubari, and al-Jawf. A strong Fezzan presence would facilitate the traffic of arms and combatants from Niger, Chad, and Sudan – countries of origin of most of the foreign combatants in the group – towards Libya to strengthen its ranks, and attack the critical infrastructure in the south of Libya (including the oil fields in Sarir and Sharara), adopting the same strategy that was used in the Sirte Basin⁶⁹.

This would also permit it to increase its influence on the Sahel and sub-Saharan African countries, and include cross-border attacks of the French

⁶⁸ LEWIS, A. «Libyan forces report further progress against Islamic State holdouts in Sirte». Reuter. 5 September 2016.

⁶⁹ COCHRANE, L., *Op. cit.* p.4.

units in the north of Niger. The Islamic State would plan and undertake attacks against the militias that support the GNA and the PFG, activating the sleeping cells in Tripoli, Misrata, and the area of Sirte, resorting to selective assassinations to foster divisions among its enemies. A possible conflict among the Misrata brigades, the PFG, and the LNA would permit the reintroduction of the Islamic State in Sirte⁷⁰.

A safe environment?

To face a promising future, Tripoli – besides expelling the Islamic State – should be able to negotiate among the parties to attain a safe environment for the political, social, and economic development that a country with the resources Libya has should enjoy. The achievement of a safe environment means three basic tasks:

- Cleansing the country of weapons from the regime and the war, and securing the Libyan borders.
- Reform of the Security Sector (RSS) so that the armed forces are efficient, and support the transition to a representative government.
- The rebel militias who have won the war should be disarmed, demobilized, and reinserted into society (DDR), whether as civilians or in the new Armed Forces⁷¹.

A safe environment would also benefit the entire region. The Libyan borders are long and porous; weapons out of control mean a threat to the entire region and beyond. Achieving control of the 2,700 kms. in the southern border of Libya is a difficult task. Qaddafi controlled and influenced the border through alliances with the tribes that regularly moved through it⁷².

But old habits do not seem to change, and as an old Arab peasant proverb says: «I, against my brother; my brother and I against our cousin; our cousin, my brother and I against the stranger», and before «the stranger» disappears, the internal conflicts have already revived.

Or not!

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⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ CHIVVIS, C. and MARTINI, J., Libya After Qaddafi, *Op. cit.* p.7-8.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

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Table of geopolitical indicators

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS	
Surface 1,759,540 Km ²	
Border 4,339 kms	
GDP: 92.61 billion USD	
GDP Structure	Agriculture 1.8 %
	Industry 40.2%
	Services 58%
GDP per capita 14,600 \$	
GDP growth rate -6.4%	
Public debt 6.6% of GDP	
Trade relations	
(Exports): 10.51 M \$	
Trade relations	
(Imports): 11.24 M \$	
Population 6,541,939 inhabitants	
Men 3,386,743	
Women 3,155,196	
Immigrants are 12% of the population	
Age structure	0-14: 26.17% (men 875,430; women 836,272)
	15-64: 64.4% (men 1,787,191; women 1,628,050)
	Más de 65: 4.22% (men 137,409; women 138,343)
Population growth rate: 1.8 % annual	

TABLE OF GEOPOLITICAL INDICATORS
Ethnic groups: Berberes y Arabs 97%, other 3%
Religions: Muslims (Sunnis) 96.6%, other religions 3.4 %
Literacy rate of the population 91%
Population below poverty threshold: 7.4%
Extreme poverty. Not available
GINI Index. Not available
Military expenditure. Not available

Chronology of conflict

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT	
CAP	LYBYA: TRYING TO «TIE UP LOOSE ENDS» OF THE REVOLUTION
DATE	EVENTS
7th century b.C.	The Phoenicians settled in Tripolitana, where the Berbers had lived until then
4th century b.C.	The Greeks colonized Cyrenaica, and named it Libya
Year 74 b.C.	The Romans conquered Libya
Year 643	The Arabs conquered Libya and imposed Islam
16th century	Libya is integrated into the Ottoman Empire. A Regency is created in Tripoli for the provinces of Tripolitana, Cyrenaica and Fezzan
1911-1912	Italy seized Libya from the Ottomans. Omar al-Mukhtar started an uprising of 20 years against the Italian power
1942	The allies expelled the Italians from Libya, which was then divided between the French and the British
1951	Libya gained its Independence with King Idris al-Sanusi
1969	Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, 27 years old, dethroned the King through a cruel <i>coup d'etat</i>
1992	The UN imposed sanctions on Libya for the attack on a Pan Am flight over the Scottish city of Lockerbie in December 1988
17 February 2011	Violent protests sparked up in Benghazi, which spread to other cities. This gave way to a civil war, foreign intervention, and finally to the assassination of Qaddafi
20 October 2011	Colonel Qaddafi was captured and killed near Sirte, his hometown
July 2014	The civil war started in Libya
March 2016	A new government of «unity», backed by the UN, settled in a naval base in Tripoli. It confronts the opposition of both rival governments and a series militias
May 2016	Three of the main armed factions in Libya started an offensive against the Islamic State in the city of Sirte.

Chapter four

The arab-israeli conflict. 100 years from the Balfour declaration

Federico Aznar Fernandez-Montesinos

Abstract

2017 marks the 100th anniversary of the Lord Balfour Declaration, assuring British support to the construction of a Jew homeland in a part of Palestine, and located in the very roots of the process leading to modern Israel. In this context, it is worth reviewing the dynamics that have led to the current situation of the Palestinian Israeli conflict. Israel was born in state of war and thus has been able to survive for almost 70 years after its foundation, which has legitimized the country and converted it in another member of the international community. The war has lost its political sense for Israel, violence can bring little more; on the contrary, it affects its legitimacy.

Israel's future and legitimacy are paradoxically linked to the Palestinian people due to its victory only being possible after having stripped them of their homeland. During this time, both violence and diplomacy have been abused ending up in a no-win conflict affecting 10 million Palestinians.

Keywords

Israel, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Middle East, terrorism, settlements, the West Bank, Gaza, refugees.

Introduction

I have travelled to Israel on several occasions. Whenever I have been to Jerusalem I have stayed at the Our Lady of Zion convent, in the Arab Sector in the famous Via Dolorosa street, the area where the ancient tradition positions the Antonia Fortress and Pilate's Praetorium. In an underground part of the convent is the Lithóstroto (Gabbatha), an area paved with stone where according to the bible, the great exaction took place. Accommodation here is not particularly good, but the religious, historical setting and the views over the Al-Aqsa Mosque are spectacular.

It is very easy to pick up the Arab - Israeli conflict here. Whenever I return, it is as if nothing had changed, despite everything having changed. It is living water and stagnant water at the same time. The «hot diplomacy» defined by Kissinger to resolve the conflicts, what Luttwak called «giving war a chance» has not brought peace, not to mention stability in the Middle East. The problem is that no end appears to be nigh and almost seventy years of the same news have caused over-exposure in the media, which, along with the psychological distance, has led to a feeling of disgust.

This conflict has been with the UN ever since it was founded, and the West has been involved right from the start. As the former British Resident Minister for the Middle East presciently forecast shortly after the end of the World War: «The way the United Nations deals with the problem will have a profound effect on relations between western civilisation and the Arab world»¹.

And the problem has poisoned the entire region, altering its different geopolitical balances and introducing huge doses of volatility in relations that take place simultaneously on different sidelines, preventing diplomacy. In fact, the region is a geopolitical fulcrum, a merger of fracturing lines that the problem exacerbates by adding a new dimension which can only be addressed in absolute terms.

Worse still, it has masked other conflicts some times and has permitted them being built on false keys. Hence, the problem of Daesh in the region, Iran's struggle to be recognised as a regional power, the claims by Al Qaeda, Pan-Arabism, Islamic movements and Pan-Islamism... all these problems or movements feed directly or indirectly from it.

Analysing any conflict requires knowledge about the object, the parties, the framework and the dynamics of it.

It is important to get to grips with the conflict. Israel covers a total surface area of 20,770 km², whereas the surface area of the region of Valencia in Spain is around 10% bigger. The two Palestinian territories are the West Bank

¹ Charles Zorgbibe. *A History of International Relations From the Yalta System to Our Days 2*. Alianza Universidad, Madrid 1997, pages 149-150.

(Cisjordan) covering an area of 5,970 km² which includes Eastern Jerusalem, claimed by both sides as their capital; and the Gaza Strip with a surface area of 365 km²; a strip of land 41 km long and between 6 and 12 km wide. The Gaza Strip has a 51 km border with Israel, 7 km with Egypt and 40 km on the Mediterranean Sea. As can be seen, it is not a particularly large territory, but it is symbolically significant.

Far from being uniform, the two entities embroiled in conflict are extremely complex and polymorphous, and there are therefore huge difficulties to reach a consensus on unified approaches. Those same sectors feel they are supported by large majorities: The Israeli right-wing remains in power thanks to the coalitions of parties leaving it with no margin for the Jewish posture. And Hamas, well established in Gaza, is winning ground in the West Bank; and its influence in Palestinian politics is increasingly more notable, both because of its huge network of social support and its comfortable attitude of letting PNA and Fatah taking the brunt of the negotiations with the Israelis, as because its legitimacy before the Palestinian people to represent the large and only resistance movement against occupation².

The dynamics are a part of a history that needs to be explained.

Background to the conflict

In order to understand the conflict, it is a good idea to take a quick look at the local history and that of the Jewish people with a view to linking this to current times, more so if we consider that protestant education, strongly marked by the bible, has continued to forge a natural familiarity in the West with Zionist objectives.

Religion becomes a fundamental factor in order to understand the conflict. Nevertheless, this analysis is only partial. The conflict may have initially been religious, but it is actually political. In fact, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) guaranteed in 1947 that the reasons for creating the State of Israel were «based on biblical and historical sources».

Religion, difference and conflict

Religion, and more specifically monotheism, has traditionally been identified as a warring factor by calling the exclusive definition of the population and distributing it according to the inside / outside logic. The first thing that there must be for a conflict to arise are groups of people to carry it out. And religion permits this.

² José Antonio Albentosa Vidal. «Palestina-Israel, el sempiterno conflicto». http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2016/DIEEEM01-2016_Palestina_Israel_AlbentosaVidal.pdf

The House of Abraham is the tap root for the three monotheist religions of Semitic signs, Judaism, Islam and Christianity, established along the Mediterranean coasts and all three claiming the figure of Abraham for themselves. The difference between one and other lays in the ability of their members to live together. As the King-Crane report stated in 1919:

«With the best intentions in the world, one could wonder if the Jews could appear before the Christians and Muslims as guardians of sacred places, or the Holy Land in general. There is a reason for this: the most sacred places for Christians - those who are connected through the life of Jesus - are likewise sacred for the Muslims. For the Jews though they are not only profane sites, but execrable sites... in fact, the Muslims, because they venerate the Holy Sites of the three religions, are naturally much more satisfactory guardians that the Jews could be»³.

Religion constitutes a factor of identity definition, whose proposals cannot leave one indifferent: they invite comment, to profess the faith or oppose it. Hence, using religion to vertebrate parties in a conflict is easy, and to stimulate or justify it - «religious, moral or other types of conflicts become political conflicts and can cause regrouping in a decisive fight based on friend / enemy differentiation. But if it comes to this, the decisive confrontation is no longer religious, moral or economic, it has become political»⁴.

That means, and it is essential to understand it as such, that confrontations, however much they are based on religion, once they occur they are political confrontations, the religious keys can help to understand what has happened, but it is a partial analysis and to be completely understood must be globally political, which is the only one correct, because when it breaks out, it is lead by politics. In fact, religious belief can be used (and it is used) to justify more pragmatic policies; referring to religion is very often none other than a language for justification.

Freud⁵ considers that in human conduct there is an underlying degree of narcissism. «Something» is wanted to the extent that it is similar to «us» and confirms us; and inversely «something» is hostile depending on how far off it is. There is recognition but no otherness. Ignatieff following in Freud's wake in «Civilisation and its Discontents» shows how small differences are taken and converted in decisive factors, the axis of all. Under this outlook, the enemy is no longer simply «the other» and undergoes a process of metamorphosis to become permanently demonized. The right of the other against my right is no longer questioned, but rather the other's right to be and to be equal.

³ Charles Zorgbibe. *A History of International Relations. From Bismark's Europe to the end of the Second World War 1*. Alianza Universidad, Madrid 1997, page 489.

⁴ Carl Schmitt. *The Concept of Politics*. Alianza editorial, Madrid 1991, page 33.

⁵ Various Authors. *Notes on Polemology*. Work Document by the Department of Strategy at the Chief of Staff School of the Armed Forces. Chapter VII.

And the truth of the matter is that major conflicts are not based on major differences, which paradoxically tend to lead to indifference, but rather on small differences, that allow recognition whilst at the same time force us to repudiate otherness. In fact, the smaller the difference, the greater is the violence that serves to feed the conflict, even contributing to its justification. Exercised violence, quashes all doubts.

The big fights do not take place between civilisations, but rather within them, as is the case that major religious conflicts are in fact intra-religious and are established between orthodoxy and heresy. It is perhaps significant to remember that both Islam and Christianity both come from Judaism.

And History has shown us that cruelty is higher among adversaries in the same society that against foreigners⁶. Civil wars are the worst kind of war. The more similar the parties are to each other, the more vicious the fighting. And paradoxically, fights make the parties more similar to each other. It is ridiculous to accuse the Arabs of anti-Semitism because they too are Semites, which paradoxically not all Jews are. The race nearest to the Israeli Jews is the Arabs themselves.

Ancient History

The Bible tells the story of Abraham, who was from Ur Kásdim, and set off for the Promised Land through divine inspiration, where he lived as an extranger. The first property he bought was a cave in Machpelah. He buried his wife Sarah there, and the site is now known as the Cave of the Patriarchs located in Hebron. As the Bible tells, in that same cave, in the presence of Ishmael, so loved by the Arabs, who will return for the occasion, Abraham will be buried. That is why when Baruch Goldstein murdered 29 Muslims at the Mosque there in 1994 - a sacred place for the three daughter religions of the House of Abraham: Christians, Jews and Muslims - he was digging his finger in a top level wound. Not by chance, the Arabs perpetrated another massacre there in 1929.

Jacob's dream took place on Mount Moriah, a site traditionally identified with the Temple's mount. According to the Bible, the conquering of the Promised Land initiated by Joshua was linked to anathema (*Herem*), the more or less strict destruction of the native people and their property, a way of ensuring the religious and cultural pureness of Israel.

The second king of Israel, David, conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites around the 10th century BC. When his son Solomon died, the kingdom was divided in two: Israel and Judah. The House of Judah included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin who accepted the authority of Rehoboam,

⁶ Raymond Aron. *War and Peace among Nations*. Revista de Occidente, Madrid 1963, page 351.

son of Solomon, with Jerusalem as their capital. It is they who receive the recognition as the Jewish people.

The other ten tribes formed the Kingdom of Israel, to the north, which would be conquered by the Assyrians around 732 BC, who then expelled the inhabitants and introduced new peoples whose mixture led to the Samaritans. The captivity in Niniveh had dispersed the other ten tribes which were incapable of preserving their roots and creeds.

The word «diaspora» means «dispersion» and is usually used to refer to the Jewish people, owing to historical reasons. The first diaspora took place around 586 BC when the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed the first temple, conquered the kingdom of Judah and moved the leaders and some of the Jewish population to Babylonia. Around 537 BC Cyrus II, King of Persia, authorised their return. That was when Jewish communities started to appear in the Middle East.

In 70 AC Titus conquered Jerusalem in the first Jewish - Roman war. Flavius Josephus said 1,110,000 people died during the siege, of which most were Jews. Moreover, 97,000 were taken prisoner and enslaved and the temple was destroyed for the second time.

The Bar Kokhba rebellion between years 132 and 135 accounted for the second Jewish - Roman war (for some historians the third) and was caused by the wish to spread Romanisation to replace the Jewish identity. In the end, according to some sources, around 580,000 Jews were killed and the Romans implemented some radical reprisals: religion was forbidden and even more people than in the first war were massively and rigorously expelled.⁹

Although there has always been a Jewish community in Palestine, either larger or smaller over time and more prosperous depending on the time, the Jews spread out around the empire and were in general accepted, although there were some problems after Christianity was adopted as the main religion in the Empire, particularly in the Eastern Empire.

The relevance of Jerusalem for Islam cannot be ignored either. According to Muslim tradition, the Prophet Mohammed miraculously travelled from Mecca to the Temple's mount in Jerusalem (the Night Journey) from where, in the company of the Angel Gabriel and mounted on the winged steed called Al-Buraq, he ascended to heaven. The al-Aqsa Mosque was built on this site after the region was conquered by the Arabs in 637, converting Jerusalem in the third Holy City of Islam, well integrated in a region where travel was very common either due to pilgrimage or trade.

Nevertheless, the history of instrumentalisation of the religion is very long. When Ariel Sharon entered the forecourt at the Al-Aqsa Mosque it provoked the second Intifada; paradoxically his presence was not offensive to Muslims as such (Mohammed had already allowed Christians in his Mosque; the Pope

himself has visited some of the most significant Islamic Mosques); but it was seen as sacrilege in the eyes of many Jews⁷.

The fact is that the forecourt to the Mosques houses the foundations of the Temple of Solomon, where the Ark of the Covenant was in the *Santa Santorum*, and where only the Highest Priest could enter once a year in a state of ritual pureness⁸. Owing to the fact that since the destruction of the temple by the Romans, a state of ritual purity could not be achieved (The Red Heifer Law), Maimonides among others in the 12th century, ruled that the whole ground was sacred and that no Jew could enter under penalty of sacrilege, since the exact location of the *Sancta Sanctorum* was unknown⁹.

In a nutshell, most of the Jews in the Middle Age remained in Muslim territories integrating well in the *Millets* system as *dhimmies*, a protected minority but as second class citizens. After the late Middle Age they started to settle in Europe and at the start of the 19th century a vast majority of the two and a half million Jews were living in Europe.

Expulsions and aggressions against the Jewish people in the West were constant throughout the Middle Age. The main European kingdoms had carried out various purges of Jews since the 12th century. King Philip Augustus of France ordered seizure of their properties and expulsion of the Hebrew population from his kingdom in 1182. This measure was repeated another four times in the 14th century (1306, 1321, 1322 and 1394) by different monarchs. Not in vain, the first mass expulsion of Jews was ordered by Edward I of England in 1290. Those that took place in the 15th century were also notable, dictated by the Archduke of Austria and the Duke of Parma¹⁰.

The expulsion decreed by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492 followed these lines and although it was important, neither was it the first or the last, although for many it is a reference that obscures the rest.

Recent history

The French Revolution brought with it an improvement in the political conditions of the Jewish people, with the result of extending the citizenship model. This saw them come out of the ghettos and integrate in society.

Another decisive matter in the advent of Zionism was the weakness of the Ottoman empire, Europe's sick, its future giving rise to numerous debates

⁷ Paul Johnson. *A History of the Jews*. Javier Vergara Editor, Buenos Aires 1991, pages 566 and following.

⁸ Numbers (19,2) and Deuteronomy (21,3)

⁹ Paul Johnson. *A History of the Jews*. *Opus cited*, pages 556 and following.

¹⁰ Cesar Cervera. «La expulsión de los judíos de España de 1492: La leyenda que construyeron los enemigos de España». ABC Newspaper 01.11.2014. <http://www.abc.es/espana/20141030/abci-mito-expulsion-judios-reyes-201410271408.html>

including the issue of the Holy Land. Israel was brought back to the minds of many after centuries.

Paradoxically, and with religion still being an intimate affair in the West since 1648, it was in those societies where they fitted in best, the German society amongst them, where years later they would be more fiercely repudiated. As we have seen, minor differences tend to be key in relationships between human groups. Think, for example, that in 1894 there had been the famous case of the French Captain of Jewish origins, Alfred Dreyfus, who was unfairly accused of treason.

In 1896 Theodor Herzl, who had been a correspondent in Paris, published his pamphlet «Der Judenstaat» (The Jewish State) Proposal of a modern solution for the Jewish question» in which he considered the assimilationist processes had failed, and accepted that his religion made him an alien in his own country, the only solution therefore being to create a national home in Canaan. In 1897, inspired on Herzl's work, the Basel Congress took place where the Zionist Organisation was founded, a religiously inspired secular cultural movement, which adopted its official programme demanding a «publicly recognised and legally guaranteed» home. The impact of this congress in the media was enormous, and opened up the public debate about the matter. Herzl sent his demands to France, United Kingdom and Germany, and even directly negotiated with the Sultan, although with no outcome.

Zionism then did not approach the problem of around 500,000 Arabs who were living in the region at the time, with whom they discussed cooperation and even the mutual benefits of living in the same land in terms of material progress. Think how, after the First and Second World Wars, and between or after them, enormous numbers of people would be forcibly displaced with the huge suffering this entailed. Paradoxically, it was at this time when Neguib Azoury appeared and started to spread the ideology of Arab nationalism.

The First World War and Turkey entering the conflict in support of Germany caused a definitive alteration in established order. The arrival of Lloyd George to power at the end of 1916 would bring the advent of the imperialists who stated Britain's interest in the Middle East by considering it extra protection of the Suez Canal and a nexus for communication with India. The question of Palestine was used to guarantee sympathies among the Zionists, particularly in the United States and Russia.

The Lord James Arthur Balfour Declaration on 2nd November 1917 in the form of a letter to Lord Rothschild and commonly known as the «Balfour Declaration» is a milestone in this sense. That letter stated British support for creating a home for the Jews in a part of Palestine. The text is as follows:

«Dear Lord Rothschild: I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:

«His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country»

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.»

The idea of creating a Jewish State was criticised in some circles, even by some Jewish personalities, ever since Judaism is a religion and the creation of a State on this basis would alter the position of citizens of that religion residing in other States. This dilemma remains the case today.

After the end of the war, and with Palestine assigned by the League of Nations British Mandate, Zionism intentions altered the current balance at the time and created strong tensions with both the Arabs and the occupying power. The King-Crane's report of 1919 used the 14 points of President Wilson, and particularly the free determination of people, to make a claim against Zionism. Nevertheless, in 1920 the Supreme Allied Council ignored those contradictions and assembled in St. Remo to grant a mandate to the United Kingdom to implement the Balfour Declaration. As result of this the tensions intensified, the White Paper of 1922 making a minimalist interpretation of the Balfour Declaration with the intention of restricting Jewish emigration to Palestine.

Despite this, the Jewish population in the region continued to grow, influenced by factors such as the Russian Revolution. In 1880 there were 24,000 Jews in Israel. In 1925 there were around 100 thousand Jews living among 765,000 Palestinians. In 1940 the Jewish population reached 400 thousand, who lived among tension with around one million Palestinians.

In the meantime the Zionist community established an almost State structure, a Proto-State that ended up being recognised *de facto* by the British authorities, who in 1929 entrusted to it the management of public services. Education, health care, economy and even its own armed militia, with the creation of the Haganah in 1920, were passed. Nevertheless, it was seen how the land buying policy had its limits.

Incidents grew in terms of frequency and intensity. The Arabs, more backward, were unable to give politically comparable answers or to effectively coordinate their efforts, and they could only look on with exasperation how they were continuously losing ground.

Moreover, the Arab and Jewish people at that time had become more aware of themselves and their rivalry, which meant the United Kingdom to consider dividing the territory between the two communities, reaching a point at the start of the war that it reversed the Balfour Declaration and even encouraged the independence of a mostly Arab Palestine.

After World War II, and the Holocaust, the Shoah, the international community became more aware of the Jewish problem from the accounts by the survivors, which led to a change in attitude. In turn, the Jewish organisations took on a more aggressive approach against British power, making the situation on the ground even more difficult. The Shoah would be the prism used to look at the world.

On 29th November 1947 the United Nations Assembly spoke out in favour of creating two independent States, an Arab one and a Jewish one, with an international zone under UN control in Jerusalem, 30 years after the Balfour Declaration created the Palestinian question. The Jewish State would cover around 14,000 km².

The decision was saluted with riots all over the Arab world and clashes between both communities were exacerbated. Despite Arabic superiority in terms of numbers and material, the Jewish Proto-State was better organised and in view of the climate of violence imposed through a Resolution that could not be implemented without a fight, Great Britain decided to bring an early end to its mandate. On 15th May 1948 the State of Israel was proclaimed. It is what Palestinians call «*Nakba*» meaning «disaster» or «catastrophe»: the start of the national tragedy.

The Arab countries entered into a conflict, but were unable to resolve the problem with arms whilst at the same time they refused to negotiate, so the State of Israel defeated them winning strategic ground and increasing its area to 20,700 km², while Arab unity broke apart.

Between 700 and 750 thousand Palestinians fled or were expelled from their land by the Army, thus converting the Jews in the majority. Israel took advantage of the breakdown of Palestinian society caused by the exodus and the war to appropriate their land and resources.

The Palestinian territories of West Bank and Gaza were put under the control of Jordan and Egypt respectively, the creation of an Arab State in Palestine was thwarted, and the city of Jerusalem divided¹¹.

This consummated fact changed with time the centre of gravity of the problem that was no longer the very existence of the State of Israel. Restoring the former borders and the return of the refugees now became a central theme. But Israel in turn has taken a step forward and believes that stage has been overcome.

At the same time the Arab countries separate from the West's influence, who they blame for the situation. The Superpowers have to choose and divide their support. The United States chose to support Israel, while the USSR, whose objectives were to prolong the conflict to wear out their strategic

¹¹ «Conflicto Palestino: El origen y el desarrollo del conflicto». <http://palestinalibre.org/articulo.php?a=13475>

rival in this peripheral theatre, assumes the Arab maximalist positions. The Israeli - Palestinian problem from this moment on was part of the logic of the Cold War.

In 1956 the Suez Crisis resolved by a North American decision accounted for a step forward in that globalisation that paradoxically helped to bond the blocks that were in conflict. In 1967 the militarisation and new close of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli merchant traffic led to a new edition of the crisis that ended up in the Six Day War in the context of which the Israeli forces managed the surprise strategy against Egypt and the Arab countries followed by their complete defeat.

A military and political earthquake took place in the region. At the end of the conflict, Israel had conquered the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, increasing its territory four-fold to reach 89,353 km² and obtaining territorial guarantees but not true peace. Quite the contrary, they found nearly one million Arabs under their administration and lines that were difficult to defend.

The different Palestinian movements unified in 1964 creating the Palestinian Liberation Organisation which then expanded its framework through the internationalisation of the conflict: and it bore its fruit. In the words of a Palestinian leader «the first (aircraft) hijacks were more effective than 20 years of pleas before the UN, to make the world aware and pique the interest of the press and public opinion». Moreover, «the choice of the Olympic Games... was like painting the name of Palestine on a mountainside that can be seen from the four corners of the World». 18 months after the Munich attacks, Yasser Arafat was invited to speak before the UN General Assembly¹².

As a result of the 1967 conflict, the number of refugees and displaced by the war increased significantly, particularly in the Lebanon (400,000) and Jordan (250,000), as does their tragedy. The surrounding countries are in turn hostages of the conflict since guerrillas infiltrate from their territory to perpetrate their acts. Moreover, the Palestinians represent a numerous armed group who have an influence on those countries' political life.

As a result, there are confrontations between Palestinian armed organisations and their foster countries. In 1970 the so-called «Black September» events took place, meaning the PLO moved its bases from Jordan to the Lebanon. Palestinian presence in this country has perturbed the delicate balance of power there and is at the root of the civil war that has blighted it. In fact, this war started when the armed militias controlled a significant part of the country and confronted the Army, leading to armed militias appearing among the different creeds. At the same time, the actions that Palestinians carried out from this territory against Israel, led to Israel sending in forces to occupy the southern strip until 2000.

¹² Hoffman, Bruce. *A History of Terrorism*. Espasa Calpe 1999, pages 100 and following.

Egypt, under Anwar Al-Sadat, sought to recover its honour lost in the Six Day war with an Arab victory, and on 6th October 1973, the Yom Kippur fasting day, Egyptian troops crossed the Suez Canal and brought with them a new twist to the Israeli Palestinian relations. On the Egyptian front they were joined by Algerians, Libyans and Kuwaitis whereas on the Syrian front there were Iraqis, Jordanians and Moroccans. The offensive was much better prepared this time, and was much more equal. In fact the Egyptians would later talk about the «October Victory», and through this they restored their honour and paradoxically made peace possible.

On 23rd August 1973 the Egyptian President, Sadat, held a meeting with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia where the decision was taken to use crude oil to apply pressure to the West. Ten days after the start of the Yom Kippur war, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi unilaterally increased their oil prices by 17% to \$3.65 per barrel. On 19th October they proclaimed an oil embargo on the United States which they lifted on 17th March (except Libya). The price of the barrel was then \$12, having increased by 400%. The psychological effect of this demonstration of the vulnerability of economies was huge¹³.

But not only oil is involved in this issue. When analysing the Palestinian - Israeli conflict from a water perspective, it can be seen that the main source of drinking water in the region is from the River Jordan, whose sources are found in the Golan Heights; and whoever controls the Heights, controls the water. Within this framework, the question of territoriality of the small areas of the Shebaa farms (Lebanese or Syrian) occupied by Israel was of capital importance.

In 1960 Golda Meir warned against any attempts at diverting water from the Jordan headwaters would be considered a «breach of peace»¹⁴. In 1966 this issue was close to triggering a war because of the Syrian project to divert the River Yarmuk, a major tributary of the Jordan, and if it had been carried out, it would have limited the availability of water in Israel. The Six Day War served to resolve this controversy, and others, as Isaac Rabin claimed «even if we resolve all the Near East problems, if we do not resolve the water problem, the region will break out in war»¹⁵.

Another very significant source of fresh water in the region are the underground aquifers. Broadly speaking, Israeli settlements in occupied territory tend to follow the geography of these settlements, as does the Wall. Consequently, we can reach the conclusion that water and settlements are fundamental factors in the Israeli concept of security¹⁶. We shall discuss this issue in further detail later on.

¹³ Juan Rosell Lastroeras. *Las guerras del petróleo*. Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, Barañáin 2005, page 13.

¹⁴ Michael T. Klare. *Resource Wars* Ediciones Urano, Barcelona, 2003.

¹⁵ Ibidem, pages 178, 211 and following.

¹⁶ Noam Chomsky. *The New (and the Old) World Order* Grijalbo Mondadori. Barcelona 1996, page 269.

In a nutshell, the so-called «October Victory» also produced realignment and re-dimensioning of strategic objectives, so that the Arabs would refrain from destroying the State of Israel in exchange for recovering the territories they had lost in 1967. In 1977 the two major powers reached an agreement about the terms to unlock the peace process by restoring the 1967 borders, but local affairs prevented its resolution.

In any case, this led to the initiative by President Sadat, breaking down the taboos of 1947, and recognising Israel by establishing direct, bilateral contacts with the country, which was condemned by the Arab world: the intended conditions were to evacuate the occupied territories and acknowledge the rights of Palestinians. In 1978 the Camp David Accords arrived under Carter's Administration, solving the bilateral Egyptian - Israel contention featuring the intention of extending it to the region as a whole. This time it led to real peace.

The rest of the Arab countries also evolved. They were divided in defenders of maximalist positions that denied the possibility of even negotiating with Israel and recognising it; and those with more possibilistic positions choosing intermediate solutions. The latter group gradually grew and became stronger.

Moreover, the PLO's own objectives gradually became more limited; adopting a more moderate approach from initially wanting to eradicate Israel and recover all its territory, to creating a small Palestinian State in Gaza and the West Bank in 1974 comprising the basis for building a reunited Palestine through a peaceful fight, but now, importantly, accepting the existence of Israel as a State. Hence, the PLO gradually accepted the territorial distribution, whilst at the same time demanding materialisation of its own national rights. Meanwhile, the focus moved from the outside of the country to the inside.

Current situation of the conflict

The Peace Accords

In view of the stagnation of the international situation, the Palestinians inside the country took the initiative in 1987 with a popular uprising in the West Bank and Gaza. It was the first Intifada (Arab Uprising) «The War of Stones», a massive, mainly civil demonstration and disobedience movement, rejecting the occupation with «low intensity» violent action and episodes of terrorism. The aim was the collapse of the legal system.

This movement initially surprised Israel and sought to reverse the roles in the conflict. The Palestinians were given a new, different visibility, their cause, previously associated with terrorism, was now that of the weak, abused people, leading to new support from the international community who no longer felt ashamed to do so.

Israel, on the other hand, and above all at the beginning, lost the initiative whilst at the same time became the main actor in a logic of action / repression through a number of actions of dubious legality.

In 1988 Jordan broke off its administrative links with the West Bank and in November the same year the Palestinian National Council proclaimed the State of Palestine. At the end of the Cold War a new opportunity to resolve the problem arose. First the USSR and then Russia reduced their support for the Arab countries, with Israel subsequently recognising the PLO and the PLO recognising the State of Israel.

In 1991 the Madrid process began, fostered by the major powers. In 1993 the PLO and Israel signed the Oslo Peace Accords, through which the PLO renounced «violence and terrorism» and acknowledged the «right» of Israel «to exist in peace and safety». After these accords, the National Palestinian Authority was created, but the implied tensions to explicit renouncement of their historical positions meant that the Palestinian side became even more fractured, and organisations such as Hamas (created in 1987 by Sheik Yassin) did not agree to this recognition¹⁷. In 1994 Jordan ceased its war against Israel. Yitzhak Rabin author of the draft accords of 1993 was murdered by a radical Jew in 1995.

The policy of approach would continue and the conversations in 2000 at Camp David driven by the Clinton Administration with Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barak in the leading roles, came very close to succeeding, but failed due to the Palestinian negative to accept any agreement that entailed revoking the right to return by refugees.

The frustration caused by this and the subsequent attempts (Taba) was enormous. Ehud Barak's peers never forgave him for going so far. On the other hand, Arafat, who did not renounce his past and remained unmoveable, was also unable to avoid a fracture of the Palestinian block in 2003 between Al Fatah (a secular party) and Hamas (an Islamic party), who still advocates the destruction of Israel. And the geographical separation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip (one of the most densely populated places in the world) would turn into a political separation when Hamas took charge of the government there after 2005, after the local elections that year, and definitively in 2007 with the expulsion of Al Fatah. This bode ill for the Israelis about what could happen in the West Bank after their exit.

The second Intifada came about from the frustration caused by this failure. Acts of terrorism took place in addition to popular demonstrations, such as the launching of *qassam* rockets, suicide bombings and other individual acts of terrorism, seriously questioning Israel's security, who soon became involved

¹⁷ José Antonio Albentosa Vidal. «Palestina-Israel, el sempiterno conflicto». http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2016/DIEEEM01-2016_Palestina_Israel_Al bentosaVidal.pdf

in a dynamics entailing the extremely legally dubious and internationally unpopular «minor» actions (such as «selective assassinations») and «major» actions (different military operations).

In 2012 the UN granted Palestine the status of «Non-member Observer State», and was therefore no longer simply an «observer entity». This change meant that Palestine could take part in the General Assembly deliberations and improve its possibilities of becoming a member of UN agencies and other organisations. The West Bank started to call itself the «State of Palestine»¹⁸.

The frustration and climate of violence caused notable desperation to the point that the current leader of the National Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, stated before the UN General Assembly in 2015 that his people had finally lost patience and no longer feel bound by the «Oslo Accords»¹⁹.

And the fact is that 23 years after the Accords were signed, the Palestinians have not substantially improved their political or economic conditions, whereas the climate of mutual mistrust and disrepute has become established between the parties. No progress towards the construction of the two states is seen. Ascent to the poles took place and the two entities are being dominated by their radical factions. In Israel by a right wing that is becoming increasingly more nationalist, ultra-orthodox and extreme, whereas in Palestine by Hamas, in a conflict that is being constantly fed by violence and exclusion of the other party. In the 2015 Human Rights Watch report, the following was stated:

There was a sharp rise in killings and injuries... Palestinians killed at least 17 Israeli civilians and 3 Israeli soldiers, and injured 87 Israeli civilians and 80 security officers in the West Bank and Israel... Israeli security forces killed at least 120 and injured at least 11,953 Palestinian civilians in West Bank, Gaza, and Israel as of the same date, including bystanders, protesters, and suspected assailants...»²⁰.

Israel and Security

Israel lacks the security needed for its inhabitants to live in freedom. It could be *de facto* considered a country in a state of war, since in fact it is in war against Syria. It is worth pointing out that the actions aimed at achieving it, however strongly criticised among the international community, are widely backed by the Israeli civil society.

¹⁸ José Antonio Albentosa Vidal. «Palestina-Israel, el sempiterno conflicto». http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2016/DIEEEM01-2016_Palestina_Israel_Al bentosaVidal.pdf

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch. Report 2015. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/israel/palestine>

In order to assess a problem, there is nothing better than experiencing it. My personal experience of finding shelter during a rocket attack was particularly burdensome (coinciding with the 2014 Gaza crisis, in which the Iron Dome system proved to be extraordinarily effective) and I was only there for a fortnight. There are lobbies in the West that want to reinstate torture owing to the problem of lone wolves, an added problem the Israelis have to face.

Nevertheless, the disproportionate, penalising and dissuasive nature of some of the measures against the perpetrators of the attacks, affecting the future of their families and entire communities, are worth of special consideration since they concern the legitimacy of Israel giving the State an asymmetric character that *de facto* is not equal for all. The legitimacy of the State is being eroded through the use of violence.

The need for security must be analysed inside and outside the country. Regarding the exterior, the borders have been contained and sealed. While inside, strategies have been defined and legal instruments provided to carry them out and halt low intensity violence. As Clausewitz would point out, the best strategies are only successful for a time, but in the end the enemy ends up adapting and getting round them.

External policies have turned into actions against infiltration from Lebanon and Gaza. The intervention in Lebanon in 2006 against rocket launches by the Shia group Hezbollah was seen as a failure by Israel and a success by Hezbollah, but it also allowed sealing the border, which was its objective.

The operations in Gaza, the other point considered and a Hamas fiefdom, were challenged by the international community for the widespread use of violence in a densely populated area, causing multiple civilian victims; and in this sense the intervention in 2014 is worth of a special mention, although it is also true that some of these victims were people who were voluntarily and deliberately acting as human shields. As Human Rights Watch says: «Neither the Israeli authorities nor Hamas have prosecuted anyone for alleged crimes committed during the 2014 Israel-Gaza war, which, according to the UN, killed 1,462 Palestinian civilians, including 551 children, and 6 civilians in Israel, including one child»²¹. Moreover, the blockade against this territory has also been criticised due to the inferred suffering of the civil population (80% of the population depend on humanitarian aid in an environment of poverty and marginality), which has once again fallen victim to the conflict.

But security cannot be separated from other questions, given the comprehensive nature of the policies used to enforce them. In 2002 Israel started to build a wall, reportedly for security reasons, but the wall does not follow the intended border and is actually used to integrate a part of the settlements' structure, by including the major part of them within the

²¹ Human Rights Watch. Report 2015. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/israel/palestine>

protected perimeter, including some land belonging to the Palestinians, thus reducing the area under the latter's control by figures that could reach up to 54%, according to some sources, whilst separating Palestinians from their workplaces and resources, thus further impoverishing their living conditions. This way, the problem of security was also transferred to the Palestinians themselves.

The Settlements

One of the problems for reaching an agreement is the matter of the borders. Israel does not want to go back to the pre-1967 borders, and considers the territories occupied at that time as their own. And they have claimed these territories by simply appropriating the land using methods that have not been symmetrical in all cases and with all ethnic / religious groups.

In 1980 Resolution 465 unanimously approved by the Security Council declared that all attempts by Israel to modify the physical, demographic or institutional characteristics of Palestinian territory would lack any legal validity and would be seriously damaging to peace in the Middle East, whilst it deplored the persistence by Israel in using these practices and requested dismantling of colonies and the existing forward posts. In 2004 the International Court of Justice passed the sentence of 9th July 2004 establishing that «the Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, were not only illegal, but were also barriers to peace and economic and social development, and were established in violation of international law...»

Although Israel evacuated the few settlements it had in Gaza in 2005, it has continued its policy of establishing settlements in the West Bank, thus making it extraordinarily difficult to find a solution to the problem. The current situation is described in Human Rights Watch:

«Israel continued to provide security, administrative services, housing, education, and medical care for around 560,000 settlers residing in unlawful settlements... authorizing construction work on 566 new settlement housing units, 529 of which were completed during the first quarter of 2015, an increase of 93 percent in housing starts... Building permits are difficult or impossible for Palestinians to obtain in East Jerusalem or in the 60 percent of the West Bank under exclusive Israeli control (C Zone). Palestinians in these areas have limited access to water, electricity, schools, and other public services, all of which the state makes readily available to the Jewish settlers there.»

Moreover, the extent of the settlements in the West Bank make construction of a Palestinian State unviable, not only because of the reduced size left, but because of the deliberate discontinuity and dilution of its possible terrain. In fact, many of the supporters of this construction, are now taking a new look

at the United Nations mandate because of the impossibility of implementing it as a result of this policy.

The Refugees

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), the «people whose normal place of residence between June 1946 and May 1948 was historical Palestine - what is today the current State of Israel - and who lost their homes and means of living as a result of the war, are Palestinian refugees. The descendants of these people are also considered to be refugees by the Agency». Consequently, approximately one third of the world's refugee population are Palestinians. The present UNRWA records report over 5 million Palestinian refugees²². Other sources raise this number to 10 million (10.6 million according to the PLO²³), considering the number of displaced persons (who did not cross the border) in the 1967 conflict and those refugees after 1948 that the organisation does not count.

The living conditions of refugees, often deprived of all or part of their social, civil and political rights are exceptionally severe. According to the UNRWA, over 1.4 million live in 58 refugee camps in Gaza, in the West Bank (886,716 refugees), in Jordan - it is worth mentioning that all the refugees in Jordan, 2,090,762, have full citizenship, except for nearly 140,000 refugees native from Gaza-, in Lebanon (470,604 with problems to access public services) and in Syria (518,949 refugees living, as is known, in a situation of civil war)²⁴.

Their return would alter the Jewish status of the State. Nevertheless, any solution must also resolve the problem of the refugees. The Palestinian problem is not just a question of territory, an inert issue, but one of people. That, and no other, is the core of the problem.

The role of external factors

The reality, the truth of a conflict is discursive, it adapts to the events and is relative to them; the names explain it all: they set the framework and establish the rules. The conflict we are dealing with, that was initially the question of the Jews or Israel, has now become the problem of Palestine.

Moreover, we can talk about the Israeli - Palestinian conflict with local dimensions, but it is also possible to extend it a little more to the region in

²² Official United Nations for Refugees website (Spain) <http://www.unrwa.es/los-refugiados/nakba>

²³ BBC. «10 questions to understand why Israelis and Palestinians fight» http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/08/140801_israel_palestinos_conflicto_preguntas_basicas_jp

²⁴ Official United Nations for Refugees website (Spain) <http://www.unrwa.es/los-refugiados/nakba>

general or to talk about an Arab - Israeli conflict. This dimension is extended to Islamism if we consider the commitment to it by Iran, a non-Arab Shia country.

The PLO internationalised the conflict after 1964 by implementing a terrorist strategy: their agenda continued in Palestine but it could be carried out in the rest of the world. And it gained a definitive global outreach when it became one of the key factors in the Cold War. Having reached this point it is impossible to ignore that Israel is not a signatory of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty, and has not admitted to or denied having nuclear weapons, which lent an even more incisive character to the situation. Islamic terrorism with its accusations against a Jewish-Crusade alliance has contributed to this globalisation.

The analysis of such a complex conflict requires a micro analysis followed by a more general one to understand it properly.

Local framework

Dealing with the local framework first, it must be said that in the Middle East there are three fracture planes: the first is religion, between Muslims and non-Muslims; the second is ethnic between Arabs and non-Arabs and the third is once again a religious issue, as a sub-product of the first, and is the division between Sunni and non-Sunni believers. There could also be a fourth plane depending on interpretations, whether broad or narrow, concerning religion, and the correct sense of society positioning it in terms of the biblical debate between man and the Sabbath.

There is an over-rating however of the religious factors, which very often ignores the necessary analysis and the weighting of merely nationalist or ideological aspects, in a world where religion acts as a counter-culture backbone, but one that does not draw up specific solutions, and less so, in the scope of International Relations.

And this is because the Middle East is a highly fragmented, poly-central region where the States have become consolidated and pragmatism and interests rule, giving rise to complex power struggles and extravagant balances. Within this context the States have assumed the cultural values belonging to each of them to make an approach to the international sphere from an Islam-nationalist perspective.

Starting off with the first plane mentioned. The States are of Muslim majorities, with the exception of Israel, whereas Christians integrate in the countries (like the Lebanon) where they are more or less diluted. Israel only has relations with two Arab states (Egypt and Jordan) with whom Peace Treaties were signed in 1979 and 1994 respectively.

As for the Sunni, we cannot really talk about a monolithic block because of the existence of several countries who challenge for leadership, each of

them with a different proposal in accordance with its national reality. The players in this game are Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Turkey, with its 72 million inhabitants and an imperial past (former occupying force), after a succession of failures in its approaches to Europe, has turned again towards the East, re-defining its foreign policy on the basis of a neo-Ottomanism, whilst remaining a member of NATO and an ally of the USA. Its relations with Israel have undergone changes, and the country currently holds a position of re-conciliation after the death of 10 Turkish citizens in 2010 in a flotilla that was attempting to break down the Gaza blockade. Their friendship has traditionally broken down as a result of the lack of Israeli allies in the region.

As a Wahabbi Paladin is Saudi Arabia, self-proclaimed «The Kingdom», which stands out on the peninsula due to its size, population (28 million inhabitants, 8 million of whom are foreign workers) and resources. The Saudi Arabian king puts above all his titles the title of «Guardian of the Holy Sites» and consequently guardian of the religion's essence.

Nevertheless, albeit on the one hand Saudi Arabia tries to lead the Sunni Muslims, on the other it holds a strategic alliance with the United States, proving once again that if the truth be known, international relations are built on interests and pragmatism. Its rivalry with Iran, paradoxically can take it explicitly or implicitly closer to political agreements with Israel, with whom it has concurrent interests.

Another key player is Egypt, the intellectual lighthouse of Islam, whose conduct paves the trend for the Muslim world. The major approaches to Islam stem from Egypt, ranging from Hassan Al Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood to Al Zawahiri and Al Qaeda. Furthermore, it is the most highly populated Arab country (80 million), in addition to its two million emigrants distributed around the region, and is solidly consolidated as a State.

But the country is undergoing deep social discontent, with nearly 40% of the population living under the poverty threshold. Mursi's inability to resolve the problem and its worsening through economic failure and tensions in a plural, diverse society by offering Islamic proposals, is one of the reasons for his fall from power. But, despite all of this, the country has not made any significant changes in terms of its foreign policy, finally maintaining its alliance with the United States and its balance with Israel.

The Shia side is capitalised by Iran, whose geopolitical situation, geographic centrality in the Islamic world and his feature of geopolitical pivot, along with its visibility, make it an indispensable key player in the region. Two planes converge in Iran, the religious and ethnic ones, their confrontation taking them to an even higher degree of polarisation. Although Iran was the second Islamic country to recognize Israel, after Turkey, since the fall of the Shah in 1979, the situation has changed.

Nevertheless, the Revolution has become institutionalised and has lost some of its drive, and moreover, despite Messiahism in the declarations by some of its leaders - it has not been capable of overcoming its intrinsic contradictions. The visibility of the Iranian regime confronting Israel and the United States, or carrying out its nuclear programme has given it in the past popularity and recognition from the Arab world, which the country has capitalised on to encourage recognition of its regional leadership. All told, Iran, the champion of the Arab world in the eyes of the West, is in reality Persian; and is postulated as the world's leader of Islam when Shia Islam is a minority branch and is secularly persecuted within that world. The nuclear agreement reached on 14th July 2014 implies a long-term change of status and model of international relations after its reinstatement as a regional power in the international community.

Israel is part of Iran's rhetoric, but if Iran wants to find a balance with the West, it must revoke it, which it will do owing to the fact that it is relatively insignificant for the country and despite its support for Hezbollah. Its model of foreign relations in the long-term will tend to adapt to the schemes that were implemented during the Shah's era, when its return to the international community prospers, which will prosper, i.e. as progress is made in a process burdened with contradictions and returns to the past.

Syria is a reciprocal example of Saddam Hussein's Iraq: a Sunni majority country controlled by a minority (Alawites and Christians; in Iraq during Saddam's government the Sunni's governed over the Shia majority). Despite the ideological incompatibilities with a secular regime, although pre-eminently Alawite, Iran has kept strategic relations since the Revolution. Syria supported Iran during the Iran / Iraq war. Moreover, Tehran sees Syria as a gateway to the Sunni and Arab world through which it can break away from the strategic siege it has been subjected to. The model that was presented was Syria and Iran united against Saudi Arabia, USA and Israel.

In either case, Syria is a key country for peace in the region. Relations between Syria and Israel have always been fraught with tension, in fact since the creation of the Jewish State, there has always been a warring attitude. And although Israel and Syria have not attacked each other directly since 1967, and the borders between both countries are the safest, both countries remain in a state of war.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that they carried on settling their differences through interposed players, either the Lebanon or through support of all kinds from Syria to an endless number of terrorist groups and organisations so that they would attack Israel. However, it is worth mentioning that Israel has never refused peace negotiations with Syria, despite the fact that Israel annexed Golan in 1981. The truth of the matter is that negotiations with Syria started at the Madrid Conference, although they were frozen in 1996 when

Syria opposed condemning the suicide bombings perpetrated by terrorist groups on that year²⁵.

At present, the Syrian state has collapsed, and violence has spread meaning that deciding who the goods and the bads are is not a fully operational reasoning; both of them are children of the same culture. The current political regime in the country is part of the problem, but is most likely part of the solution as well. Nevertheless, the problem has been prevented from spreading to Lebanon and the border with Israel has not suffered any significant breaches. In fact Israel has kept outside the conflict, except for occasional intervention. When peace arrives, which it will do sooner or later, the new regime is more likely to reach a better understanding with Israel, because of its weakness and need for support from the West.

The Lebanon is in a very unstable situation, because of the religious diversity in the country with weakened State structures and the presence of armed groups inside such as Hezbollah, a Shia group inspired and supported by Iran and by the Syrian government which was created in 1982 in reaction to military occupation by Israel, and whose military wing is listed as a terrorist organisation by the EU. The Lebanon currently supports the Syrian government in the civil conflict going on in the country.

In the context of an economic crisis and high unemployment levels, the Lebanon is also home to 40% of Syrian refugees in addition to the Palestinians. The result is a ratio of 183 refugees for every 1000 inhabitants according to UNHCR. The stability of this country that declared war on Israel in 1948 is critical for peace in the region. Fortunately, it has not been contaminated by the Syrian crisis.

Jihadist movements are also players in this conflict, including Daesh and Al Qaeda, who have used Israel in their rhetoric, but whose efforts are not in agreement with their rhetoric in the fight against the Hebrew state. The priority goal is at local level, whereas the West and Israel are secondary theatres where they can win ground in benefit of their main theatre. Moreover, these organisations, and this could become the case here, have colonised and infested conflicts of another nature (ethnic, tribal... Mali is a good example) and have transformed their codes and nature in religious affairs, without really resolving them and in some cases have even ended up fighting against those they had come to support. Israel is a part of their rhetoric, but little more.

Hamas, which forms a part of the Muslim Brotherhood, is an Islamic group the United States has listed as a terrorist organisation. Nevertheless, some Arab countries, Russia and Turkey, do not see it as such. The European Union

²⁵ Romualdo Bermejo. «Las conflictivas relaciones de Siria e Israel en el ajedrez del Próximo Oriente». UNISCI Magazine Issue no. 37 (January 2015). <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/media/www/pag-72478/UNISCIDP37-6BERMEJO.pdf>

included Hamas on its list of terrorist organisations in 2003, although the Court of Strasbourg ordered it to be removed from the list in 2014, an order that has not been met in that it is subject to evaluation by the European Council.

Extended framework

The problem has a global dimension, as proved by the composition of the Near East quartet for peace created in 2002, also known as the Madrid Quartet, in order to supervise application of the road map designed to channel the Arab / Israeli conflict, whose members are the UN, EU, Russia and the USA.

At the time, and in its context, very different from the situation today, the United Nations approved the creation of the State of Israel, and was involved at Security Council level and in the General Assembly in the peace process, putting forward many resolutions which have been violated on many occasions, but which have given the parties political strength, particularly to the Palestinians whose State planned by the United Nations has not been founded.

USA and EU are like Mars and Venus acting together, never better anywhere else. The USA represents a more favourable position for Israel, which is highly influenced by the Jewish Americans and the Bible Belt protestants.

North American commitment, higher still among the Republicans, to the Hebrew State is practically unconditional, its maximum expression being its military and political support. Ever since the sixties, the US has allowed Israel to hold a decisive qualitative military advantage over its regional enemies.

But that does not exclude Washington from being the only player with the ability to force the parties to negotiate, and that has been shown through its vocation to promote different peace process related initiatives. In fact, all North American presidents, at least in their second mandates, have made major efforts to resolve the problem.

The European Union includes countries with different attitudes towards Israel, which makes its influence in the region, in the context of European Neighbourhood Policies, being more economic and humanitarian than political (it is the first economic contributor to cooperation and the main donor of humanitarian aid). A weak power, which through all has been very critical against Israel and influential in terms of legitimacy and capacity for dialogue.

In any case, the 2003 European Security Strategy already defined the peace process as a priority for Europe. But in addition to the Quartet, the EU has also supported the Arab Peace Initiative (2002) which, headed up by Jordan

and Egypt aimed to normalize diplomatic relations between Arabs and Israelis. Apart from the special envoy to the Middle East, the European Union has delegations in Israel, Lebanon and Jordan²⁶.

Spain has always played a mediator's vocation, with presence and specific weight in the region above its theoretical level in accordance with its position as a mid-level power. Not in vain, the King of Spain holds the historical title of King of Jerusalem.

This is explained by the traditional friendship between Spain and the Arab countries which has contributed greatly to the acceptance of its mediation role. Spain and Israel established diplomatic relations in 1986, as formalised in a joint Spanish-Israeli declaration in the Hague²⁷.

The Sepharad-Israel House was officially opened in Madrid in February 2007, now called the Sepharad-Israel Centre, an institution assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation which has the goal of serving as a meeting point between Spain and the Jewish World and Culture. The Sephardi Jews are a historical link between Israel and Spain²⁸. The granting of Spanish nationality to this collective is the continuation of Spanish policies initiated at the start of the 20th century, which permitted numerous Jews to escape from the concentration camps.

The most visible action by our country today, is undoubtedly the deployment of a military contingent in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to support the Lebanese authorities and their Armed Forces to exercise their authority in the south of Lebanon, and thus comply with the demands defined in Resolution 1701 and precedents by the United Nations Security Council²⁹.

Spain has been involved for many years in the search of a solution to the Palestine / Israel conflict, whether at the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, continuing its support for Resolution 1515 (2003) by the UN Security Council - where the well known Madrid Quartet Road Map was officialized - and, basically, actively cooperating and even leading initiatives from the European Union and other security and defence related organisations³⁰.

²⁶ Alberto Priego Moreno. «Presente y futuro de la acción exterior de la UE». Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2013/DIEEM10-2013_AccionExteriorUE_AlbertoPriego.pdf

²⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. «Israel» http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Documents/FichasPais/Israel_FICHA%20PAIS.pdf

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ José Manuel García Sieiro. «El papel de España en la estabilidad del escenario regional de Oriente Medio» in Emilio Casinello (Dir). *Oriente Medio y su influencia en la seguridad del Mediterráneo*. Cuaderno de Estrategia no. 139, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, May 2008.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

Conclusions and prospects

Maurice, Elector of Saxony wrote: «Winning is surviving on the battlefield». The question is that the military purpose of war is victory, but this must be placed at the service of politics to make sense; prolonging the use of violence without political benefit is both a crime and a mistake. Yitzhak Rabin was a great general and an extraordinary politician who knew how to understand this relationship better than anyone. The death of Simon Peres and his funerals were a suitable framework for a change in approach.

Israel, a country that was born in a state of war, has won because it has survived. The victory consisted of gaining time to consolidate and legitimise its situation. Israel has now been a state for 70 years, time enough. It has won its right. Gaining time is starting to give little advantage, and increasingly less. It would be a time to change its strategy, to keep ahead of events instead of behind them.

Because the price of victory entails an inherent political cost, which is the defeat of a people unfairly dispossessed, such as the Palestinian. In the Bronze Age that would not be a problem, but in the 21st century it is.

Peace is always a compromise between different planes, and is therefore fragile. It is not now about winning, but also about convincing, i.e. rethinking victory and turning it into a common episode of mutual benefit. This way the paradoxes of war take us to Israel's legitimacy going parallel to the destiny of the Palestinian people. Their interests in this sense are no longer contradictory, and can even be considered concurrent. In the long-term Israel has no future without a future of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian problem is the problem of its people, ten million people, not their territory and not their holy sites, although these too must be considered.

Repression no longer contributes. Asymmetry in the practice of law (even archaeology has been used as a legal and political weapon) illegitimises the State. Democracy in the West is not built on an ethnic or religious base, but rather over real and equal citizenship. And, by the way, democracy incorporates a similar behaviour towards the interior and the exterior, and towards the area where both these terms merge. Democracy is an attitude, a method and a will to settle conflicts.

If Israel has shown its determination, and that is why it has won, it is also true that the Palestinians have shown the same, if not more, determination. It serves no purpose to try and make them leave, to harass them further, because they are not going to, and the scenarios that can arise are not going to any worse than the ones they have already lived through. And that has a cost in terms of legitimacy that Israel ought to avoid. Violence will only drag on, and that will serve nobody's purpose.

Changing the trends, interpretative cultures require teaching and time. 2017 will see the 100th anniversary of the British (this must not be forgotten)

Balfour Declaration, a good time to reflect on what too many years (100) of war have brought. In that time, and particularly since 1991, the dialogue and negotiation processes have taken place as if they were exercises at a School of Diplomacy. In 2014 the attempts by the Secretary of State Kerry, failed and now France is trying to restart a well-stagnated peace process.

The question is that with the settlements' policy applied since 2005, the viability of building a Palestinian State has been considerably reduced and, as President Hollande recognises, is being seriously questioned. The other options along the lines of the UK's proposals during the independence process would be a Federal State or cantonal municipal districts, both of which would be difficult because they entail co-habitation and altering the demographic base of Israel.

And violence will not serve to unblock the situation. Battles do not help to solve identity problems, that is not their purpose: they measure the willingness of the parties, which has been made more than obvious in this case. Diplomacy and violence appear to have little to offer, since both have been abused to the limits of disgust.

Moreover, we have seen how the centre of gravity of the conflict has moved from the exterior to the interior, whereas what «could» be offered to the Palestinians has been reduced over time with consolidation of situations.

Consequently, the prospects are not cause for optimism in the mid-term, because to this situation which is installed on a historical context of violence, atomisation of the parties, stultification of the Palestinian political structure resigned to the current situation, and the presence of extremists with a notable polarisation capability on both sides, are added. Strong leadership is required, which does not exist at present on either side and a project to commit to, which does not currently exist either.

Shema Yisrael.

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Chronology

10th Century BC	David conquered Israel from the Jebusites. Division of the Kingdom between Israel and Judah
732 BC	The Assyrians conquered the kingdom of Israel. Captivity of Niniveh
586 BC	First Diaspora: Judah conquered by Nebuchadnezzar II Captivity of Babylonia
537 BC	Return from Babylonia
70 AC	Jerusalem conquered by Titus
132-135	Bar Kokhba Rebellion
637	Jerusalem conquered by the Muslims
691	Construction of al-Aqsa
1290	Expulsion of Jews from England
1894	Dreyfus Affair
1896	Theodor Herzl published «Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State). Proposal of a Modern Solution for the Jewish Question».
1897	Basel Congress
1917	Balfour Declaration
1936-1939	Arab Revolt in Palestine
1947-1949	Civil War in the British Mandate of Palestine
1948	Proclamation of the State of Israel
1956	Suez Crisis
1967	Six Day War
1973	Yom Kippur War
1978	Camp David Accords
1979	Israel - Egypt Peace Treaty
1982	First Lebanon War
1987	First Intifada
1991	Madrid Conference on the Middle East
1993	Oslo Process
1998	Way River Summit
2000	Camp David Summit. Second Intifada
2001	Taba Summit
2007	Annapolis Summit
8th Century BC	Medes Empire
640 BC	Foundation of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great
522 BC	Maximum outreach of the Persian Empire under Darius I
331 BC	Battle of Gaugamela - Victory by Alexander the Great

The arab-israeli conflict. 100 years on from the Balfour...

634 BC	Start of the Arab invasion of the Persian Empire
9th Century	The Farsi language became consolidated
1221	Mongol occupation
1501	Proclamation of Shia Islam as the State Religion
1639	End of the 150 year war against Turkey
19th Century	Russian / British rivalry over Persia
1828	Cession of the Caucasus to Russia
1921	Coup d'état by Reza Khan, crowned Emperor in 1925
1935	Persia changed its name to Iran
1941	Fall of Reza Khan for his pro-Germany position Reza Palhavi came to power
1951	Nationalisation of the Oil Industry
1953	Fall of the Prime Minister Mosadeq
1963	White Revolution, authoritarian westernisation of the Shah
1979	Islamic Revolution
1981	End of the hostage crisis
1980-1988	Iran - Iraq War
1989	Death of Khomeini Succeeded by Ali Khamenei The technocrat Rafsanjani became the new president Re-elected in 1993.
1995	USA imposes sanctions on Iran for supporting terrorism
1997	Khatami the Reformer as new president Re-elected in 2001.
2002	USA includes Iran in the Axis of Evil
2003	Iran announces suspension of its enriched uranium programme
2005	Ahmadineyad elected president of Iran. Enriched uranium programme restarted
2006	Iran enriches uranium to 3.5% The Security Council votes to impose sanctions
2009	Ahmadineyad re-elected Green Tide Demonstrations in the streets
2010	Iran starts a programme to enrich uranium to 20% Uprising. Sanctions by the International Community are intensified
2012	European Union imposes an embargo on Iranian oil products
2013	Hassan Rohani elected as Prime Minister
2015	Nuclear Agreement

Chapter five

Lebanon

Jose Luis Cabello Rodríguez

Abstract

Over the last years the everlasting crisis in Lebanon has been marked by two main trends. One is the permanent attempt of Hezbollah to assume power, blocking the political institutions' normal functioning and threatening with violent actions in a more or less veiled way if their goals are not achieved, like for example their wish to avoid indictment for the murder of Prime Minister Hariri in 2005. The other relevant event, external yet not less disturbing, has been the Syrian Civil War. The flow of refugees, mostly anti-Assad Sunni, brought a humanitarian as well as political problem, while Hezbollah military involvement in the conflict, with significant casualties including some relevant army commanders and the Jihadist retaliation over Shia population, have imposed additional pressure over the country that Lebanon has managed to resist so far despite many negative forecasts.

Keywords

Lebanon, Hezbollah, Syria, Middle East.

Introduction

Geopolitical outlook on the region

If there is one region in the world whose name is tantamount to conflict, that is the Middle East. Although the term is somewhat confusing, in order to fit the Lebanese conflict in, we shall consider the area from Anatolia Peninsula in the north, to the extreme southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, with the connecting areas of Mesopotamia, Levant, Palestine and the Jordan River, plus the territories of Egypt and Iran.

Historically, the strategic players have been positioned at the ends: Egypt, Anatolia, Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau, and have kept the struggle for the central territory around which they pivot. The cradle of Judaism and Christianity is located in the central territory, which made Palestine a territory with huge emotional value, far higher than any economic or strategic value it could have. The Arabian Peninsula remained an onlooker until the appearance of Islam made it an intermittent centre of power, initially military and political power, to later become a spiritual epicentre with capital influence in the world.

A struggle took place among the peripheral powers until the end of the 19th century and early 20th century that practically the entire region was under control by the Ottoman Empire rulers, Iran being relegated to a marginal geopolitical position, being seen more as a connection point with Southern Asia and a buffer for the Russian - British friction, rather than a source of power on itself irradiating out its geostrategic vectors.

After the two World Wars, the situation changed considerably. The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the French and British decolonisation led to a profusion of new political entities within artificial borders, sharing space with age-old entities of invariable geostrategic value. A newly created Iraq, that did not previously exist, appeared on an equal footing with the age-old interests of Egypt.

Nevertheless, the final detonator of the conflict was the constitution of the Israeli State, initially only planned on part of the British Mandate over Palestine. It was rejected at the time by the Arab majority in the region, who wanted a multi-religious, united Palestinian State (with an Arab majority), and ever since that moment its existence has been the cause of permanent instability, with numerous wars, both conventional or otherwise.

These two circumstances, a rushed decolonisation with artificial results, along with the borders with Israel, have been the root of the conflict in Lebanon. The Lebanon in itself is a world of contradictions, imbalance and age-old confrontations inherent to the geopolitical system of the Middle East. There have been periods of enviable prosperity, compared to its neighbours, although this has not avoided the Lebanese becoming embroiled in violent

disputes for power, or avoiding rivals from gaining power; wasting everything that had been achieved during periods of peace.

To be fair, we must acknowledge that the Lebanese have been treading on hot coals ever since their peculiar process of independence from France, in view of the fact that the country is in a physically and human geographical position condemning it to high on impossible feats of balance both internally and externally.

Relevance of the conflict

With a recent history consisting of a succession of human tragedy, social and political failure and magical survival, studying the case of the Lebanon is relevant because today it is an example of how players and interests interact, without large amounts of violence, whereas in other parts of the Arab world, such as Syria, this takes place as open warfare.

Studying the relations between the internal dynamics of Lebanon and the Civil War in Syria is another fundamental point in order to foresee undesirable scenarios. Beyond the presence of United Nations forces in the country, with Spanish participation, the geographical situation of Lebanon regarding Europe is a point that requires that country to be kept stable to avoid an avalanche of refugees coming out, either through expulsion or due to a hardening of the country's attitude towards those who have fled there from Syria, or because an explosion of violence expels the native population and those who live there now after being displaced, towards other areas..

Any destabilisation of the country would force Israel to openly intervene, with the subsequent cascade of political, military and economic reactions by the regional and global players that would damage the scenario of global economic recovery.

Background to the conflict

Distant background

The distant background to the conflict dates back to the era of Ottoman dominion. During that period the concept of «Arabism» appeared in the Middle East in response to the attempts by the «Young Turks» to create a feeling of imperial nationality, similar to that professed by the «White Dominions» in relation to the British Crown among the different peoples of the British Empire. A basis was sought for modernisation of the Government structures that would allow them to face up the pressure from the European powers, causing populations traditionally passive and hostile to Turkish dominion to join in the idea of an «Inclusive Ottomanism», a dominion that was tolerated in Arab areas more as a vehicle towards an Islamic Caliphate than as an acceptable form of governance.

This ideological offensive was seen in those areas of Arab majority as an attempt of assimilation and a loss of cultural and ethnic identity, at a time when Turkish military and political weakness was launching learned minorities to seek political solutions by moving away from the Sublime Porte.

The incipient arab nationalist movements in Lebanon were violently culled by the Turkish authorities. In fact, the Independence monument in front of the Great Mosque in Beirut does not glorify the martyrs sacrificed by the West, but rather those sacrificed by the Turks.

After the defeat of the Turks in the Great War and in view of the Sykes-Picot agreement, France inherited the Levantine block of the Turkish domain and the dilemma was served, lasting to present day. Just, which was the political project to be fomented and, just which were the possibilities of kindling it among the «intelligentsia» so as not to be rejected by the people. The solution represented the permanence of the French geopolitical vision about the Levante: the division of the French mandate in two nations so that the Christian population of the Lebanon could serve as a guarantee of permanent Westernisation of the region, constituting the tip of the lance of French influence in the area.

Recent background

The conditions under which decolonisation took place, French national decomposition in World War II (during which the Mandate of Syria was the only territory in the Empire where free French ground troops and those of Vichy faced each other in battle) and the permanent political crisis in the Fourth Republic later, forced Syria and the Lebanon out into the international limelight. Without the natural resources of Algeria or Indochina, maintaining a political and social tinderbox was not part of France's plans even before the war.

And it was apparently the right solution. The existence of the State of Israel and the defeat against it, although it is true that it there was a half-hearted fight by the Lebanese, did not diminish the status of the country as the most westernised Arab country, where Muslims were forced to live with and tolerate Christians, sharing power with them and not simply tolerating their existence. The example the presence of the American University of Beirut has represented since 1886, is an exception to the existence of exclusively Islamic teachings, and has guaranteed the dissemination of western thinking even among Muslim students of both confessions, who have resorted to study there in search of a technical education that is difficult to find anywhere else in the Arab world.

The natural course of events pointed towards an exception in the Levantine where tolerance, education and a network of highly developed banking services would have been the nexus between the different political

expressions in the Arab world and a western world whose only contention with this area was the recognition of the State of Israel.

Ever since then, the source of all the problems in the Lebanon has been its own political organisation, that recognises and embodies distribution of power based on religious communities rather than political ideology as would be normal in a parliamentary democracy. Loyalties tend to focus more on the religious side rather than on the State as a whole, and it is very difficult to build a feeling of belonging to a national community in this situation. If in the beginning as an independent country the solution of assigning the highest magistracies to certain confessions, a Christian president, a Sunni Prime Minister and a Shia President of the Parliament, was a formula that guaranteed stability, maintaining this distribution however has proved to be an encumbrance for the institutions and has generated distrust among the communities preventing an integrating transversality.

Ultimately, the national reality was legally subordinated to the religious communities and conflicts are resolved the «Lebanese way», always postponed until a formula is found with no winners and no losers. This results in institutional paralysis and blocking of more compromising and effective solutions.

The country is not only divided into a host of communities, the social differences are poles apart. The existence of this matrix of interests and loyalties has been a millstone around the neck of the national project and has caused a succession of internal conflicts lasting through to today.

As if the internal factors were not enough on their own, Lebanon is geographically placed between Syria and Israel, which has meant the country has suffered the consequences of all the conflicts between these two players, despite having taken an active part, rather dismally due to the size and quality of its Armed Forces, in the 1948 War only, in the attempt to avoid the division of the former British Mandate's territory of Palestine and the birth of the State of Israel.

If the country ventured into this armed conflict based on Arab solidarity and the hope that more powerful armies would take the brunt of the hard work, the experience of defeat and the awareness of the advantages of investing in human and financial capital for an efficient banking system, limiting to propaganda only the hostilities towards Israel, made Lebanon to steer clear of the successive Arab / Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. Nevertheless, Lebanon technically maintains a warring status with its neighbour to the south, that sometimes flares up in reality.

The appearance of Israel caused the Palestinian diaspora. Palestinians, who had been arriving since 1948, at the end of the first Arab - Israeli war and after the arrival from Jordan of those expelled by the Hashemite Government, became a destabilisation factor. Their number and military

capability made them an uncontrolled power within the fragile Lebanese institutional structure. In a country with very fragile military structure and security, the presence of the Sunni masses, who could disrupt the balance of power, armed and acting outside the needs of the country (basically peace and stability) was a calamity.

World War II should have taught more than one ruler that once a group sets off on the road to exile, the possibilities of them returning are practically zero. Neither the Jews who survived the Holocaust were welcomed back in their countries of origin in Eastern Europe, nor the Germans from Eastern Prussia or the Sudetes have ever returned home (nor have they conditioned German foreign policy). The possibilities of the Palestinians who left Israel returning and recovering their property were next to nothing, but, unlike the Germans or the Jews, they had no «homeland» to shelter in, except the «Umma», the community of Muslim believers.

Although they were initially welcomed, the avalanche of refugees entailed a serious humanitarian problem, particularly for countries that were not exactly rich to start with. But the Palestinians also became an unpredictable, unmanageable strategic player, in a world that was clearly divided between US and Soviet Union interests. Since there was no single country with a clear political and strategic agenda responding for them, they directly went into an irregular fight against Israel, extending from classic guerrilla warfare to acts of terrorism as a kind of «action propaganda» keeping their claims alive in the agendas of the main regional and global powers.

Their hate towards Israel led them to attack it from any bordering territory where they could settle, not only in the case of Lebanon, causing retaliation from Israel against the territories the attacks came from. In the end they became a parallel state that even imposed contributions and coerced the local population. The southern region became a territory where Al-Fatah imposed its law and controlled the local population, which became involved in a growing crossfire between Palestine and Israel, without Beirut being capable of doing anything about it. It is therefore not surprising that during the first invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1978, after three years already of civil war, the Lebanese people applauded the pass of the Hebrew tanks.

This combination of institutional weakness, lack of national feeling, social inequality, the presence of Palestinians and powerful neighbours influencing their politics took Lebanon to a civil war in 1975. Curiously, during this fight the fiction of the state remained in place, so that at its end, power was distributed among the different communities in the same way. Memories of the 1958 crisis served as a reference throughout the entire conflict.

This conflict, which was initially caused by the distrust and subsequent forming of armed militias by the Christian community, against the growing power of the Palestinian militias, was the gateway for intervention by Syria and Israel.

The recurrence of crises in the country of cedars meant that western countries saw them as something assumable and not as an indicator of the fragile situation in the Middle East. The Levantine strip has never managed to become entirely pro-west and a beachhead against Arabism, whether socialist or Jihadist, who see the west from their traditional viewpoint dating back to the crusades and colonisation/protectorates at the end of the 19th century to the early 20th century, leading to the cosmic Islamic visions today in which the west is the source of all evil due to its sins ranging from arrogance (according to Tehran) to idolatry or inducing apostasy and atheism - in short the embodiment of values completely opposite to the Islam values.

The neighbouring proximity of Syria just adds an extra dose of insanity to the internal conflicts. Its neighbour, surrounding its territory, is also an explosive mosaic, which has remained united thanks to the Ba'ath regime of the Assad family. With a strong alliance to the Soviet Union first and afterwards to the Russian Federation, who has been its defender internationally come hell or high water; the strange mix of «forward-looking» ideology and despotism by the Assad family, has kept most of the Sunni population away from political power. The most elementary geopolitical conception would lead any Syrian government to monitor and attempt to control the Lebanon, hence the call for help that Syria received in 1976 to mediate in the civil war only served as an excuse for a large-scale military intervention.

What is truly important in the politics of Lebanon is that the development of the sixties and early seventies in the 20th century disappeared, and the always existing distrust between the communities in a country that has practically been invented, surfaced with violence. Following the example of the Palestinians, the political parties based on ethnic or religious groups created their own militias and made ready to secure their networks of power using force.

The civil war brought an operational end to the state structures. Although they continued searching for an agreement and maintained a fictitious state, it actually disappeared. Violence was on the verge of destroying the country and a Christian «Maronistan» was about to crystallise. The dwindling infrastructures disappeared completely through armed conflicts or lack of maintenance and the country entered a black hole. There were borders that were virtually respected, but inside the country there was little more than general chaos sustained by armed force. The truth is that during the late stages of the Cold War, nobody was interested in the disappearance of the Lebanese state, which could only have been occupied by Syria, a true ally of the USSR.

As a result of the insecurity caused by the Palestinians and afterwards by the civil war, Israel repeatedly invaded the Lebanon, even laying siege to Beirut, causing much the relief of the Lebanese population, the top brass of Fatah led by Yasser Arafat, fleeing to Tunisia.

