The Arab Spring in Comparative Revolutionary Analysis: Implications of the Arabellion for Security Policy

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Causes, paths and interim results of the Arab Spring are discussed from the perspective of comparative revolutionary analysis. One has to distinguish revolutionary situations, with a multitude of conflict forms, from revolutionary outcomes. Also one should consider the options for development granted by different forms of political authority. Sultanist rule here allows for only highly limited perspectives. Such a form of political authority is focused only on the ruler and his entourage. There is no developing of encompassing and persistent institutions that would allow for smooth political change and the provision of public goods characteristic of democratic order. Numerous other theoretical elements are drawn on in assessing the chances of transformation and possible scenarios. Population pressures by an extremely young and mostly unemployed or underemployed population and the lack of a regional power are two of the crucial burdens. Further, one finds persistent cultural-religious cleavages. The Arab monarchies from Morocco to Saudi-Arabia have reacted with very limited political concessions and welfare payments to buy off protest sentiments. Thus far they could avoid regime failure as occurred to the more Sultanist regimes in Libya and Syria. In the second portion of this manuscript the security implications of the failed Arab spring are addressed in regional and global terms.

Keywords: political violence, rebellion, sultanism, political order, comparative revolutionary analysis, international security

Introduction

Three and a half years after the outbreak of the rebellion in Tunisia—following the self-burning of the Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010—and the waves of protests, rebellion, attempts at revolutionary overthrow, sequences of civil wars, civilian and military coups in the Arab world and, since June 2014, the attack of the Sunnite IS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria) on the Shi'ite-led state of Iraq, the Salafi winter¹ has fully arrived. Here one is reminded of one of the fundamental insights of comparative revolutionary analysis: One has to distinguish political challenges in crisis situations from those in revolutionary situations, and even more from revolutionary outcomes. Revolutions are outcomes, rare outcomes. Most outcomes of revolutionary situations do not end in revolutionary outcomes.

So how and why has the Salafi winter arrived? There are many answers, and only a few of them can be considered here. Yet, underbrush can be cleared away even in the current situation where IS has announced an Islamic caliphate in an area from Iraq to Syria. These recent developments look like a nightmare to all countries

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¹ Feared by Tunesian President Marzouki already in 2012.

surrounding Iraq and beyond. State failure of a gigantic nature is the dominant scenario with international Islamist terrorism regaining strength.

This paper is theory-driven, wants to be short and maybe is wrong on the strong deductions made. In section II, we concentrate on three theories² to explain the political and economic inefficiency of Arab political regimes: sultanism with its high corruption and lack in the production of public goods. The limited selectorate in the Arab states explains why that is so. The lack of political structures intertwines to make a reconciliation between old and new political and economic elites almost impossible. Huntington's (1968) theory of political institutionalization spells out what would be necessary for political order to occur in changing societies. Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) followed the same track with stronger emphasis on economic institutions and more recent research but left out other important factors in understanding the causes, forms and impact of political institutionalization, innovation and economic growth.³

In section III we address the security implications of the political and economic instability in the Arab world linking internal burdens to internal and external conflict constellations. Here hegemonic stability theory and international patronage have proved to be powerful theories. The future is open. Yet, we dare to speculate on political instability on a much larger scale based on a limited set of powerful theoretical instruments. This is a think-piece, maybe a piece of not thinking far enough. At the same time it rests on much empirical evidence that can be documented elsewhere, quantitatively and qualitatively.

Figure 1. Causal model of the implications of Sultanist Rule for state stability and regime change.

Theories to Explain the Political and Economic Inefficiency in the Arab World

First, we develop a causal model on the characteristics and effects of sultanism as a form of political authority. The causal model in Figure 1 links the three basic theories touched upon.

Second, we tie this to the consequences likely to emerge when fundamental political reform of sultanism is at order. In a third step international security issues are linked to the national security issues addressed in the first two models.

Sultanism is the predominant form of rule in the Arab world. Sultanist regimes are not legitimate institutional structures and do not produce such structures that foster incentives for economic growth and individual freedom

² Adding *resource curse* as a fourth one. The resource endowment and, in the end, most likely resource curse (Ross, 1999) is an explanation why the destructive elements of sultanism, for the moment, are delayed for Saudi-Arabia and the Arab Emirates.

³ See the highly plausible arguments raised by Sachs (2012).

(Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Acemoglu et al., 2013) (path 1). The sultan in fact rules uncontrolled by institutional constraints. At best these constraints are of a weak nature. As Weber (1964) described sultanist rule in the format of an ideal type: “arbitrariness free of traditional bonds of this form of patrimonial rule, the stressed to the extreme ‘sphere of unrestricted arbitrariness and mercy’” and thus the lack of “any form of rational authority” (p. 171). Thus, it is no surprise that rules of succession are not established under sultanism (Linz & Stepan, 1996). The de facto successor, the new “sultan”, usually emerges from the disorder left by the late sultan. The new sultan knows best how to play the political game in an un-institutionalized environment of arbitrariness. It is, however, vital for him to claim to be remote from the atrocities committed under the late sultan.

Path 2 points to the economic inefficiency resulting from sultanist rule. Corruption, the distortion of prizes, insecurity about business rules (also fostered by weak institutions) are examples here.

Weak and illegitimate institutional structures cause economic inefficiency (path 3) and are in turn affected by economic inefficiency (path 4). Both variables are responsible for the low or inexistent production of public goods (paths 5 and 6).

Selectorate theory (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003) distinguishes between a small selectorate (the most influential people co-deciding on the key political issues and major leaders) and a wider electorate. A selectorate, i.e. the sultan, focuses on private goods only. The sultan at any time can expropriate goods from others for his private consumption. As the selectorate becomes wider, more heterogeneous demands of other population groups become represented or are at least raised.

With inefficient institutional structures and economic inefficiency as background variables, there is a mediating effect of insufficient public goods on a fragile state monopoly of violence (path 7). There is also a direct effect of the two mediating variables in our model (paths 8 and 9). Yet, note that all effects are predicted to run via the lack of working institutions and economic inefficiency. They drive the devastating effects that sultanist rule has on the polity and economy.

Up to this point we have represented two basic theories in a simple causal model: sultanism as a highly ineffective rule of political authority and selectorate theory in describing in greater detail the lack of political control of the sultan and the failing production of public goods.

The call for regime change, for democratization, is also a claim not just for political and economic freedom, but also for the production of public goods such as security, justice, for enforcing property rights and looking after the commons.

Once the calls for political change have aggravated, another deadlock occurs that can be well-captured with two theories, the theory of political institutionalization (Huntington, 1968) and the externalization of internal conflicts in regimes under stress to reform, as spelled out by Mansfield and Snyder (2005). We draw here on our own work in part (Zimmermann, 2004; 2013) and link the paths explicated there to what has been stated in model 1.

Path 10 spells out that a weak or failing state monopoly of violence has an effect on many demands, one being possibly the call for regime change towards democracy. This changes the interests of elites who perceive their stakes in zero-sum terms (path 11). In the presence of an undifferentiated party system, or even more a total lack thereof (path 12 and path 13 feeding back to the chances of bargaining over elite interests), the mobilization of coalitions with maximal demands is a likely prediction (paths 14 and 15). Externalization of domestic conflicts (path 16) is a temptation and squares with the many “easy” outcomes sought in the Arab world (Saudi-Arabia, Iran, Qatar, Syria, and other countries where rulers are financing terrorist groups abroad).

Having laid out the basic structures of the consequences of sultanism for the political survival of this regime form or the change to another form of political order, in particular democracy, two major groups of causal factors still need to be specified. The first group refers to domestic structural factors, namely population setup and population growth, and ethno-cultural differentiations and conflicts. The second set of factors focuses on international security issues which come into play once national security is no longer given and insecurity threatens to spill over to the neighboring countries or to interference with the interests of major powers.

In short, the ethno-cultural and population dynamics are acted out in both ways: inward-out via external conflict linkages or out-migration, or outward-in via intervention, military aid or subsidizing terrorism in a foreign country or massive immigration, be it on the part of victims of warfare, of economic misery or widespread epidemics. With respect to ethnic conflicts, there are irredenta (artificial boundaries separating people of the same kin⁴), support given from the diaspora, prosecution and driving out of cultural and religious minorities. There are two major reasons here: one is cultural resistance, the other, often intermingling with it, is economic survival of prosecuted minorities.

Figure 2. The core model of Mansfield and Snyder to explain the nexus between regime democratization and external war.

Migration of any sort is a permanent theme in the Arab world (Shi'ite and Sunni groups; Palestinians; Syrian and Kurdish civil war refugees etc.). Yet, shifts not only occur in the population-setup of specific states, but also in the international actors supporting other states or having an eye on them in their own interests of balance in a region.

⁴ Cf. the boundaries of the Sykes-Picot agreement concluded on May 19, 1916 that IS wants to change now. "France and Britain divided up the Arab territories of the former Ottoman Empire into spheres of influence. In its designated sphere, it was agreed, each country shall be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States. Under Sykes-Picot, the Syrian coast and much of modern-day Lebanon went to France; Britain would take direct control over central and southern Mesopotamia, around the Baghdad and Basra provinces. Palestine would have an international administration, as other Christian powers, namely Russia, held an interest in this region. The rest of the territory in question—a huge area including modern-day Syria, Mosul in northern Iraq, and Jordan—would have local Arab chiefs under French supervision in the north and British in the south. Also, Britain and France would retain free passage and trade in the other's zone of influence". Retrieved from <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/britain-and-france-conclude-sykes-picot-agreement>

Implications of the Arabellion for Security Policy

Political security comprises the domestic and foreign domains. Both are intertwined and condition each other. In the Arab world, the state capacities in most countries are persistently limited by at least three factors: First, the state monopoly of violence is lacking (Libya, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen) or is implemented only in an autocratic way (Egypt, Saudi Arabia), thus limits the basic rights of citizens and therefore does not meet their consent; The second large threat to internal security politics derives from the lacking ability of the Arab countries—with the exception of the Gulf states with their vast energy resources and state welfare payments—to fulfill the basic economic needs of the population for nourishment, protection of their homes and local markets that are functioning; The third factor are the cultural and religious cleavages which lead to violations of the state monopoly of violence and to further repression, as well as to extensive fighting between and within the lines of division. All these increase economic inefficiency even more. On top of this there is—fourthly—the rapidly-growing majority of unqualified and unemployed young people. There is also the widespread discrimination of women.

The internal security tensions are transferred into the international realm by artificial boundaries which mostly are a legacy of the colonization period (e.g., the Sykes-Picot agreement). They are recognizable as straight lines and set up by Western powers in their interest of “divide and rule”. These artificial boundaries nourish violent clashes, cause willing and unwilling migration (more than 6.5 million refugees in the Civil War within Syria and more than 2.5 million out of Syria at the beginning of 2014) and set the stage for externally-led terrorist groups. All these factors lead to numerous inter-linkages in the forms of conflict. “The enemy of my enemy is my friend” is the simplest inter-linkage in playing the game indirectly. The status of an enemy could change almost any day, as becomes clear in the role of the Kurds in Iraq or in the international alliance of the US, Russia, Iran, Syria and others (perhaps indirectly even of Turkey) forming to stop and crush IS.

The broadest frame for security policy is determined by geo-political and ideological intentions and resources of the major powers (Russia, China, India, of the European Union), and of the only superpower, the American hegemon.

In 2014, the domestic security has almost completely eroded for Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Iraq through civil war fighting with persistent support from abroad. In the case of ethno-culturally and geographically divided countries like Libya, the vacuum of state power in itself, after the overthrow of the prevailing elites⁵, contributes to the scenario of state failure and subsequent division into various regions. These are controlled by warlords. Not always is there need of a persistent civil war if the erosion of internal security is to come about. In Syria, the participants in civil war activities are exhausted, the state structures are crumbling. A second Kurdish state in North Syria, “West Kurdistan”, is to come about. The ruling regime of the Alawites is internationally ostracized after the gas attacks on the own population in August 2013. Meanwhile the Assad regime hopes not only to survive but also to be needed in the role of the minor vice vis-à-vis Islamist terrorist groups such as the Al-Nusra Front and IS. The reserves for poisonous gas are being destroyed, but not according a recent statement of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.⁶

Three oppositional groups are to be distinguished (Steinberg, 2014): the Free Syrian Army (formed by

⁵ Which in Libya, in Tunisia, Egypt and (unsuccessfully) Syria occurred with sizable official and unofficial, direct and indirect backing of the oppositional forces on the part of the US.

⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/29/world/middleeast/chemical-weapons-syria.html>

surrendering military men and various oppositional groups, right now on the retreat vis-à-vis more radical oppositional groups as well as government troops), the Islamists (Islamic front of various groups with about 50,000 combatants, including the salafists, most strongly supported by the Arab Gulf states) and Salafists (the Ahrar al-Sham supported by Qatar and Turkey, the Jaysh al-Islam by Saudi Arabia) as well as the Jihadists (al-Nusra-Front with links to Al-Qaeda and IS—both fighting for large-scale liberation of the Near East under Islamic rule). Divisions, fights within and between these groups are the order of the day (On May 5, 2014 al-Nusra and IS have agreed on ending mutual fighting). One has to add the insufficient external support with weapons and fighters so that the Assad troops meanwhile have won back the strategically important cities of Homs, Hama and Aleppo. Obviously the fear of an even greater threat through jihadist terrorist groups is so large that the West and even Saudi Arabia have given their consent to tolerate the Assad regime. The conflict in the Ukraine, the insecure state of security in the east of the European Union and in the Far East between China, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan and Korea has played into the hands of Assad and his supporters in Iran, Russia, and in China. The West probably has nothing gained altogether in the Arab Spring but rather lost ideologically and strategically. Whether this point of view is shared and will be corrected by active politics is to be seen. The dramatic rise of IS is explainable only through the support of former Sunnite army personnel in Iraq, the Sunnite tribes and the reinforcing success of numerous military and financial raids of this ultra-radical group. In addition, with Tullock (1974), one has to consider that the most radical organization with its brutality influences the cost-calculation of potential bystanders in its own favor. If one shows sympathy for a milder organization, one cannot be assured of not succumbing to the more rigorous one. The media again exert a strong reinforcement effect here.

In Egypt there is the alternative scenario with the taking over of power on the part of the military.⁷ As predicted in the theory of sultanist regimes, the political successors stem from the lager of the old authorities. Police, the army and the decisive structures of authority remain unchanged (irrespective of respective announcements).

Two theories provide an explanation here: in case of a political opening, the theory of the forms of political authority (Linz & Stepan, 1996) predicts for the regime form of sultanism—a successor to emerge out of the environment of the sultan. Under that type of political regime the Sultan by and large enriches himself and his clientele (“cleptocracy”) without institutional rules of control.

Selectorate theory (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003) as the other theory focuses on the number of selecting persons and predicts with a greater number, also the production of public goods (and not just only of private groups for the cleptocracy), and thus greater chances for the change to democracy. In this perspective, also the elected Muslim brothers and their allies in Egypt, from June 2012 to the beginning of 2014, have produced no public goods like law and order, provision of needed goods in local markets at acceptable prices, and the functioning of schools and hospitals. Their tutelary and misjudging role of the assignments of a majority in a democracy, thus their coup as parliamentary majority, was followed by the coup of the army. In any case, the core of political regime change consists in agreements between the old and new elites so that the majority of the old elites can survive (unless their political crimes are entirely out of bound) and even obtain a new chance as competitors in an open and equal election. The old elites have to accept the view that they alone are not able to rule and that new authorities have to make a new effort. Yet, these can only be successful if they are not

⁷ In Libya within one week in February 2014 there were two failed coup attempts under two distinct commands.

sabotaged by the old elites (Lipset, 1994). The development of South Africa since 1989 with de Clerk and Mandela as main actors provides a successful example.

Variants of international security political developments cannot eliminate two insights of Huntington (1996): in the Arab region there is no dominant regional political power, and population pressure (“youth bulge”)⁸ limits the internal and external control of youngsters. The share of the young of the entire population is beyond 50%, and the unemployment rate of the very same segment even reaches 80% in some countries. The link between an enlarged proportion of young people in underdeveloped countries, an inefficient economy and the exertion of political violence is not to be questioned (Urdal, 2012). Only the point of time of a massive conflict to break out remains unclear⁹, but can be predicted to arise from even minimal incidents. One has to add climatic changes—such as occurring in the extremely hot summer before the outbreak of the civil war in Syria which further increased hardship to meet the daily needs. In Iran, the level of groundwater is falling dramatically so that in combination with intensified periods of heat only about half of the population could be sufficiently nourished. Waves of migration, fights to replace others and externalization of internal conflicts will be the consequence of these additional conflict lines.

The major powers and the superpower US have contrary interests, just as much as the weakening regional powers Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran which share clear feelings of distrust and fight each other. In addition, there is Turkey which is not trusted because of a different religious setup¹⁰ and because of the historical experience of cultural dominance (Ottoman-Saudi war of 1811 to 1818, Arab revolt 1916-1918; Iran and Saudi Arabia). Surprisingly some of these countries have the same allies (Turkey and Saudi Arabia with the US). Yet this does not simplify the situation since the security interests of the US as to Turkey, in long-term perspective, are much greater than for any Arab state.

Both elements of security are thus entirely lacking: a regional power which controls smaller countries and limits their range of activities. Egypt is not able to do so, for lack of financial resources and due to its own cultural tensions between a small secular Western-oriented upper class and upper-middle class, the politically disunited Muslims, and the 10% Coptic Christians. Also there are no regional powers which jointly could stabilize the regional order. The interests of the major powers will focus on weakening the hegemony of the US either by forcing a retreat of the US from the Middle East or by destroying resources and imposing losses in efficiency on the US through permanent conflicts in the Arab region. In case of Russia, there are geostrategic interests such as access to the Mediterranean Sea, towards the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean as well as security and military base in the Near East. For the Chinese, the procurement of raw materials and the relative “balance” of the other powers in the Near East are predominant.¹¹

Therefore and for other reasons (advantages in the trade with weapons, diffusion effects of other worldwide crisis areas, e.g., in the Chinese Sea) one hardly has to reckon with unity amongst the major powers in the Arab region and a solution of the security-related issues. A permanent conflict in the Near East coupled with all the individual conflicts within and between states in that region above all weakens the European Union.

⁸ The World Bank estimates the following annual population growth rates in the Arab states for 2013-25 (> 1%): Iraq (3), Jordan (2), Kuwait (2), Oman (2), Qatar (2), Sudan (2), Syria (2), United Arab Emirates (2), West Bank and Gaza (2), Yemen (2). <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.1>

⁹ As Kuran (1995) has shown, such a moment arises when private opinions of dissent are made public, instigate others to likewise behavior and paralyze the repressive forces.

¹⁰ In Turkey there are 70% Sunnites, vis-à-vis 90% Shi’ites in Iran; in Egypt there are over 90% Sunnites, in Saudi Arabia over 80%. The real commitment there to the ruthlessly-enforced state religion of Wahhabism cannot be determined.

¹¹ The latter is also the most likely goal in the ambivalent Chinese attitude as to the Russian annexation of the Crimea.

Conflicts about raw materials may overspill, just as much as terrorist and military acts and persistent migration. The weakening of the economies in the Eastern Mediterranean occurs, in nuce, in front of the doors of the European Union. It will weaken the European Union intensively and threaten its existence. This may be in the interest of the US to weaken the position of a rivalling (not yet) economic hegemon. It may coincide with traditional Russian geopolitical intentions but is not in the interest of China. China needs a functioning European Union to tame Russia, once the most recent closing of ranks with Moscow with respect to the Crimea and military cooperation is over, just as much as India as a further still underdeveloped superpower needs this balance vis-à-vis China. This view is dominant even in respect to a greater dependency on raw materials from Russia.

In the conflict with Iran, the issue is stopping the atomic program of Iran or at least achieving a sufficient degree of control of it. Otherwise a similar buildup of Saudi Arabian atomic weapons is almost certain. The major goal is the dominance in the Arab world. Without atomic weapons this cannot be achieved by Saudi Arabia, and most likely not even with them. The influence of Iran in the neighboring countries of Syria and Iraq is strong. In fact, they are mostly satrapy states of Iran though that image crumbles in view of the rise of IS. In Lebanon the Shi'ite Hezbollah also depends on Iranian support. The Saudis are fearing that the tensions spreading through Shi'ite fanatics will capture ground among Shi'ite populations elsewhere (Saudi Arabia: 10 to 15%; Bahrain: 70%; Iraq: 68%; Lebanon: 50%; Yemen: 38%; Kuwait: 23%; Syria: 18%; Qatar and United Arab Emirates: 10%; Oman: 8%). Moreover the Saudi rigid and extremely conservative reading of the Sunni religion, Wahhabism, cannot hope for sympathy in other areas. Monetary payments and the mobilization of third-party groups interfering in other countries are to help out here. Moreover, Saudi Arabia views itself as the protector of the two most holy religious sites, Mecca and Medina, as the center of the Sunnite religion.

Both states in this conflict are hopelessly over-challenged: the Saudis lack the attraction of a legitimate model of state, of society, and a less rigid practice of religion. Lastly their only resource is money from selling oil. The Iranian leadership in turn is undermining the resources of its economy, and can only control the situation by means of a nationalist security policy and strong domestic repression. The election of prime-minister Rohani here provides a contrast to the almost revolutionary situation in the years of 2009-2010. Iran also views itself in a central position and as most influential protector of the Shi'ite religious belief and in this respect in a more legitimate position, at least for the countries with a larger Shi'ite population ("Shi'ite belt" from Iran via the Lebanon to the Arab Emirates).

In the end there is the question whether the mullah regime in Iran will fall down earlier than the one in Saudi Arabia. For this to occur a massively decreased engagement of the US in the Near East is of prime importance. This, in turn, is decisively determined by the forms and sites of the competition with China. Should the mullah regime fall down in favor of less strongly oriented religious political system, with the clearly taken back inclination to export its religious beliefs, there is still the geographic numerical rivalry and that of a provider of raw materials. A simple zero-sum idea of weakening the Iran with an automatic gain for Saudi Arabia would underestimate the Iranian reserves just as much as the remaining rivalry with the other Sunnite state, Turkey.¹² The core question from a Western historical point of view is whether state, society, and religion could find to a secular-determined balance and how much autonomy trade and science will have in the dynamics of developing the societies. The extent of education, in particular of women and their chances on new

¹² Qatar with a population of two million is irrelevant in this respect.

labor markets, is a central indicator, lastly also for decreasing population pressure. Yet, here one has to calculate in decades.

Two scenarios going beyond the discussion so far should be indicated here whereof the first one could become reality very quickly: the US will turn into a vast exporter of raw materials with the new fracking technology and thus have an extended arsenal of incentives and threats, apart from their military weapons. This will lead Saudi Arabia, where the tribe of the Wahhabites—with a share of 23% of the population—rules over a population of 30 million in an extremely autocratic way, will have to have look for a new protector (“oil for security”).¹³ In Qatar, not in Saudi Arabia, one finds the biggest American military base in the Near East. From here military movements vis-à-vis Syria, the Iran, Iraq and other countries are directed. None of the superpowers would be attractive for the ruling Saudis: the Russians probably would be inefficient and are not well-liked from their occupation of Afghanistan and the Muslim war of liberation, the Chinese highly efficient but equally unpopular.

There is one scenario remaining: the Saudi ruling circle with more than 5000 Princes (Economist 2010: July 15) and their kin (thus a six-digit figure) is given protection but will step down, and a Sunnite geographically vastly-extended greater Egypt would gain means for a successful and persistent modernization. Pre-requirement is that the original intentions of the protesters on the Tahrir square will be carried out: the stepping down of the kleptocrats, broad participation in democratic structures and the setting up of efficient political and economic institutions. Yet, nowhere in the Middle East so far have there been so basic measures of consensus formation as were found with the round-tables in Europe.

The danger for other countries created through such developments rests in the increased resources for Egypt. The international items to bargain about are a reduction of military spending, a total ending of financing external terrorist groups, and providing massive capital investments from abroad (“Marshall plan”) and investments into human capital. Right now the driven-out financial elite of the Middle East is assembling mainly in Dubai and helping this state out of its own financial crisis. In a mirror image this refraining from external war is to be demanded from Iran and to be complied with. If one adds the population of Iran (80 million) and Iraq (28 million) and of Egypt (81 million) and Saudi Arabia (30 million) one almost reaches a stalemate.

A greater demilitarized zone in the Arab region under international control at the centers of conflict would have to include Israel which has not been addressed in this manuscript since the Arab countries, even beyond their difficulties with Israel, would have the same challenges and rivalries as indicated here.

The situation is and remains extremely dangerous, for the domestic monopoly of violence and for international peace. For the major powers and the only remaining superpower US there will be always the primacy of one’s own sovereignty and the (relative) weakening of challengers and competitors. In this respect the US will probably regard the protection of Saudi Arabia as dramatically less important than that of Israel.

No hope? On the contrary, the pressure to remain competitive and to participate in international trade to become competitive will increase. The gains from international trade would benefit all (even if trickling down

¹³ The Saudi rulers had already strongly disagreed with the US on removing Saddam who ran a secular yet Sunni-based dictatorial regime in Iraq. “The Saudis suspect for years that America in reversing the alliances and the protection over the Arab Gulf states will transfer the role of the regional policeman to Teheran – as in the times of the Shah. In supporting the Syrian rebels in their fight against the Assad-regime which is tied to Iran they hope to restrain the Iranian influence in the Levant. Also the uprising of the Iraq Sunnites against Maliki is seen, on the part of the Sunnite Arabs, as a justified resistance against Iranian hegemonic striving” (Bischoff, 2014).

will take some time), losses of the collapse of trade or its non-establishing would hit in particular underdeveloped countries such as the Arab ones. Such insights could be blocked by daily politics, long-term historical views, in particular uncompromising religious cleavages as those between Shi'ites and Sunnites, and the lacking structures of control within each religion, as well as in the lacking delimitation from secular institutions. This long-term historical view is re-appearing in the conflict about the Crimea and Ukraine. Nobody could maintain that the understanding for the Arab region is particularly strongly developed in the European Union, at least not in comparison to the greater cultural affinities to Eastern Europe. Yet, nobody is safe from far-reaching dynamics.

The dreams of the Arab Spring have given way to hard reality. Each state in the Near East, extending into the Maghreb, has been distressed, indirectly Israel as well. For Algeria this is not true where the military neglected the victory of the Islamic Salvation Front in the first electoral round in 1992, governs with a strong hand and where far more than 100,000 victims on the part of the armed wing of the Islamic Salvation Front are counted. Perhaps Algeria has already pre-empted what could happen in Egypt. The hard judgments against the Egyptian Muslim brothers in the first half of the year 2014 could be first indications.

The rulers in Saudi Arabia, in the Emirates, in Morocco and Jordan who bind autocratic legitimacy to public welfare payments have maintained their position. In all instances their legitimacy is paired with hard and consistent repression. Whether the rulers will run out of money or other means in their specific forms of legitimacy *-prior* to the mass wishes of basic changes—is a challenging question. At present the alternatives in the respective polities and in international order do not look very promising. Great statesmanship and leadership is nowhere in sight.

From mid-June 2014 on, IS has captured more than a handful towns in Iraq, massive weapons and vast financial resources and claims to control the belt from Aleppo to Mosul. IS is supported by former generals and Sunni military groups that had key positions in Saddam's army and in the Baath party. These and other Sunni groups resent the one-sided policies of Prime-Minister Maliki who so far was backed by the US with money and weapons. Maliki kept the Sunnites away from the new army and important state positions, and abused the power entrusted to him by (almost) majority vote, as did his counter-parts in Egypt, the Muslim Brothers. In a multi-cultural and multi-religious society forms of accommodation between these various groups are to be found that give special guarantees to minorities (The same mishandling of multicultural issues occurred in Ukraine when the Russian language was banned in 2014 by the new rulers).

In the meantime full civil war between the Sunni groups (e.g., Naqshbandi Army) and reacting Shi'ite groups (e.g., al-Sadr's Shiite Militia and other militias) has broken out. All this squares with our emphasis on the lack of a state monopoly of violence, of one-sided ethnic and religious policies, of the enemy-of-my-enemy-is-my-friend policies and many other reasons for ongoing cycles of political violence. The fatwah issued by leading Sunni mullahs against the self-styled new Khalif Abu Bakr al-Baghdad in the end will turn out as an important step in dissociating IS from supporting groups it still can command and/or tyrannize. Perhaps even more detrimental is the destruction of holy graves and mosques on the part of IS. Yet, this will occur only after enormous bloodshed with much more foreign intervention and support on the part of Saudi-Arabia, Iran, the US, Kurdish Peshmerga forces, Russia, and other countries. It will, however, quite unlikely end the re-occurrence of similar career patterns and alliance-formations as just experienced with IS.

Our fundamental analysis of the failures of sultanist rule, absent state strength and absent state monopoly of violence, super-imposed by cultural-religious and ethnic divisions, a long history of fighting and suffering

along those lines—thus with a long shadow of the past and into the future— will, with substantial likelihood, be the dominant scenario for years to come. Whether the economic advantages of backwardness, a backwardness further cemented through such multifold and perennial conflicts, will set in some day, remains to be seen. In short, IS is only the most recent and thus most dramatic example of policies of neglect and absence on the part of external control powers, including the super-power US. Clear learning patterns to avoid past mistakes and prevent future ones are hardly recognizable. Analyzing the falling apart of two Arab countries, *The Economist* (July 5th, 2014, p. 9) gives its headline “The tragedy of the Arabs” the sub-title: “A civilization that used to lead the world is in ruins—and only the locals can rebuild it”.

Conclusion

In short, the diagnosis presented here around the end of the first half of 2014 runs as follows: (1) The state monopoly of violence is nowhere in the Arab countries maintained without intensive use of violence or the threat of such use, thus lacking the necessary legitimacy among the population; (2) Economic inefficiency predominates and is only superimposed in the states rich in raw material and granting welfare payments, and also right now through massively-increased capital inflows on the part of rich migrants fleeing from the conflict areas; (3) Cultural and religious cleavages of dramatic intensities are characteristic of all Arab states. The Christian minority of less than 10% in Egypt, Syria and elsewhere in this situation has always inclined towards benevolent autocratic rulers; (4) International security is not solidified for any of the Arab states. It is driven by the indicated tensions, by migrations, by manifold violent groups with terrorist inclinations acting on external order. The superpower US, the second one (to be) China and Russia as well as the European Union in this region have, on the one hand, interest in obtaining raw materials but also to explore the tensions there to weaken their respective international competitors; (5) In the course of this, the conflict about hegemony in the Near East between the Sunnite Saudi Arabia and Shi’ite Iran—with Sunnite Turkey as the observant third-party—is only the biggest driver in this conflict constellation; (6) Huntington early on has drawn attention to two basic elements of analysis here: the lack of a regional power. Such a power will not show up in view of the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. If there were a war between the two, with an insecure outcome, other powers would be drawn into this conflict. The above described peaceful and nowadays rather utopian-looking scenario of a peaceful unification of Egypt with Saudi Arabia, with an according neutralization of Iran, could create such a peacekeeping power, but only under international pressure and international supervision. The second element is the increasing and not controllable population pressure through the share of young people (up to 30 years old, with more than a 50% share of the respective populations and with much higher operating rates of unemployment); and (7) One has to add the insights from analyzing the political order of sultanism which precludes a promising political change with an agreement between new elites and old elites.

As Kurt Lewin (1952) said, “[t]here is nothing more practical than a good theory” (p. 169). We may have such a theory for sultanism and its desperate effects on political regime change. What we lack is an equally parsimonious theory about the international security implications of the legacy of sultanist regimes. Maybe the impact of globalization points to the root of such a theory.

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