

Studia Orientalia Tartuensia, Series Nova VIII

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# Cultural Crossroads in the Middle East

The Historical, Cultural and Political  
Legacy of Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict  
from the Ancient Near East to the Present Day



STUDIA ORIENTALIA TARTUENSIA

*Series Nova*

Vol. VIII



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LEGACY OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND  
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THE PRESENT DAY

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# Introduction

HOLGER MÖLDER, VLADIMIR SAZONOV

The region of the Middle East has been called the cradle of mankind where the first human civilizations were born (Ancient Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Egypt, the Levant). It became home to numerous cultures, religions and ethnicities with long experience of living together in a multicultural environment. At the same time, we are currently living in the midst of turmoil with crises full of enmity and rivalry the roots of which extend back to Ancient times. Historical, cultural, religious, social and political legacies often play a central role in obstructing intercultural dialogue in the Middle East. A comprehensive and multifaceted approach is therefore immediately required to solve the numerous problems in the region. The initial idea for the publication “Cultural Crossroads in the Middle East – The Historical, Cultural and Political Legacy of Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict from the Ancient Near East to the Present Day” came in April 2016 and some chapters are based on presentations given at the Baltic Alliance for Asian Studies (BAAS) conference in Tartu, with several scholars from various European and Middle Eastern countries also agreeing to contribute to this volume. This is an intermittent and interdisciplinary publication that focuses on multiple topics related to the Middle East and the areas of study included in this particular volume encompass ancient history, the religion and mythology of the Ancient Near Eastern regions (Sumer, Akkad, Iran, etc.), Arabic and Islamic studies, Persian, Turkish and Arab literature, among others, as well as modern Middle Eastern issues related to politics, security, society and the economy. Its authors hail from the Baltic Sea countries of Estonia, Latvia and Poland, and from the farther-flung lands of Israel and Azerbaijan.

This interdisciplinary volume begins with an introductory chapter by **Holger Mölder and Vladimir Sazonov** which analyzes the perspective of intercultural dialogue in the region throughout history. The Sumerian civilization has been widely accepted as the earliest in human history, dated between 4500/4000 and 2000/1900 B.C., and in his chapter



**Peeter Espak** examines the origins of the Sumerian myths, concluding that mythological motives, textual parallels and ideological aspects all indicate that the myths of Enki and the World Order, Enki's Journey to Nippur, and Enki and Inanna most probably belong to the period of the Isin Dynasty which reigned from 1953 B.C. **Krzysztof Ulanowski** focuses on the role of divination in the Mesopotamian civilization which was in many ways a natural and common phenomenon in the Ancient world. The mutual interreligious influence of the god Mithra in Zoroastrianism and of Mihryazd in the Manichaean religion is analyzed by **Jaan Lahe**, followed by his chapter in collaboration with **Vladimir Sazonov** (*this article is published in German*) in which they link the role of god (Mithra) with the important treaty *between the Hittite king Šuppiluliuma I (1380–1340 BC) and the Mitanni king Šatiwaza from 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C.* In the next chapter **Amar Annus** provides an overview of the academic heritage of well-known Estonian-American Orientalist and Syriologist Arthur Vööbus (1909–1988). **Lidia Leontjeva** introduces us to the early Persian manuscripts held in the University of Tartu Library, most of which were donated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. **Aynura Mahmudova** studies the texts of Turkish-Azerbaijani poet and thinker Fuzuli (1483–1556) and his literary school. The Lebanese American (Maronite) writer Ameen Rihani (1876–1940) was also an early theorist of Arab nationalism and in the next chapter **Ingrida Kleinhofa** analyzes his literary heritage along with Western and Arab influences on his works.

There exist approximately three million Alawites in Syria and one million in Turkey. The Alawite identity has received a lot of attention in the recent Syrian civil war, which started in 2011, due to their support of President Assad against Sunni-led opposition. Alawites identify themselves as a separate ethnoreligious group which is distinctive from mainstream Islam while remaining related to its Shia branch. In his chapter **Üllar Peterson** focuses on Alawite positions on Islam. Next, **Tanja Dibou** examines how the Alawite youth in modern Syria distinguish themselves from other young Muslims during the ongoing civil war in Syria. **Kobi Michael** and **Yoel Guzansky** in their chapter examine the phenomenon of the failed state in the Middle East and its impact upon Arab statehood. Saudi Arabia is another regional power which characterizes emerging rivalry in the Middle East and its power relies on vast oil resources. **Yossi Mann** therefore focuses on Saudi Arabia's

fluctuating impact on the world oil market in his contribution. The appearance of the State of Israel on the Middle Eastern political landscape covers a significant part of the recent history of Middle Eastern conflicts. **Itamar Rickover** takes a look at Israeli strategic culture based on three indicators: symbols and images; militarism; and a system of norms, traditions and procedures that regulate the rules of conduct between the military and political echelons. **Limor Nobel-Konig** in her chapter analyzes the success and failure of terrorist organizations that recently became part of the Middle Eastern image by emphasizing five key strategic components: recruiting activists/supporters; creating provocation; eliminating opponents; instilling fear; and media activity. Finally, **Holger Mölder** ends by studying the influence of new types of actors such as the Islamic State on the contemporary security environment.

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# The Failure of Intercultural Dialogue in the Middle East – the Impact of War Theology to Contemporary Ideological-Religious Conflicts<sup>1</sup>

HOLGER MÖLDER, VLADIMIR SAZONOV

**Abstract** This article analyses opportunities for the development of intercultural dialogue in the Middle East, home to several world religions. The spread of numerous ethnic, religious and cultural conflicts in this region has promoted the emergence of various radical movements there. The goal of this study is to determine the conditions under which it might be possible to achieve a breakthrough in the development of regional peace for these multicultural religions. This paper examines the impact of historical, religious and political processes on intercultural communication in the region and focuses on processes which have led to the development of the current situation in the Middle East with its escalation of extremism.

**Keywords** Middle East, intercultural dialogue, war theology, Islam

## Introduction

The Middle East is a clear example of protracted imminent conflict formation which also possesses some distinctive cultural features.<sup>2</sup> Ongoing processes in the Middle East are related to the spread of religious and political extremism which may end up creating nondemocratic regimes and/or continuous ethnic/religious conflicts, a very frequent phenomenon in the Middle Eastern political landscape. The primary goal of this study is to analyse the influence of historical legacy on social and political processes in the region including the tradition of war theology, the persistence of authoritarianism, and the formation of a multicultural

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<sup>1</sup> This article was written with the financial support of grant PFLKU15910 “Conflicts inside Islam in the Middle East and their Historical and Cultural Roots on Examples of Syrian and Iraq Civil Wars.”

<sup>2</sup> Buzan & Waever 2003: 187–218.

environment in the Middle East. Multiculturalism may emphasise intercultural dialogues but it is also able to produce various violent responses to it (i.e., ethnic and religious conflicts, extremist movements, social revolutions).<sup>3</sup> The authors argue that many of the regional processes we witness today (e.g., the Arab Spring, the civil war in Syria, the Iraqi conflict, the Israeli-Palestine conflict, the rise of religious extremism) have their beginnings in early history, but these long-term developments are now tied to building a modern identity. Therefore, historical processes continuously influence the success of intercultural dialogue and produce obstacles to stable regional peace.

The present-day Middle Eastern cultural, political and security environment is a result of processes which started a long time ago. In the Ancient Near East, religion and politics were even more closely related to each other than nowadays and they have always played a very significant, even central, role in the functioning of the state, the legitimisation of power and the justification of war).<sup>4</sup> The Middle Eastern political landscape significantly changed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and a number of new states had to start their identity- and state-building processes using contrasting ethnic and religious identities which had survived from earlier times. The last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shifted focus towards the growth of religious self-consciousness accompanied by the increasing trend of religious extremism. The present study looks for sources which might explain the emergence of religious, nationalist and political extremism by taking a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach.

### **Building an intercultural dialogue**

The purpose of intercultural dialogue between distinct identity groups is not always to achieve the benefits of common goals, it can also be to value and respect the role of another culture, religion or ethnic identity. Distinct identities can be developed as a dynamic process without denouncing other identities as worthless; indeed, learning and becoming aware of each other can be a central value. Dialogue is an important source of contextualisation where religions and cultures contribute to identities with rites, symbols, beliefs, norms, traditions, events and

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<sup>3</sup> Martin & Barzegar 2010; Perkinson 2002; Rubin 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Oded 1992.

mythologies that make up culturally distinctive communities with their own particular historical and cultural memories. These memories are interpreted on an individual and collective level. Intercultural dialogue has to adjust a self-constructed picture of other cultures or religions according to the self-determination of others, which in turn may lead to a change in its own image.<sup>5</sup>

Rationalist theories have often marginalised questions of perception, belief and identity.<sup>6</sup> The cultural theory of international relations, introduced by constructivist scholar Richard Ned Lebow) in his book<sup>7</sup>, emphasizes interconnections between society, actors and their identities, all closely related with claims for status and recognition.<sup>8</sup> Emotions can affect international relations and world politics in different ways. According to Plato and Aristotle, there are three fundamental drives – appetite, spirit and reason – which can influence the decision-making process. Besides these basic paradigms, there are also many other influential drives like fear, resentment, hatred, sympathy, and others, that can direct the behaviour of international actors. Whatever perceptions people might have about each other, these are often constructed imaginations about possible future action which manifest in conflicting identities – Self and Others – but the motives for these constructions often serve powerful emotions based on sentiment rather than rational calculation.<sup>9</sup>

Emotional narratives may impact the establishment of unstable security environments. Fear is a fundamental drive which has significantly shaped the security environment in the Middle East since Ancient times. Fear-based worlds may produce constructed security narratives justifying a permanent state of war that keeps mutual misperceptions alive. In the construction of security dilemmas, cultural misperceptions are important elements).<sup>10</sup> Aristotle described fear as an imagined pain

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<sup>5</sup> Prentice & Miller 1999; Ringmar 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Williams 2007: 44.

<sup>7</sup> Lebow 2008a.

<sup>8</sup> see also Bleiker & Hutchinson 2008; Lebow 2008b; Lindemann & Ringmar 2012; Mercer 2006; Renshon & Lerner 2012; Ringmar 1996; Ross 2006; Sasley 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Wendt 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Booth & Wheeler 2008; Bleiker & Hutchinson 2008.

or disturbance that prepares a mindset for an evil future.<sup>11</sup> Elias<sup>12</sup> implied that fear is one of the most important mechanisms through which structures would be transmitted to individual psychological functions. The present-day image of the Middle East is built on maintaining constant fear between actors based on historical, ethnic, religious and social origins.<sup>13</sup> In a conflict-prone security environment fear can be developed into a culture of fear, which has proved itself an important force in international politics, justifying the activities of actors and producing enmities and polarisations within the international environment, among others.

Cultural origins are the most powerful incentives in promoting conflicts in culturally divided environments.<sup>14</sup> Managing ethnic and religious conflict is no simple task. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary<sup>15</sup> identified eight distinctive macro-methods of ethnic conflict regulation, some of which eliminate differences and some of which manage differences. The eliminating methods (genocide, forced mass-population transfers, secession, assimilation) can often intensify conflict, while the managing methods (hegemonic control, arbitration, federalisation, power-sharing) can strengthen cooperation between different identities. However, this is not a hard and fast rule. If conflict management brings in winners and losers, revanchist moods may strengthen again in the long run. The current international order does not favour the eliminating methods. If the managing methods do not produce comprehensive results, secession would be favourable in some cases. Certainly, it would be preferable to the continuation of armed conflict.

The Middle East has often been regarded as having become a region that is exceptionally resistant to democratisation and whose liberal regimes will initially end up with durable authoritarianism).<sup>16</sup> Schwarz and de Corral<sup>17</sup> conclude that most Middle Eastern states are strong in the area of security but weak in the area of representation and political legitimacy. Historical, ethnic, religious, and social incentives may

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<sup>11</sup> Lebow 2008a.

<sup>12</sup> Elias 1982.

<sup>13</sup> Fattah & Fierke 2009; Löwenheim & Heimann 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Prentice & Miller 1999; Lebow 2010.

<sup>15</sup> McGarry & O'Leary 1993: 4.

<sup>16</sup> Hinnebusch 2006: 373.

<sup>17</sup> Schwarz & de Corral 2011: 210.

produce emotional narratives emerging from interactions between political elites and public expectations which feed extremist movements. An interdisciplinary approach would help examine the origins of such narratives. So far, relatively little research has been focused on comparative analysis including different periods of history and it would be beneficial to take into account the different ideological and religious systems that emerged in the Middle Eastern area throughout history, while analysing contemporary conflicts.

### **Ancient Near East and its holy wars**

Even today, in the post-modern and high-tech world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, radical political-religious movements and organizations have become extremely influential. Religiously motivated extremist and fundamentalist political movements have emerged especially from within Islam as we see from the example of the *Islamic State*, *Al-Qaeda* and their affiliates, making the security environment in the region permanently unstable and explosive. Religion is still very closely related to politics to such an extent that they often cannot be separated from each other and theology is even used by religious fundamentalists and extremists to justify violent methods like war, terror, or genocide, towards which they often turn to achieve their political goals.<sup>18</sup> In the Ancient Near East, theology was a very influential and powerful political weapon for ruling elites, traces of which we observe in contemporary regional political culture.

Numerous examples of Ancient influences on modern wars and conflicts can be found in the Middle East. Holy or divine wars were strongly related to the theology of war and the state ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>19</sup> The first documented wars against other religious or ethnic groups were justified by theology.<sup>20</sup> The tradition of henotheism or monotheism in the Ancient Near East<sup>21</sup>, the rising importance of god-creator in Ancient Mesopotamia<sup>22</sup>, and the development of monotheism in Israel are all related to elements that can be regarded as the possible

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<sup>18</sup> Martin & Barzegar 2010; Selengut 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Kang 1989; Mayer 2001; Fales 2000; Bahrani 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Espak 2010, 2011; Schmitt 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Parpola 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Espak 2015.

roots of modern Middle Eastern radicalism, as well the politics of terror by Assyrian or Babylonian kings against ethnic groups).<sup>23</sup> Besides, the theology of war very often served political goals in the Old Testament, which later carried over into Christian ideologies.<sup>24</sup>

Examples of despotic ruling systems, regarded in some cases as “early totalitarian systems”<sup>25</sup>, can help contemporary scholars understand the roots of modern extremist movements and the nature of Middle Eastern dictatorships. The system of government in Ancient Iran was strongly influenced by Assyrian and Babylonian ideological and religious systems. These systems have been maintained in the Ancient Near East, having a great number of similarities with subsequent systems. Some of them were unique and constituted local phenomena, typical for a given region. Methods and techniques for the legitimisation of power and kingship in Ancient Persia during the Teispid-Achaemenid period and later in Sassanid Persia, share many similarities with Ancient Mesopotamian royal ideological systems. Zoroastrianism was the first monotheistic religion in the world, which was dominant in Iran until 651 AD and had a strong influence on Judaism, Christianity and Islam.<sup>26</sup> In the Sassanid Empire kings considered themselves the legitimate successors of the Teispid-Achaemenids<sup>27</sup>, which shows how Persian kings legitimise their power through Zoroastrian theology.

In written sources and iconography we can find evidence for the justification of wars in Mesopotamia since Early Dynastic Sumer. From the reign of Ur-Nanshe (ca. 2500 BC), ruler of Pre-Sargonic Sumerian city-state Lagash, more than 50 royal inscriptions have been found – almost all of which describe the building or rebuilding of temples for important gods of Lagash such as Ningirsu or Nanshe.<sup>28</sup> Among the inscriptions of Ur-Nanshe there is only one fragment (*Ur-Nanshe EI.9.6b*) which is probably the earliest known longer description of an historical event in Mesopotamian history and belongs to the first written records of warfare.<sup>29</sup> All the previous texts from Pre-Sargonic Sumer (2800–2335 BCE) were

<sup>23</sup> Oded 1979; Röllig 1996; Sazonov 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Pöldsam 2009/2010: 85–90.

<sup>25</sup> Kulmar 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Boyce 1979; Stausberg 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Shahbazi 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Selz 1990; Espak 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Espak 2011: 118–120; see more on theology of war Espak 2019; Sazonov 2015.



only very short statements about building temples or sometimes digging canals, or simply named the ruler at the time, or sometimes his titulary was added.

It is commonly believed that the theology of war was developed c. 2400 BC. E-anatum, another ruler of Lagash, tried to justify his military campaigns using theology, divine forces and gods.<sup>30</sup> In a description of wars between E-anatum and the leader of Umma, the former used theological justification for his aggressive politics and war, using the gods Enlil, Ningirsu and others to lend legitimacy to his wars. E-anatum shows in his inscriptions that he was led by Enlil or Ningirsu; he was the chief or commander of the army of Lagash but was always supported or commanded by great gods. He “subjugates the foreign lands for the god Ningirsu”.<sup>31</sup>

If we look at texts from the Sargonic period of the kingdom of Akkad (2334–2154 BC) when the first centralized territorial state was founded, then the justification of wars with the help and support of gods becomes clearer and the theology of war seems to be better formulated. Sargonic kings such as Sargon, Rimush or Narām-Sîn used different ways to justify their wars and the king was a warlike hero, supported by the gods.

Sargonic kings Sargon and Narām-Sîn became archetypal rulers in the Ancient Near East for a very long time and influenced the ruling ideologies across whole epochs of the history of Ancient Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East. Building upon their legacy, the first Roman emperors Julius Caesar and Octavianus Augustus became archetypes for successive Roman emperors and, likewise, for all rulers of the whole of Western Civilization right from the fall of the Roman Empire up to modern times

The city-state Assur had become more or less sovereign after the fall of the Neo-Sumerian rulers of the Third Dynasty of Ur (2112–2004 BC). Only the god Assur was regarded as almighty Lord of all Assyrian people and the ruler of state was simply his vice-regent.<sup>32</sup> This idea is comparable to the Islamic creed *lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh, muḥammadun rasūl-llāh* – *there is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God.*

<sup>30</sup> Winter 1986: 205–12.

<sup>31</sup> RIME 1: E-anatum EI.9.3.4, lines i 9–10, p. 144.

<sup>32</sup> Parpola 2000: 168–73.

In the Succession Treaties of king Esarhaddon (681–669 BC)<sup>33</sup>, we find a similar passage concerning his son and crown prince Assurbanipal and god Assur: “in future and for eternity must Assur be your god and Assurbanipal must be your Lord”.<sup>34</sup> However it seems that this idea is older; in the longest inscription of the ruler of Assur, Erishum I (20<sup>th</sup> century BC), we read the following: “Assur is king, Erishum is (his) appointee.”<sup>35</sup>

Simo Parpola<sup>36</sup> pointed out: “As rulers of the universe, the ‘great gods’ were similar in role and function to the Gnostic archons (literary, ‘rulers’), who were in turn essentially equivalents of the Jewish and Christian ‘archangels’.” The god Assur was always seen by Assyrians as the real sovereign and owner of the Land of Assur, and the ruler of Assur was only his vice-regent.<sup>37</sup> Only the god Assur was regarded as the almighty Lord of all the Assyrian people, which is similar to the position of Allah later adopted by Muslims.

The growth of power, expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and the creation of *Pax Assyrica* in the 8<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC were directly connected to the new political-ideological programs of very ambitious Neo-Assyrian kings such as Tiglath-Pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.<sup>38</sup> This growth also led to the successful development of Assyrian warfare, innovations and reforms in the Assyrian army. The aim of these Assyrian kings’ geopolitical ambitions was splendidly reflected in their royal inscriptions that listed successful military campaigns, among other feats, which they tried to justify with the support of theology and the gods. Theological justification played a very significant role in supporting royal legacy.<sup>39</sup>

Back in Early Dynastic Sumer we have many instances where kings tried to justify and legitimise their rule with support from the gods. The rulers of Mesopotamia started to use theological justifications for military campaigns and wars. It is a very long tradition that began in III millennia BC and continued for thousands of years; it was also very

<sup>33</sup> Wiseman 1958.

<sup>34</sup> Parpola 2000: 167.

<sup>35</sup> RIMA 1: Erishum I, A.0.33.1, 21, lines 35–36.

<sup>36</sup> Parpola 2000: 180.

<sup>37</sup> Holloway 2002.

<sup>38</sup> Fales 2008: 17–35; Mayer 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Garelli 1982: 16–29; Barjamovic 2012: 43–59.

popular in the Neo-Assyrian period, and even much later. Zainab Bahrani<sup>40</sup> noted: “The Assyrians are perhaps thought of in relation to war and violence more often than most other ancient cultures, especially in the first millennium BC.”

The translation of ancient heritage contributes to a deeper understanding of the roots of contemporary Middle Eastern religious fundamentalism and provides a clearer picture of social processes that have recently taken place in the region. The development and functioning of cultural patterns over various historical periods, the rule of different ideologies, and their mutual influence would help to build bridges for intercultural dialogue, which would ideally help a move towards a stable peace in the region.

### **Islamic war theology and its pre-Islamic sources**

The year 622 AD has been widely accepted as the beginning of Muslim world, a time at which Islam took a big step towards becoming the dominant religion for the Middle East. The new Islamic period included many traditions from the pre-Islamic period following Assyrian, Babylonian, and Ancient Persian traditions, among others, which was especially strongly reflected by the administrative system, governing principles, state ideology, methods of propaganda, rhetoric, and the ruler’s cult of personality, etc. Examining the cultural context of earlier periods helps us to understand the current situation.

The Quran, just as in many sacred texts, contains many controversial verses referring to war and peace. The introduction of the Quran into the political context often relies on patterns already practised by the earliest rulers of the Ancient Near East. Hundreds of pieces of evidence from Ancient Mesopotamia indicate that rulers used similar theological justifications for their military campaigns or invasions which later appear in the Quran. Similarities to earlier pre-Islamic tradition which emphasizes the role of war against those who do not belong to Our ranks in their fight against Others can be seen

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<sup>40</sup> Bahrani 2008: 14.

If we compare Quran-based war theology with pre-Islamic Persian tradition, Teispids-Achaemenids, Sassanids and other evidence, we can find analogous expressions in Behistun inscription of Darius I<sup>41</sup>:

*31. (2.64–70.) Darius the King says: Thereafter I went away from Babylon (and) arrived in Media. When I arrived in Media, a town named Kunduru, in Media – there this Phraortes who called himself king in Media came with an army against me to join battle. Thereafter we joined battle. Ahuramazda bore me aid; by the favor of Ahuramazda that army of Phraortes I smote exceedingly; of the month Adukanaisha 25 days were past, then we fought the battle.*

*32. (2.70–8.) Darius the King says: Thereafter this Phraortes with a few horsemen fled; a district named Raga, in Media – along there he went off. Thereafter I sent an army in pursuit; Phraortes, seized, was led to me. I cut off his nose and ears and tongue, and put out one eye; he was kept bound at my palace entrance, all the people saw him.*

*Quran (9:14) – “Fight against them so that Allah will punish them by your hands and disgrace them and give you victory over them and heal the breasts of a believing people.*

*Quran (5:33) – “The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement.”*

From Neo-Assyrian times, Esarhaddon caught the king of Sidon and cut off his head by command of the god Assur, applying for the wish of the main god of Assyria. Therefore, this act of violence was justified by using theology. Extremist Islamic movements throughout history have used similar justifications.

*Esarhaddon: By command of the god Assur, my lord, I caught him like a fish from the midst of the sea and cut off his head.*<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Corpus of Old Persian Texts – AVESTA – Zoroastrian Archives.

<sup>42</sup> RINAP 4: Esarhaddon 1, 16.

*Quran (8:12) – “I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them.”*

Contemporary Islamic extremism (i.e., war theology revealed by the Islamic State) often turns to controversial sources from the Quran which were probably borrowed from the earliest kingships in the Ancient Near East. The Quran does not use the word “jihad” for warfare or fighting but for serving the purposes of God on the Earth (El Fadl 2002, 37).<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the concept of “holy war” as used by Islamic extremists can hardly be called Islamic, but it rather expresses a tradition of war theology that seeks to justify the violent behavior of rulers in achieving their political goals. Indeed, in certain contexts the Quran tells its followers that disbelievers have to be killed. However, this does not mean that the religion itself need necessarily be violent and repressive, but it does convey the political tradition of using religion to bolster the legacy of Islamic rulers. We can also find similar descriptions in the Christian Bible and other contemporary sacred texts.

Khaled Abou El Fadl<sup>44</sup> writes: “The real challenge that confronts Muslim intellectuals is that political interests have come to dominate the public discourse, and to a large extent, moral discourses have become marginalized in modern Islam.” The Quran does not have as chronological a structure as, for example, the Bible, which makes the abrogation of earlier texts with later texts a debatable issue among Islamic scholars. David Bukay<sup>45</sup> (2007) mentions that the text of the Quran contradicts itself and that earlier verses revealed by Muhammad in Mecca tend to be more peaceful than the later verses revealed in Medina which tend to become progressively more violent as Muhammad’s strength as a political leader of the Islamic community grew. It is important to acknowledge the difference between that which the majority of Islamic scholars believe and that which extreme Muslims believe, the latter having clear motivation to incite just wars to politicize the religion. Religious extremism, state dictatorship and ethnic conflict are frequent manifestations in the Middle Eastern political landscape. The roots of fundamentalist ideologies are strongly related to the history of the region which has

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<sup>43</sup> El Fadl 2002: 37.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*: 36.

<sup>45</sup> Bukay 2007.

been rich in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes since the early days of human civilization born in the Middle East. The modern traditions and customs of the Islamic Middle East follow at least to some extent early medieval Islamic traditions.

Fundamentalist Salafi movements idealize the early Muslim world and have taken on a return to the early Muslim world as their credo. The Prophet Mohammad's life, his words and deeds, are the basis for determining the significance of Islamic law, religious dogma and piety. Spokesmen of fundamentalist Salafi movements emphasise their desire to go back in history and restore the situation that existed in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. Salafists of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Gulf states, along with the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, seek to establish a direct link with the activities of Mohammad and his time. The most widespread term *al-Wahhābiyya* is derived from Islamic preacher and scholar *Moḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb* from Nejd and was originally used by his opponents to denounce his doctrine as mere personal opinion. *Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb* and his followers called themselves *al-Muwaḥḥidūn* – “those who profess the unity of God”.<sup>46</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the term was also used by followers and sympathisers of the Salafi movement, like *Sulaymān bin Saḥmān*. A neo-orthodox brand of Islamic reformism from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century aimed to regenerate Islam by returning to the traditions represented by the “pious forefathers” of the primitive faith.<sup>47</sup>

The term “Salafism” can be defined as “a school of thought which surfaced in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a reaction to the spread of European ideas,” which “sought to expose the roots of modernity within Muslim civilization”.<sup>48</sup> Salafism is not one uniform, extremist power as depicted in the image promulgated by the media after the terrorist attack against the United States in 2001, the Madrid and London bombings and the recent Paris shootings, but instead one can identify at least three to five distinct branches within this movement. First, the non-violent Purist branch has sought to promote mainly religious goals and Islamic education. The Madkhalist branch, close to the Purists and followers of Saudi Arabian Islamic scholar *Rabee' Ibn Haadee 'Umayr*

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<sup>46</sup> Pink 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Süld 2014.

<sup>48</sup> Kepel 2006.

al-Madkhalee, supports secular state-building in Arab states and justifies it by claiming secular leaders have a divine right to rule their countries. The outnumbered branch of the Salafi movement is mainstream Salafism or political Salafism which condemns violence, but differently from the Purists and Madkhalists; they are actively engaged in the political processes of their home countries. The most infamous, but less supported branch of Salafism is Jihadism. Salafi Jihadism strengthened in the mid-1990s and practises armed insurgency, including terrorism, against secular and non-Muslim regimes.

Qutbism, which influenced the ideological stances of the al-Qaeda organization, is the most extreme branch of the Salafi movement. It was named by its founder, Egyptian scholar Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the 1950s and 60s. According to Qutb, Islam is a comprehensive system of morality, law, and management governed by Shariah principles which should ensure the equitable development of state and society. Sayyid Qutb's main work was the 30-volume edition of the Quran *In the Shade of the Qur'an*.<sup>49</sup> The previously secular and progressive scholar Qutb turned to fundamentalist Islamism during his studies in the United States. In 1952, Qutb welcomed the "Free Officers" movement led by Gamal Abdel Nasser and their coup to overthrow the king of Egypt Farouk, but soon got into conflict with the new authorities and spent ten years (1954–1964) in prison where he completed his political manifesto of Islamism "Milestones" (*Ma'alim fi-l -Tariq*). Sayyid Qutb was hanged in 1966 by the Egyptian authorities but his younger brother Muhammad (1919–2014) went to Saudi Arabia and taught Islamic studies in Mecca and Jeddah. His students included future al-Qaeda leaders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Muhammad Qutbi's work *Islam: A Misunderstood Religion (Shubuhāt Hawla al-Islam)* is considered one indicator of the fundamentalist path of Islamism that promotes Islamic moral superiority over the West.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> al-Qur'an Zilal Fi.

<sup>50</sup> Mölder 2014: 123–125; Sazonov & Mölder 2015: 144–145.

## Contemporary war theology in the Middle East and premises for intercultural dialogue

The main problem causing obstacles for intercultural dialogue in Middle Eastern countries is limited democratic experience within their societies. The divine rights perpetuated by contrasting religions, ideologies and rules still play an important role in the political landscape of the contemporary Middle East, just as they did in the Ancient Middle East. Contemporary Islamic societies often practise war theology which promotes conflict between the legacy of fundamentalist Sharia and secular states that rely on Western models of statehood. Moreover, with only a few exceptions Middle Eastern secular states are rarely democratic states and autocratic traditions have maintained the prominent role they played thousands of years ago. Israel and Tunisia, and to some extent Turkey, Kuwait, Lebanon and Morocco, notably qualify as free countries practising political rights and civil liberties, according to the US-based non-governmental study *Freedom in the World*.<sup>51</sup>

Many states in the region are under internal pressure from weak economies, a high birth rate and resulting boom in the young population, deficient education, and repressive authoritarian regimes, while the United States is busy making friends with hated and uncompromising Israel, autocratic and fundamentalist Saudi Arabia and corrupt and undemocratic Egypt.<sup>52</sup> In Iraq and Afghanistan the West interfered in the name of global security but found itself confronted with a number of internal conflicts that had not been immediately apparent under the previous dictatorships led by Saddam Hussein and the Taliban regime. For the West, political gains have always downplayed value-based policy in the region. There was no significant public pressure to invade Iraq in 2003 but the United States chose to act decisively in order to send a clear message to diverse Middle Eastern audiences and also to portray itself as sole hegemon of the world.<sup>53</sup>

Conflict between the West and Islamic civilization does not represent a fight for global dominance but more likely stems from the internal problems of the Middle East. It is also notable that many extremists

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<sup>51</sup> Freedom House 2015.

<sup>52</sup> Buzan 2003: 202–203.

<sup>53</sup> Lebow 2008a: 441.



sustained by Middle Eastern autocratic regimes have since fled to the Western world which practises freedom of speech.

Past experience has had an influence on the shape of the present-day political landscape and without studying the multiple ideologies that have emerged in the region throughout its time-proof history it would be impossible to establish reliable models that stimulate intercultural dialogue between Middle Eastern nations. Clement M. Henry<sup>54</sup> claims that, although the Middle East is predominantly Muslim and predominantly Arab, its most distinctive characteristic is neither religion nor language nor culture but rather its peculiar colonial legacy. After World War I, the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire had a tremendous impact on the region; the Middle East became a subject of Western colonialism in which its religious and ethnic composition and the patterns of former governance were ignored. The Aliyah process started at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, brought waves of Jewish immigration into the Palestine area. This process resulted in Israeli statehood and launched the most complicated Israeli-Palestine conflict, a phenomenon which consequently had a big impact on extremist challenges in the region.

In 1979, the Islamic revolution in Iran led to rising Shia political activity in several parts of the region and the Soviet invasion to Afghanistan helped to consolidate supporters of Sunni extremism.<sup>55</sup> Khomeini, the leader of the Iranian Islamic revolution, focused on two particular areas above all: Palestine and Lebanon and regarded the Arab-Israeli conflict as being primarily religious, although only a few Palestinians were Shiites.<sup>56</sup> The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979 helped to consolidate Sunni extremists. Many extremist movements were born during the civil war in Afghanistan when Western-supported Islamists fought with the Soviet-backed secular government. Later the first Sunni-based theocratic regime in the Middle-East established by the Taliban movement also contributed to the spread of religious extremism in and around the whole region. The Iraqi intervention of 2003 and the Arab Spring revolutionary wave produced a further spread of Islamic extremism in the region.

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<sup>54</sup> Henry 2005: 108.

<sup>55</sup> Mölder 2011: 256.

<sup>56</sup> Caryl 2014: 197.

It is notable that religious extremist movements in the Middle East, the only exception to which being Iran, are not led by theocratic hierarchy. In some cases they may be clerics by profession or education, like caliph Ibrahim in the case of Islamic State, but they are often just politically-motivated religious seculars without any connection to the Islamic clergy. Religious extremism in Middle-Eastern societies is multifaceted. The Salafi movement itself is not homogeneous and is certainly not necessarily always an extremist ideology; different kinds of political activism with various goals and ambitions may manifest within it. The Taliban practises militant insurgency and intends to create a theocratic regime in Afghanistan – and perhaps in Pakistan – but so far it has not expressed any global ambitions. Al-Qaeda is oriented towards fighting Western civilization, although some its offshoots actively fight for power in Yemen (AQAP), Somalia (*al-Shabaab*) and Syria (*Jabhat al Nusra*, since 2016 *Jabhat Fatah al-Sham*).

The Islamic State calls for interventionism and the implementation of an Islamic caliphate along the lines of early Arab conquests. The war theology practiced by the Islamic State has many incredible parallels with the Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian kings of Ancient times. The other Salafi political icon, the Muslim Brotherhood, represents a political kind of Salafism which aspires to milder forms of Islamic state while maintaining a parliamentary democracy. Despite its ideological similarity to the leadership of the Gulf states, the Muslim Brotherhood has been officially declared a terrorist organization in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>57</sup> The organization was also expelled from Qatar in September 2014. Nevertheless Qatar had become a prominent donor country to Salafi movements, which caused a diplomatic crisis in 2017.<sup>58</sup> One positive example of the Middle-Eastern peace process can be found in the upheaval of the Israel-Palestine relationship of the 1990s which established the preconditions for a peace settlement, being the implementation of UN resolution 181(II) of 1947.<sup>59</sup> However,

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<sup>57</sup> Also in Syria, Egypt and Russia and by the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

<sup>58</sup> Several Islamic countries led by Saudi Arabia cut their diplomatic ties with Qatar. This act was followed by the blockage of Qatar's airspace and sea routes and land crossing by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

<sup>59</sup> The resolution established a partition plan for Palestine and recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States and the Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem. The UN General Assembly adopted it on 29 November 1947.

more extremist challenges later emerged in Palestine when a Salafist Hamas won the parliamentary elections in 2006 and Benjamin Netanyahu's government in Israel adopted a more fundamentalist stance, bringing the Oslo Peace Process<sup>60</sup> between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to a dead end. However, the Oslo Peace Process remains one of the few positive outcomes of national reconciliations in the Middle East. Emmanuel Adler<sup>61</sup> suggests that regional identity-building would have a chance of establishing regional peace in the Middle East. Such an initiative would produce new narratives and myths supported by voluntary civil-society networks and civic beliefs instead of by blood or religion.

The Middle Eastern political environment has some difficult issues as a product of its historical legacy. Scholars often measure the impact of changes through the status of the elites who hold power in a particular society.<sup>62</sup> The elimination of political extremism from the Middle Eastern societies is another important requirement for regional peace. Extremism can easily spread if different ethnic and religious groups start to intervene in the power struggles for dominant positions in multinational societies. Political experience and the failure of many past peace processes indicate that the reformation of such societies must begin at grass-root level. The examples of the Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006, won by Hamas, and the parliamentary and presidential elections in Egypt in 2011–2012, won by Mohammed Morsi and the Freedom and Justice Party, a political offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, prove that Salafi movements can indeed be successful in democratic elections.<sup>63</sup> Building bridges between cultures and stimulating intercultural dialogue for national reconciliation may reduce the influence of extremist movements within their societies.

Henry notes that “countries lack the domestic political space in which to negotiate compromises between the putative globaliers and the reluctant moralisers, whether Islamist or nationalist, within their respective

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<sup>60</sup> Oslo Peace Process includes a set of agreements signed by the government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993 and in 1995 (Oslo II).

<sup>61</sup> Adler 2005: 236–7.

<sup>62</sup> Caryl 2014: 289.

<sup>63</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood and President Morsi were removed from office by the military in 2013.

communities.”<sup>64</sup> The social revolutions of the Arab Spring did not produce the expected “westernisation” of the Middle East. Moreover, the Arab Spring saw an increase in the influence of Islamist extremism in different Arab societies, particularly in Egypt and Syria. After challenges to secular dictatorships, Jihadism strengthened its positions in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Yemen, which were caught up in endless civil wars. The Sunni-Shia conflict is manifested in struggles in Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, and Yemen with a significant number of Shias, but also in Saudi Arabia, which has a large Shia minority in its Eastern Province, and Lebanon which is home to the powerful militant Shia movement Hezbollah. Besides the two-state solution for Palestine, the Kurdish problem has remained unresolved for centuries despite the fact that Kurdish armed groups seem to be the only effective force against the rising extremism of the Islamic State. The Kurds comprise an ethnic minority in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, but their identity rights are often rejected by Turkish, Persian and Arab rulers in their native countries.

The continuation of the Oslo Peace Process is the only productive policy right now for managing the Israel-Palestine conflict. The birth of the State of Palestine, recognised both internationally and by the State of Israel, is an inevitable result for any Middle-Eastern peace process, a result which will have a deep impact on peace-building in the region. Besides, the status of Jewish settlers in Palestinian territory and the status of the holy city of Jerusalem require a comprehensive agreement between both parties of the conflict. The implementation of the UN resolution, adopted on November 29, 1947, is a good roadmap for a two-state solution that also confers special status upon Jerusalem, the key issue in the Israel-Palestine peace process. The Kurdish problem has two possible solutions: the eliminating way of secession and the establishment of a Kurdish state, or the managing way of broad autonomy for Kurdish minorities in Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria.<sup>65</sup> The involvement of the Kurdish people through comprehensive discussion and the subsequent period of transition must however be followed by some concrete political decisions.

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<sup>64</sup> Henry 2005: 112.

<sup>65</sup> An independence referendum for Iraqi Kurdistan was held in 2017, where 93.25% of voters supported independent statehood, but it was rejected by the Iraqi federal government.

## Conclusions

The successful implementation of intercultural dialogue demands a reduction of the influence of extremist movements and the establishment of identities that follow civic-oriented narratives which will not give priority to any of the competing ideologies. The invocation of ethnic or religious identities in pursuit of political goals has always undermined the establishment of stable peace. The Middle Eastern security environment is full of various polarities, most of which have become stronger since the 1980s. Sunni-Shia conflict can be identified in the civil wars of Iraq, Syria and Yemen, but also in political fights in Bahrain, a Shia-dominated nation ruled by a Sunni dynasty and government. There are obvious intentions from Saudi Arabia, challenged by Qatar, to establish itself as leader of the Sunni community. Iran is widely recognised as leader of the Shia community, but with the rare exceptions of Iraq, Syria and Yemen suffering under civil wars, Iran does not enjoy much support across the Arab countries. There is most likely no single solution for encouraging intercultural dialogue between all the Middle-Eastern societies; each conflict-prone situation requires an individual approach for uniting ethnic and religious communities in the pursuit of common goals.

The Middle East offers multiple pieces of evidence confirming that historical processes and traditions continuously produce obstacles to the establishment of stable regional peace, while also having an influence on the success of intercultural dialogue in the region. First, historical Sunni-Shia conflict destabilises the societies of Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, and Lebanon. Second, the future of Palestine is a source not only of ethnic conflict between Jews and Arabs but also of religious conflict between Judaism and Islam. Third, the unresolved Kurdish problem influences the societies of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Besides these mainstream conflicts, the situation of smaller ethnic and religious minorities living in the Middle East such as Assyrians, Armenians, Christians, Druzes, Jezids, and others, also produces tensions in the Middle East. War theology by which conflicts are justified through religious exhortation has had an impact on the regional security environment since Ancient times and is often simply a manifestation of the regional leaders' political ambitions, while contrasting identities are used as tools to enhance one group's national or religious interests at the expense of others.

The promotion of intercultural dialogue in the conflict-prone Middle-East has to start with the implementation of a peace-oriented environment enabling ethnic and religious communities to continue with their practices. The region must overcome its past history to encourage dialogue between all religions prevalent in the region. If states were able to negotiate for a stable security environment this would support the management of interstate ethnic and religious conflicts. The lack of democratic traditions and the ubiquity of weak civil societies in the region feed the sources of extremism. However, the evidence of peace settlements having been hammered out between Israel and Egypt, Israel and Jordan, and Israel and Palestine proves that intercultural dialogue and the dominance of non-sectarian interests over ethnic or religious identities would be at least theoretically negotiable for achieving regional peace.

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# On the Time of Composition of the Hitherto Undated Sumerian Myths<sup>1</sup>

PEETER ESPAK

**Abstract** The paper points out several similarities in the myths Enki and the World Order, Enki's Journey to Nippur and Enki and Inanna, which seem to reflect the material or ideology also present in the Isin era royal poetry and inscriptions. The objective is not to claim that all the mythological ideas present in the analysed texts had to be created during the Isin period. Large part of the mythological motifs used in these myths probably have their origins going back already to the mythology of the Early Dynastic period. The major Sumerian myths are all full of ancient mythological motifs which were accessible through written records as well as by their presence in oral folklore or story-telling. However, in addition to the almost precisely datable city-laments, several Sumerian myths also might have originated from the mythological thinking of the Isin period. Mythological motifs and sometimes almost identical textual parallels and ideological aspects lead to the conclusion that the myths Enki and the World Order, Enki's Journey to Nippur and Enki and Inanna are most probably Isin time compositions reflecting the ideology and ideological needs of that dynasty and its priests and officials.

**Keywords** Sumerian mythology, Enki, Inanna, Ancient Near Eastern religion, Enki and the World Order, Enki's Journey to Nippur, Enki and Inanna, Isin Dynasty

The chronology of historical Mesopotamian texts is relatively easy to determine since the royal inscriptions and royal hymns, as well as many other literary and official texts, often also mention the name of the ruler

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who commissioned or composed them. While a number of historical chronicles and royal hymns have survived in the form of much later transcripts or copies, in most cases there is still reason to assume that the original content dates from the lifetime of the ruler mentioned in the text. However, the dating of mythological texts is much more problematic, since texts about the adventures of gods and different heroes and the creation and nature of the world do not contain names of rulers or other officials that could be placed in a particular era. Therefore, determining the approximate time when these texts were composed calls for the use of comparative material from accurately dated texts with identified chronology. Yet, the great Sumerian myths about the exploits of the gods Enki, Enlil, Inanna, Ninurta etc. are some of the most important sources of Sumerian literature and mythology and simultaneously some of the earliest examples of “fiction” texts in the world. Without ascertaining the chronology, if only approximate, of the significant Sumerian myths it is impossible to achieve a clear understanding of the religion, history of the literature or ideological developments of the Near East as a whole.

The hymns from the time of Išme-Dagan (reigned 1953–1935), king of Isin, and also the laments probably originating from the same period, contain genealogies and titles of gods not present in previous royal hymns and inscriptions. For instance, the god Enki is titled “the first-born son of holy An” (*dumu-sag an kù-ga*), and the goddess Uraš is referred to as his mother. An and Uraš are also named as the parents of several other important gods. Enki is also called “junior Enlil” who has received his enlil-ness from the great Sumerian gods (Enlil and An) as a gift or a duty. He has also received the *me-s* – the holy rules that determine the Sumerian world order – from the important Anunna gods and from An and Enlil.<sup>2</sup>

### **Enki and the World Order**

One of the main reasons for dating Enki and the World Order into the period of Isin is Enki’s title in the myth – Son of An. In earlier texts dated to Ur III period Enki was never titled this way. However, the myth also contains titles already in use in Ur III texts such as “elder brother of gods” and Enlil-banda – “the younger Enlil” or “the junior Enlil.

<sup>2</sup> See: Espak 2015: 95ff and Espak 2015a for similar reasoning.

Enki and the World Order 68:<sup>3</sup>

a zi am-gal-e ri-a me-en dumu-sag an-na me-en  
 I am the good seed inseminated by the wild bull, I am the first-born son of  
 An!

## Enki and the World Order 80:

ù-tu-da dumu-sag an kù-ga-me-en  
 I am the one born as the first son of holy An!

## Enki and the World Order 71:

šeš gal digir-re-e-ne me-en hé-gál šu du, me-en  
 I am the eldest brother of the gods, I am the handler of abundance!

The similarities between king Ur-Ninurta hymn B and the myth Enki and the World Order also led the Russian Assyriologist Vladimir Emelianov to conclude that the entire myth could have been written down during the reign of Ur-Ninurta (1923–1896).<sup>4</sup> However, since the myth also has many similarities with several other hymns of Isin rulers it might not be wise to attribute the composing of the text to any specific ruler with any certainty but to settle instead for a slightly wider possible time period. Both Enki and the World Order and the hymns of king Išme-Dagan (1953–1935) describe Enki as the one who ensures fertility and prosperity, and especially as a god who “brings forth the seed.”

## Enki and the World Order 52–54:

[a-a] <sup>[d]</sup>en-ki ùg numun-a è-ni numun zi hé-i-i  
<sup>d</sup>nu-dím-mud u<sub>8</sub> zi gá è-ni sila<sub>4</sub> zi hé-ù-tu  
 áb numun-a è-ni amar zi hé-ù-tu  
 When father Enki goes forth to meet the inseminated people, let good off-  
 spring come out!

<sup>3</sup> The edition of the myth here and after: Benito 1969 and ETCSL 1.1.3.

<sup>4</sup> Emelianov 2009: 298–299, table 17: Enki and the World Order 62–67 / 251–254 corresponding to Ur-Ninurta B hymn lines 6–12, 13–15, 25–26.

Nudimmud goes forth to meet the good pregnant ewes, let good lambs be born!

(Enki) goes forth to meet the inseminated cows, let good calves be born!

### Išme-Dagan X, 7:<sup>5</sup>

en numun i nam du<sub>10</sub>-bi tu-tu ús dab<sub>3</sub>-bi pà-pà

Lord who makes the seed to come forth, who creates good destiny for it,  
who finds the right path for it!

Similarly to the royal hymns of the Isin period, in the myth Enki and the World Order Enki receives his authority to be the organiser and the judge of the world from the god Enlil. As Herman Vanstiphout concludes: “Enki did what he was ordered to do”<sup>6</sup> and is described acting on behalf of his slightly more important companion or brother Enlil (Enki and the World Order 75–76):

<sup>d</sup>en-líl-da kur-ra igi gál-la-ka nam tar-ra-me-en

nam tar-ra ki u<sub>4</sub> è-a-ke<sub>4</sub> šu-gá mu-un-gál

Alongside Enlil setting the sight upon the lands, I am the determiner of destinies!

The determining of destinies he has placed into my hands in the place where the sun rises!

Enki and the World Order also includes a relatively detailed description of Enki’s Abzu temple in Eridu. His temple is located in a marshy area (see lines 96 and 168) where fish swim in the reeds (line 98) and purification rites are carried out in the temple (105–106). These motifs are similar, for example, to the Hymn to Enki for Išme-Dagan (lines 1–4)<sup>7</sup> and Išme-Dagan D Hymn (B 8)<sup>8</sup>. There is a passage in Enki and the World Order that describes the duties assigned to the mother-goddess by Enki. The goddess Aruru has been equated with the goddess Nintu and the description concerns the mother goddess’s instruments for cutting

<sup>5</sup> Sjöberg 1973: 40–48; ETCSL 2.5.4.24.

<sup>6</sup> Vanstiphout 1997: 120.

<sup>7</sup> Tinney 1996: 71; ETCSL 2.5.4.b.

<sup>8</sup> Sjöberg 1977: 29–32; 1973: 13–16; ETCSL 2.5.4.04.



the umbilical cord<sup>9</sup> and her function to assist at the birth (Enki and the World Order 394–397):

<sup>d</sup>a-ru-ru nin<sub>9</sub> <sup>d</sup>en-lí[l-lá-k]e<sub>4</sub>  
<sup>d</sup>nin-tu nin tu-tu-d[a]  
 sig<sub>4</sub> tu-tu kù nam-en-na-ni šu hé-em-ma-an-[ti]  
 gi-dur-ku<sub>5</sub> im-ma-an ga-raš<sup>sar</sup>-a-ni hé-em-ma-da-a[n-r]i  
 Aruru, the sister of Enlil  
 Nintu, the lady of giving birth  
 The holy brick of birth of en-ship shall be her assignment  
 Her reed-stick for cutting the umbilical cord, the *imman*-stone and leeks  
 shall be under her direction.

Another hymn of Išme-Dagan has an almost similar description of the duties of Nintu/Aruru assisting at the birth, cutting the umbilical cord and also granting the lordship or greatness to the new-born (Išme-Dagan Hymn A+V, lines 44–45):<sup>10</sup>

<sup>[d]</sup>nin-tu tu-tu-a ha-ma-ni-in-gub  
 gi-dur-ku<sub>5</sub> rá-gá [...] nam-en ha-ma-ni-in-gar  
 Nintu stood by assisting at my birth  
 When my umbilical cord was cut [...] she established the status of rulership  
 for me

Enki and the World Order also contains a long description of the nature and role of the goddess Ninisina (meaning “Lady of Isin”)<sup>11</sup> (lines 402–404). It is claimed that she stands with the sky god An and can speak with An whenever she wishes. Ninisina F Hymn’s lines 6–15 mention that it was Enki who determined Ninisina’s fate and Ninisina herself has been titled “holy daughter of An.” According to the hymn, Ninisina came from the temple of Enlil in Nippur and reached Enki in Eridu. Enki receives Ninisina and sets out to take care of his guest:

Ninisina F, 8–10:<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See: Stol 2000: 111.

<sup>10</sup> Ludwig 1990: 161–225; Frayne 1998: 8–19; Römer 1965: 39–55; ETCSL 2.5.4.01.

<sup>11</sup> See: Edzard 1998–2001: 387–388.

<sup>12</sup> Sjöberg 1982: 67–69; ETCSL 4.22.6.

èš-e a[bz]u-a dūr ba-ni-in-gar  
 a-a-ni <sup>d</sup>en-ki-ke<sub>4</sub> du<sub>10</sub>-ba nam-mi-in-tuš  
 [<sup>d</sup>nin]-in-si-na-ra mí-zi na-mu-un-e  
 She took her seat in Abzu shrine  
 Her father Enki seated her on his knees  
 He cherished Ninisina truly

### Ninisina F, 13–15:

gada babbar-ra hi-li im-ma-an-[te]  
 dumu an kù-ga-ra bar-ra hé-em-mi-in-du[l]  
 en <sup>d</sup>nu-dím-mud-e nam-[e-e]š m[u-ni-in-tar]  
 When she became attracted to the fine white garment  
 He (Enki) dressed the daughter of An in it  
 Lord Nudimmud determined her fate

Ninisina A describes the roles and functions of the goddess Ninisina in detail and claims that Enki in his Abzu temple assigned to her the duties of an incantation priestess (line 30: nam-išib). The hymn also describes the birth of Ninisina, who is conceived by the sky god An and given birth to by the goddess Uraš – the goddess of earth and fertility, worshipped in Uruk since ancient times. The text also describes the sexual intercourse between An and Uraš (Ninisina A, lines 85–88).<sup>13</sup>

a-a-gu<sub>10</sub> an lugal sipa digir-re-e-ne  
 kalam-e barag kù-ga ba-e-tuš  
 ama-gu<sub>10</sub> <sup>d</sup>uraš nin digir-re-e-ne  
 an-da ki-nú kù-ga šà kúš-ù e-ne sù-ud gal ba-e-du<sub>11</sub>  
 My father is An, the king and shepherd of the gods  
 He put me to sit on the holy throne in the land  
 My mother is Uraš, the lady of the gods  
 With An in the holy bedchamber she was interacting, for a long time and  
 greatly was playing

Ninisina D and Ninisina E Hymns both describe Ninisina as sky god An's beloved daughter, given birth to by the goddess Uraš. She is also called the advisor of her father An – as in the myth Enki and the World

<sup>13</sup> Römer 1969: 279–305; ETCSL 4.22.1.

Order. It is highly likely that the hymns of Ninisina were written down during the period of Isin and their ideology and mythological motifs also concur well with other texts of that period. Enki and the World Order places Ninisina at a level with the most important mother goddesses of the Sumero-Akkadian pantheon and she is occasionally depicted as equal with ancient important Sumerian fertility and mother goddesses such as Nintu, but also Nisaba and Nanše. The exaltation and praise of Ninisina could have been one of the main purposes of composing the myth Enki and the World Order.

### Enki's Journey to Nippur

The royal hymns of Isin do not make it clear who could be considered the creator of mankind. An, Enki, the mother goddesses and Enlil all seem to be involved in the process. However, the god Enki is celebrated most as the one who is responsible for humanity's well-being. The myth Enki's Journey to Nippur and the hymn Ur-Ninurta B both seem to attribute the processes of humanity's emergence or "creation" to the god An.

#### Enki's Journey to Nippur 1–3:<sup>14</sup>

u<sub>4</sub> re-a nam ba-tar-ra-ba  
 mu hé-gál an ú-tu-da  
 ùg-e ú-šim-gen, ki in-dar-ra-ba  
 In those days when destinies were determined  
 In the year when abundance was given birth by An  
 People broke out through the earth just like plants

#### Ur-Ninurta B, 6:<sup>15</sup>

a-a-zu an lugal en numun i-i ùg ki gar-gar-ra  
 Your father is An, the king and the lord who made the seed (of mankind)  
 to come forth, who placed the people on earth

<sup>14</sup> Cecarelli 2012: 90–118; Al-Fouadi 1969; ETCSL 1.1.4.

<sup>15</sup> Falkenstein 1950: 112–117; ETCSL 2.5.6.2.

Enki's Journey to Nippur and Ur-Ninurta B Hymn both describe the city of Eridu as "a heavy cloud in the heaven spreading fear and awe" with striking textual similarities.

Enki's Journey to Nippur 53–55:

eridu<sup>ki</sup> gissu-zu ab-šà-ga lá-a  
 a-ab-ba zi-ga gaba-šu-gar nu-tuku  
 i<sub>7</sub> mah ní-gál-la su kalam-ma zi-zi  
 Eridu, your shadow reaches/hangs (until) the middle of the sea!  
 Rising sea having no rival!  
 Great awe-inspiring river frightening the land!

Ur-Ninurta B, 29–31:

gissu-bi u<sub>1</sub> è-ta u<sub>4</sub> šu-uš kur-kur-ra ši-im-dul  
 ní me-lem<sub>4</sub> muru<sub>9</sub> dugud-da-gen<sub>7</sub> an kù-ge íb-ús  
 é-kur ki-tuš kù an <sup>d</sup>en-líl-lá su-zi im-du<sub>8</sub>-du<sub>8</sub>  
 Its shadow covers all the lands from east to west  
 Its fear and terrifying splendour like a heavy cloud follows the holy heavens (god An)  
 It spreads fear/respect to E-kur temple – the holy dwelling place of An and Enlil

Also Nisaba Hymn A contains several passages similar to the myth of Enki's Journey to Nippur. Both texts mention abgal creatures known to be closely related to the mythology of Enki. Unfortunately, it is not possible to accurately determine the time of writing of the Nisaba hymn, but the two passages are certainly interdependent:

Enki's Journey to Nippur 48:

abgal-zu siki bar-ra bí-in-du<sub>8</sub>  
 Your Abgal, the hair spreading (loose) on the back

Nisaba A, 44:<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Hallo: 116–134; ETCSL 4.16.1.

abgal siki bar-ra du<sub>8</sub>-a-ni  
 Abgal, his hair spreading (loose) on the back.

## Inanna and Enki

The themes of the myth Inanna and Enki are closely related to the ones of Enki and the World Order where, in the end of the text, Inanna complains to Enki that Enki has not assigned to her any important duties in the world (lines 421ff.). In the story of Enki and the World Order, Enki hands Inanna her duties voluntarily. However, the myth Enki and Inanna<sup>17</sup> explains how Enki, after having had too much to drink, hands over his me-s – the divine norms organising the world – to Inanna by mistake, under the influence of alcohol. Hymn A of the Isin king Iddin-Daggan (1974–1954) assumably also describes how Enki handed the me-s to Inanna voluntarily (Iddin-Dagan A, 22–24).<sup>18</sup>

abzu eridu<sup>ki</sup>-ga me šu ba-ni-in-ti  
 a-a-ni <sup>d</sup>en-ki-ke<sub>4</sub> sag-e-eš mu-ni-in-rig<sub>7</sub>  
 nam-en nam-lugal-la šu-ni-šè mu-u<sub>8</sub>-gar  
 In Abzu of Eridu, me-s were given to her  
 Her father Enki placed them upon her head  
 Lordship and kingship to her hands he gave

Hymn Ur-Ninurta D also describes the me-s received or brought by Inanna. As Gertrud Farber-Flügge claims,<sup>19</sup> the two texts – Inanna and Enki and Ur-Ninurta D – must have certainly been in literary dependence and one was partially quoting the other (Ur-Ninurta D, line 8):<sup>20</sup>

me-zu u<sub>4</sub> silim-ma-bi ba-e-de<sub>6</sub> ni-nam la-ba-e-da-šub  
 You have brought the me-s on a fine day, none of them has been lost

Descriptions of cultic journeys to the city of Eridu are already present in Early Dynastic Sumerian literature and the later epic Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta, for example, mentions that king Enmerkar goes to the city of Eridu to get the me-s (line 58: [er]jidu<sup>ki</sup>-ta me de<sub>6</sub>-a-gu<sub>10</sub>-ne).

<sup>17</sup> Edition of the myth Enki and Inanna: Farber-Flügge 1973.

<sup>18</sup> Reisman 1969: 147–211; Reisman 1973: 185–202.

<sup>19</sup> Farber-Flügge 1973: 6.

<sup>20</sup> Falkenstein 1957: 56–75; ETCSL 2.5.6.4.

It is difficult to say whether the text of the myth Enki and Inanna could be associated with some ancient cultic festivals, but it seems possible.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the examples above, the similarities include parallels between the myths Enki and Inanna and Enki's Journey to Nippur. The drinking parties taking place in different contexts in the two stories are described by using relatively similar motifs. Beer is drunk from the vessels of the mother goddess Uraš and the party itself is called a "competition" (a-da-min):

Enki's Journey to Nippur 112:

zabar-e <sup>d</sup>uraš-e a-da-min mu-un-di-ne  
They started a competition, (drinking from) the bronze vessels of Uraš

Inanna and Enki, I ii 30:

[za]bar <sup>d</sup>uraš-a a-da-min mu-un-a[ka-ne]  
They started a competition, (drinking from) the bronze vessels of Uraš

The fact that Enki's Journey to Nippur and Inanna and Enki myths have common motifs and stylistic features, of course, does not prove that they must have been written down during the same period or the Isin period. It only proves that taking into the consideration the larger picture and other similarities and parallels, the dating to Isin period seems relatively possible, if not obvious.

In addition to the three myths discussed above, it could be hypothesized that Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld could also originate from the Isin era. The titles of the kings of Isin always listed the following as the most important cities always done in the specific order of: Nippur, Ur, Eridu, Uruk.<sup>22</sup> In Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld the goddess's journey is also described in the order Nippur, Ur, Eridu (lines 37–67, 182–216, 322–324): é-kur-re é <sup>d</sup>mu-ul-líl-lá-šè / úri<sup>ki</sup>-ma é <sup>d</sup>nanna-šè / úru-zé-eb<sup>ki</sup> é <sup>d</sup>am-an-ki-ká-šè.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See: Mittermayer 2009: 80.

<sup>22</sup> See: Espak 2015: 72 ff and Espak 2016: 99–101 for the specific order of listing the cities in royal ideology of Ur III and Isin Dynasty.

<sup>23</sup> Kramer 1980: 299–310; ETCSL 1.4.1.

Analysing the different myths and analogous passages of texts from the royal hymns that can be dated based on the chronology of rulers it seems impossible to indicate with absolute certainty that any particular myth was written down or commissioned during the reign of any particular ruler. However, many motifs in these myths are first used in a similar form precisely in the hymns of the Isin kings. Although there is no direct evidence to show that several of the myths analysed above must be composed during the Isin era, the indirect evidence and the analysis of the general context strongly point toward that conclusion. This makes the current author to conclude that the myths Enki and the World Order, Enki's Journey to Nippur and Enki and Inanna are most probably Isin time compositions reflecting the ideology and ideological needs of that dynasty and its priests and officials. This does not exclude the fact that most of the mythological ideas and most certainly also several written passages had much older predecessors.

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# Communication with Gods. The Role of Divination in Mesopotamian Civilization

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**Abstract** Divination is given special attention as the main topic of this article, although it was long treated in the scientific world as a simple superstition that was trivial, outdated and not really deserving of attention.<sup>1</sup> Although the topic was considered to be unworthy of scientific research, we have many definitions of this term. Some of them were crystallized in antiquity, and others relate to contemporary studies. There are different forms of divination, and many of them are carefully studied and explained by the contemporary scholars.<sup>2</sup> The main questions related to the definition and realm of divination and the role of the diviner in Mesopotamian civilization have to do with communication between gods and kings.

**Keywords** divination, Mesopotamia, civilization, ancient, Shamash, king

## Divination – ancient and modern definitions

Divination<sup>3</sup> appears to have been natural and common in the ancient world.<sup>4</sup> Generally, the art of divination provides answers to questions *post hoc ergo propter hoc*.<sup>5</sup> Because of that, divination should be future-oriented, not necessarily in the sense of foretelling future events, but as a method of tackling anxiety about the insecurity of life and coping with risks brought about by human ignorance. The future as crystallized in

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<sup>1</sup> Bottéro 1992: 126.

<sup>2</sup> Maul 2013; Beerden 2013; Annus 2010; Flower 2008; Johnston 2005; Koch 2011; Koch 2015; Lenzi 2008; Stoneman 2011; Nissinen 2003; Rochberg 2004; Rochberg 2010; Jeyes 2000.

<sup>3</sup> See Black & Green 2004: 68–9. On the complex subject of Mesopotamian divination, a proper place to start is: Oppenheim 1977: 206–27. Less detailed introductory discussions are Bottéro 1992: 125–37; Bottéro 2001: 170–202; Flower 2008: 104–31.

<sup>4</sup> Rutz 2013: 301.

<sup>5</sup> Geller 2008: 308.

the present was not considered by the Babylonians as having been created solely by gods, but it was seen as the result of a dialogue between man and god.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, divination is based on the idea that to some extent the future is pre-determined, but the gods, especially Shamash and Adad, have made available to man certain indications of the future (omens and portents) in the world around him, which can be interpreted (divined) by experts with specialist knowledge. The role of the diviner is essentially that of an intermediary between the human and superhuman worlds. Divination is rational in the sense that a necessary amount of divine knowledge in a special case is available to humans, especially to those acknowledged by the society as diviners by virtue of their background, education, or behavior.<sup>7</sup> The diviners should find the gods' answers in their interpretations of animal entrails.<sup>8</sup> In the literate periods of ancient Mesopotamian history, titles like 'diviner' appear in virtually every major type of cuneiform text, including lexical and literary texts, practical documents, and scribal colophons.<sup>9</sup>

All of the activities connected with divination are treated as irrational in today's world, but for Mesopotamian civilization they were entirely rational (in the modern sense of the word). In other words, omens were a sign of divinity and thus carried a guarantee of unflinching accuracy.

The first and basic assumption of Mesopotamian civilization is that the gods communicate their intentions through signs, and that the universe works according to certain principles that only require knowledge and expertise to decode them. Mesopotamians believed that the gods encoded information into the universe, and that is why the world could be read by those who were properly educated. Divination looks for traces of such signs, and specially-trained priests were responsible for this. In Akkadian, *pašāru* is a multilayered reading or decipherment of texts connected with *barūtu*. The epithet of Shamash, who as sun god could see all from above, was "divine seer of the land" (*barū ša mati*).<sup>10</sup> Many

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<sup>6</sup> Nissinen 2010: 341.

<sup>7</sup> Maul 2008: 362.

<sup>8</sup> Nadali 2010: 137.

<sup>9</sup> Rutz 2013: 17.

<sup>10</sup> Bahrani 2008: 63–5.

Babylonian oracle questions begin: “Shamash, lord of the judgment, Adad, lord of the inspection”.<sup>11</sup>

Mesopotamian scholars believed that the gods left signs on the exta of sacrificial animals, in the life of plants, the behavior of animals, the movement of heavenly bodies, and in dreams. These signs reminded them in many respects of the symbols of the cuneiform writing system. The scholars regarded nature as a book, or rather a tablet, that could be read by those who knew the underlying code. Haruspices occasionally called the liver a ‘tablet of the gods’ and claimed that the signs they were able to detect on it were ‘written’ by the god Shamash. Celestial diviners spoke of the ‘writing of the firmament’ when referring to the sky from which they took their forecasts. There are cases in the Mesopotamian textual record in which the starting point for a divinatory quest was the observation on objects of various types of writing in its most literal sense, that is, of individual or multiple cuneiform signs.<sup>12</sup> Roaf and Zgoll note that Sumerian word *mul*, ‘star’ (or *mul-an*, ‘heavenly star’), “can refer both to a star in the sky and to a cuneiform sign on a tablet”.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in celestial divination and extispicy, the constellations and the liver were considered to be carriers of divine writing, conveying information regarding human life and cosmic truth (*kittu*).

As noted above, scholars referred to celestial phenomena as “heavenly writing” (*šitir šamē*) or “writing of the firmament” (*šitir burūmē*) and described the liver as the “tablet of the gods” (*uppi ša ilī*).<sup>14</sup>

A *Babylonian Diviner’s Manual* says:

- (41) A sign that portends evil in the sky is (also) evil on earth,  
 (42) one that portends evil on earth is evil in the sky.<sup>15</sup>

Based on the reasons mentioned above, Burkert says that divination is an attempt to extend the realm of *ratio* into misty zones from which normal knowledge and experience is absent.<sup>16</sup> According to him, divination

<sup>11</sup> Charpin 2013: 78; Starr 1983: 30, 44–6; Lambert 2007: 62, no. 4b, i. This concerns a campaign of a Babylonian king against the Lullubū.

<sup>12</sup> Frahm 2010: 98.

<sup>13</sup> Roaf & Zgoll 2001: 289 and no. 68.

<sup>14</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2014: 39.

<sup>15</sup> Oppenheim 1974: 204.

<sup>16</sup> Burkert 2005: 30.

serves as a mediator or buffer between the human and nonhuman realms, articulating the separation between them even as it attempts to bridge them. Divination plays the same role as sacrifice, an act with which divination was inextricably bound in antiquity. Together, sacrifice and divination delineate mortal existence even as they strive to reach beyond it.<sup>17</sup> Also according to Oppenheim, “divination represents a technique of communication with the supernatural forces that are supposed to shape the history of the individual as well as that of the group. It presupposes the belief that these powers are able and, at times, willing to communicate their intentions... and that if evil is predicted or threatened, it can be averted through appropriate means”.<sup>18</sup> Rochberg emphasizes the same purpose of divination: “A central relation to the world is the attention to the divine and the assumption of the possibility of a connection and communication between divine and human. In the specific case of celestial divination, that form of communication connected humans not only to gods but to the heavens wherein the gods were thought to make themselves manifest and produce signs for humankind”.<sup>19</sup> According to Beerden, “Divination is the human action of production – by means of evocation or observation and recognition – and subsequent interpretation of signs attributed to the supernatural”.<sup>20</sup> In Tedlock’s opinion, “Divination is a way of exploring the unknown in order to elicit answers (that is, oracles) to questions beyond the range of ordinary human understanding”.<sup>21</sup>

### Mesopotamian sources

There is overwhelming evidence that portents played an important role in all ways of life in the ancient world.<sup>22</sup> Divination was a salient characteristic of Mesopotamian civilization.<sup>23</sup> Out of 3594 Babylonian literary and scientific texts in the library of Ashurbanipal (kept in the British

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<sup>17</sup> Johnston 2005: 11.

<sup>18</sup> Oppenheim 1977: 207; Rutz 2013: 219–59.

<sup>19</sup> Rochberg 2003: 185.

<sup>20</sup> Beerden 2013: 20.

<sup>21</sup> Tedlock 2001: 189, see Koch 2010: 44; Nissinen 2010: 341.

<sup>22</sup> Cic. De Div., see Pritchett 1979: 142.

<sup>23</sup> Michałowski 2006: 247; see Maul 2003–5: 45–88; Bottéro 1974: 70–197; Oppenheim 1977: 206–27.

Museum), 270 cannot be classified, 1085 are “archival texts” and 645 are “divination reports”. Of the other 1594 texts – *i.e.*, the “library texts” – 746 are divinatory (46.8%).<sup>24</sup> Even allowing for some inaccuracies in this calculation, the number of divinatory texts is significant. Oppenheim estimated that fully 40 percent of those scholarly texts are related to the art of divination.<sup>25</sup> Taking this into account, Maul emphasizes that it is surprising that there is no Sumerian or Akkadian equivalent for the terms ‘oracle’, or ‘omen’.<sup>26</sup> The Mesopotamian terms for divinatory signs are as follows: *ittu* is a general word for sign, *tamītu* can mean a question asked of the supernatural at an oracle, but also the answer – a sign. The word *tērtu* can also be translated as a sign, used in general sense and particularly during the extispicy.<sup>27</sup>

The Babylonian oracle questions (*i.e.*, *tamitu*) and *ikribu*<sup>28</sup> concern a course of action to which the supplicant wants the gods to give the stamp of approval (*e.g.*, a military action). The question comprises most the text. It may be divided into three parts, the last two of which are marked by a re-introduction of the person for whom the diviner is inquiring. The first part describes the potential preparations and attack of an enemy army. The second describes what the enemy may potentially harm among that which the concerned person is guarding, and the third part describes how the person for whom the diviner is inquiring might be affected by the enemy’s potential actions.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, within this performative juridical context, all means of connecting *protases* to *apodoses* constitute vehicles for demonstrating and justifying divine judgment. The diviners use the word *purussū* ‘legal decision’ or ‘verdict’ to refer to an omen’s prediction. Divinatory texts also share with legal codes the formula *if x, then y*.<sup>30</sup> The omen books work with a simple structure of ‘if – then:’. The answer, that is, the decision of the gods, is provided via extispicy. The answers are not recorded with the *tamitus*. We have

<sup>24</sup> Fincke 2003–4: 130; Schaper 2013: 231.

<sup>25</sup> Oppenheim 1977: 15–17.

<sup>26</sup> Maul 2008: 361.

<sup>27</sup> Beerden 2013: 110–11.

<sup>28</sup> *Tamitus*, see Lenzi 2011: 49–53; 465–74, an OB *Ikribu*-Like Prayer to Shamash and Adad – 85–104; Steinkeller 2005: 13; Koch 2011: 447–69.

<sup>29</sup> Lenzi 2011: 465.

<sup>30</sup> Noegel 2010: 147–8.

tablets on which diviners report the results of their extispicy rituals for delivery to the person concerned, often the king.<sup>31</sup>

### **Between god and humanity. The role of the diviner**

Divination is a way to get access to divine knowledge and knowledge about the gods' decisions.<sup>32</sup> The gods preferred clearly to take a 'medium' to communicate their secrets. This is mantic, direct discourse – from 'mouth to ear' – an inspired divination. In the second way, the indirect one, deductive divination was based on the model of written discourse, and the gods encoded the signs graphically.<sup>33</sup> The diviners may have manipulated some of the results of the extispicies, but not the fact stated in the queries placed before the god of justice.<sup>34</sup> A divine sign must be interpreted infallibly. Seen in this way, the act of interpretation – like the act of naming – constitutes a performative act of power: hence the importance of well-trained professionals and of secrecy in the transmission of texts of ritual power.<sup>35</sup>

As was said, the Mesopotamians tended to view all aspects of the world as potential signs of divine activity or as signs conveying significant information about the future. The diviners in Mesopotamia viewed themselves as integral links in a chain of transmission going back to the gods. A privileged place for the occurrence of such signs was the entrails and livers of sacrificial animals, for it was believed that the gods placed such signs there. Knowledge about the will of the gods was believed to be gained by consulting a diviner (*bārûm*).<sup>36</sup> *The diviner is depicted as enthroned in the presence of divinity, ready to pronounce the final verdict.*<sup>37</sup> In Mesopotamia, the people believed in fate (*šīmtu*),<sup>38</sup> meaning "that which is determined by (divine) decree".<sup>39</sup> *Tupšarrû and bārû mediated the will of the gods to the king and made judgments about the*

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., SAA 4: 262–315 for examples of NA divination reports, see Veldhuis 2010: 487–97, here 487, no. 2 for OB divination reports.

<sup>32</sup> See Streck 1916: 48f., 95ff.

<sup>33</sup> Bottéro 1992: 106.

<sup>34</sup> SAA 4: 14.

<sup>35</sup> Noegel 2010: 147.

<sup>36</sup> Launderville 2003: 214, 216.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 57. See Zimmern 1901: 105, no. 1–20, ll. 122–5.

<sup>38</sup> See Lawson 1994.

<sup>39</sup> Rochberg 2004: 196.

*congruity between the divine will and the king's plans.*<sup>40</sup> The predictions given for the signs were even sometimes termed *purussû* 'divine decisions'.<sup>41</sup> Not only a cosmological cable (*i.e. markasu*) and temple, but first of all writing was a linking device that permitted the diviner to connect and communicate with the gods.<sup>42</sup>

### **Divination and the king**

We know from Mari, in the Old-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian sources, that kings consulted the omens, especially via extispicy, before making important decisions.<sup>43</sup> In everyday life and for (inter)national issues as well, the Neo-Assyrian kings were obligatorily motivated to hear or read their scholars' reports and interpretations of omens. The royal letters and archives found at Nineveh give us an idea about the Sargonid rulers' need to look for signs and understand their diviners' interpretations about matters of great importance.<sup>44</sup> Divination is not so much a shared characteristic of the royal secret council and the divine assembly as it is the point of contact for the two bodies via the person of the diviner, for within the personnel of the royal council, only the diviner had the authority to set the king's plans before the gods via an extispicy and to read the judgment of the gods from the liver and other exta of the animal:

Being (now) clean, to the assembly of the gods I shall draw near for judgment.

O Shamash, lord of judgment! O Adad, lord of ritual acts and of divination!  
In the ritual act I prepare, in the extispicy I perform put your truth!<sup>45</sup>

Increasingly complex political structures forced the kings to submit their relationship to the gods as a form of permanent scrutiny.<sup>46</sup> As was said, divination is the human observation of perceived divine signs and the response to them.<sup>47</sup> Such a practice would be able to diagnose and

<sup>40</sup> SAA 19, 77.

<sup>41</sup> Rochberg 2004: 59.

<sup>42</sup> Noegel 2010: 144.

<sup>43</sup> SAA 19: 41.

<sup>44</sup> Jean 2010: 267.

<sup>45</sup> SAA 19: 55.

<sup>46</sup> See Pongratz-Leisten 1999.

<sup>47</sup> W. Burkert "Divination: Mantik in Griechenland" in: *ThesCRA* 3, 2005: 1.



soothe any enflamed divine wrath before it could unleash its destructive potential to destabilize a dynasty or a whole kingdom. Until one deciphers omens, they represent unbridled forms of divine power. While their meanings and consequences are unknown, they remain potentially dangerous. The act of interpreting a sign seeks to limit that power by restricting the parameters of a sign's interpretation.<sup>48</sup> The aims of divination, according to Veldhuis, is to tell the future, to shape the future, to protect the king, to collect and to speculate.<sup>49</sup> On the one hand, divination is a form of ritual, a kind of formal procedure that trained practitioners perform to provide clients with advice or help for solving a problem. This ritual aspect of divination places emphasis on the traditional nature of what the seer says and does. On the other hand, divination not only was a form of ritual; it was also a 'pure' performance.<sup>50</sup>

The faith of the society in the legitimacy of signs was so strong that their utterance had the authority of official statements. Esarhaddon's *Succession Treaty* states that any improper word heard from the mouth of a prophet, of an ecstatic, or of an inquirer of oracles should not be concealed from the king.<sup>51</sup>

The seriousness with which divination was treated is presented in the *Legend of Naram-Sin (Naram-Sin and the Enemy Hordes)*<sup>52</sup> about the king Naram-Sin (2254–2218 BC), who did not comply with divine words heard during extispicy.<sup>53</sup> Before going on campaign, he inquired of the gods by means of extispicy, but when the omens were unfavorable, he decided to ignore them and attacked, bringing fatal results.<sup>54</sup> His act of disobedience gave rise to a series of military defeats and was detrimental to the entire kingdom. The legend mentions the reign of Enmerkar of Uruk who also "committed a shameful act" and did not hear the gods' decisions. For his disloyalty, Shamash punished:

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<sup>48</sup> Maul 2008: 364.

<sup>49</sup> Veldhuis 2006: 487–97.

<sup>50</sup> Flower 2008: 189.

<sup>51</sup> Jean 2010: 270.

<sup>52</sup> *Naram-Sin and the Enemy Hordes* in: Westenholz 1997: 263–368.

<sup>53</sup> Alexander the Great behaves similarly, although victorious in battle, but after the battle falls heavily from health: Arr. *An.* 4.4.

<sup>54</sup> *Naram-Sin and the Enemy Hordes: Cuthean Legend SB Recension* 79–81 in: Westenholz 1997: 317.

... his ghost, the ghosts of [...],

the ghost(s) of his family, the ghost(s) of his offspring, the ghost(s) of his offspring's offspring".<sup>55</sup>

Protecting his shameful decision Naram-Sin explains:

Thus, I said to my heart (*i.e.*, to myself), there were my words:

What lion (ever) performed extispicy?

What wolf (ever) consulted a dream-interpreter?<sup>56</sup>

This refusal of divine verdicts brings disastrous results, and only a second consultation of the omens and adherence to these, along with the help of the goddess Ishtar, makes the situation become favorable.<sup>57</sup>

The epic *Legend of Naram-Sin* provides evidence of the belief that disaster falls upon those who ignore omens. According to Flower, this legend "was the classic propagator of extispicy, which it presented as totally secure act of studying the divine will, and as a necessary prerequisite for any important undertaking".<sup>58</sup>

Even the Hebrew *Bible* contains a similar idea; the king Saul is defeated and killed because he started the battle with the Philistines without favorable omens, being unable to obtain them through any of the means available to him: dreams, the Urim (a type of dice),<sup>59</sup> prophets,<sup>60</sup> or even necromancy.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *Naram-Sin and the Enemy Hordes: Cuthean Legend SB Recension* 24–27 in: Westenholz 1997: 306–7; *Legend of Naram-Sin*, 22–24 in: Foster 1995: 174.

<sup>56</sup> *Naram-Sin and the Enemy Hordes: Cuthean Legend SB Recension* 79–81 in: Westenholz 1997: 317.

<sup>57</sup> *Naram-Sin and the Enemy Hordes: Cuthean Legend SB Recension* in: Westenholz 1997: 323.

<sup>58</sup> Flower 2008: 120.

<sup>59</sup> Urim and Thummim (translated in the Septuagint as *deloi*, 'conspicuous [stones]'), see Stoneman 2011: 113, 133–5; 1 Sam 14.41, 28.6. Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (3.215–18) gives more detail, explaining that the twelve stones, stitched into what Josephus calls the *essen*, would foreshadow victory to those on the eve of battle. Assyrian texts of the 7th century refer to 'incantation for oracular decisions with alabaster and haematite.'

<sup>60</sup> Noort 1999: 109–16, and the interesting parallel between the Assyrian and Hebrew tradition, see Horowitz 1992: 95–115.

<sup>61</sup> 1 Sam 28–31.

## Conclusion

Study on divination enriches many aspects our understanding of ancient Mesopotamia. In conclusion, I want to stress that divination was important for the functioning of Mesopotamian civilization. In this tradition, divination was treated as entailing professional knowledge that was highly esteemed in society, and the diviner was seen as a mouthpiece of the gods. A throne as his attribute was highly impressive and unequivocal in meaning. In sum, the definitions of divination have changed through the ages, but the importance of divination is related to its potential for communication between gods and humanity.

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# The Deity Mihryazd in Manichaeism and His Relations with God Mithra in Zoroastrianism

JAAN LAHE

**Abstract** In Manichaean literature written in the Middle Persian, Parthian, and Sogdian languages, which was discovered in Central Asia (then Chinese Turkestan) at the end of 19th century and beginning of 20th century, a mythological figure called Mihryazd (“god Mihr” (=Mithra)) is found. He is identified with two different figures from Manichean mythology: in texts written in the Middle Persian language (including Mani’s work Šābuhragān) with Living Spirit (Latin *spiritus vivens*), while in texts written in Parthian and Sogdian with The Third Messenger (Latin *tertius legatus*). The article explores how the figure of Mihryazd influenced pre-Manichaean Iranian religious traditions and concludes that although the figure of Mihryazd is not borrowed from Zoroastrianism, but is instead a new creation of Manichaeism, the creation of his figure has been influenced by the figure of Mithra (Mihr in the Middle Persian language) in Zoroastrianism. From the latter, he has taken over both the link with order in the universe as well as with the sun and light, military characteristics, and his role as a fighter against evil (demons). However, in Manichaeism, the different functions of the god Mithra have been divided between two different gods, following the language-regional principle.

**Keywords** Iran, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Middle Persian and Parthian languages, Mihryazd / *Miši βayi*, Living Spirit, Third Messenger

Among the various religions that have influenced the formation and development of Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism plays an outstanding



role.<sup>1</sup> Although the Sasanian Empire, in which Manichaeism emerged and spread, was multicultural and multireligious,<sup>2</sup> Zoroastrianism was the ruling religion in the empire.<sup>3</sup> According to the tradition, Mani (216–276/77 CE) himself was Persian.<sup>4</sup> Although Mani grew up in the Jewish-Christian group of Elcesaites,<sup>5</sup> his ancestors were very likely Zoroastrians. He preached at the court of Sassanid, who promoted Zoroastrianism.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is no wonder that we find in Manichaeism many terms, concepts, and ideas that originate from Zoroastrianism.<sup>7</sup> We find influences of Zoroastrianism in different spheres – in cosmology and cosmogony,<sup>8</sup> in eschatology<sup>9</sup> and in ethics.<sup>10</sup>

Manichaeism in Iran<sup>11</sup> and in Central Asia,<sup>12</sup> have a number of mythological beings whose names are borrowed from Iranian mythology.<sup>13</sup> Among them is the divinity (in Middle Persian and Parthian *yaz(a)d*, in Sogdian *βayī*)<sup>14</sup> who is called in both Middle Persian and Parthian *Mihr* (*myhr*), in Sogdian *Miši* (*myšyy*). Both are forms of the Middle Persian god's name *Mihr* (=Old Persian *Mithra*). Thus, Manicheans adopted the name of a Zoroastrian god and used it to designate one of their own deities.<sup>15</sup>

The title of this deity in Middle Persian and Parthian Manichean texts is invariably *yazad*, which differs from the Old Persian convention

<sup>1</sup> On the role of the different religions to the development of the Manichaeism see Widengren 1977: X–XXIX; Böhlig 1989 a: 457–481; Böhlig 1989 b: 482–519; Hutter 2010: 19–26; Lahe 2016: 73–91.

<sup>2</sup> On the religions in the Sasanian Empire see Böhlig 1981: 436; Widengren 1965: 274–283.

<sup>3</sup> On the position of Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian Empire see Widengren 1965: 243–245; 274–283.

<sup>4</sup> Boyce 1979: 111; Böhlig 1981: 437; Gnoli 1987 a: 158.

<sup>5</sup> Böhlig 2007: 22; Rudolph 2005: 355; Tröger 2001: 175; Hutter 2010: 8; Hutter 1996: 264–266; on Elchasai see also Luttkhuizen 1985.

<sup>6</sup> On the Sassanids as promoter of Zoroastrianism see Boyce 1979: 101–117; Stausberg 2001: 206–234.

<sup>7</sup> See Hutter 2015: 477–489.

<sup>8</sup> See Böhlig 1989 a: 468–472; Hutter 1989: 153–236; Rudolph 1991: 307–321; Sundermann 1997: 343–360; Gnoli 1987: 163; Sundermann 1993.

<sup>9</sup> See Widengren 1965: 306; Henning 1977: 180–181; Hutter 2015: 24.

<sup>10</sup> See Hutter 2015: 483.

<sup>11</sup> On the History of the Zoroastrianism in Iran see Foltz 2013.

<sup>12</sup> On the History of the Zoroastrianism in Central Asia see Foltz 2010; Lieu 1998.

<sup>13</sup> See Sundermann 1979 a: 93–133; Colditz 2005: 20–21.

<sup>14</sup> On the terminology see Sundermann 2002.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

that regarded Mithra as a *baga-*, if a title was given to him at all. But it is in perfect agreement with the Avestan way of addressing Mithra (Av Miθra) as *yazata-* (only once called *baya*). In Manichean Sogdian, however, the name and title of Mihr are regularly *Miši βayi*, conforming to the Old Persian convention.<sup>16</sup>

Is this Manichean deity connected with the Zoroastrian tradition only by the same name or do the Manichaeism and Zoroastrian divinities have common features? Why have the Manichaeism included this divinity into their pantheon? The aim of this article is to answer these questions. To answer this, we must first observe the deity Mihryazd in Manichaeism, then the god Mithra (Mihr) in Zoroastrianism and finally, to compare these two gods to each other.

### The deity Mihryazd in the Manichaeism

The Manichaeism deity, called Mihr yazd / *Miši βayi* takes two different roles or functions. In Mani's *Šābuhragān* and in all later Middle Persian texts, he is the Living Spirit (Lat. *Spiritus vivens*). In Parthian and Sogdian texts *he is the Third Messenger* (Lat. *Tertius legatus*). As such, are these two different beings and both have their own place in the Manichaeism system.<sup>17</sup>

The Living Spirit is a hypostasis of the highest God, created for the liberation of the First Man. It comes from the Great architect, who emanates from the Friend of the Lights.<sup>18</sup> As the First Man had five sons,<sup>19</sup> the Living Spirit also has five sons,<sup>20</sup> who acted as his companions. After the liberation of the First Man, the Living Spirit instructs his five sons to kill the demons in order to save the light, which remained in the hands of the demons. His five sons kill the demons, and the Living Spirit creates the material world from the bodies of the dead demons.<sup>21</sup> From the

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> On the Manicheism system see for example Böhlig 1995: 27–36; Rudolph 2005: 362–365; Hutter 2010: 16–19.

<sup>18</sup> Böhlig 2007: 31; Rudolph 2005: 363.

<sup>19</sup> Their names are “Intelligence”, “Science”, “Thought”, “Reflection”, and “Conscience”. On the five sons of First Man see Böhlig 2007: 30; Rudolph 2005: 362; Gnoli 1987: 167.

<sup>20</sup> On the five sons of Living Spirit see Böhlig 2007: 62.

<sup>21</sup> See Böhlig 2007: 32; Alexander of Lycopolis (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.) has designated the Living Spirit as δημιουργός (see Brinkmann 1895: 6:8).

bodies arise the skies, the mountains, the soil, and finally, from a first bit of liberated light, the sun, moon, and stars.<sup>22</sup> The world is designed as a machine, and its task is to clean the divine Light from Matter (darkness). The sun and the moon are the elevators which elevate the light from the earth to the divine world of light.<sup>23</sup> To keep the cosmic order, the five sons of the Living Spirit enter into action now, each guarding a part of the cosmos.<sup>24</sup> They are the gods who guide the world and keep it in gear. It is remarkable that in the Middle Persian writings the five sons of the First Man are called Amerahspand (= Ameša Spentas in the Avesta). Ameša Spentas (“Holy Immortals”) are already in the Avesta, the gods that protect different parts of the cosmos.<sup>25</sup>

The creature of the Living Spirit (= of Gods Mihr) is described in detail in many texts. For example, this passage translated from a Persian text:

“Und als (Gott) Mihr jene vier Schichten, das Gefängnis der Dämonen, und vier Erden mit Säulen und Anordnungen und Toren und Mauern und Gräben und Höllen und den Kanälen, die im Inneren der Erde sind, und Bergen und Tälern und Quellen, Flüssen und Meeren, und zehn Himmel mit Weltteilen und Thronen, Schwellen, Umdrehungen und Doppelstunden und Mauern, und ein Himmelsrund mit Zodiakus und Sternen, und zwei Waagen, der der Sonne und der des Mondes, mit Häusern und Thronen und Toren und Torwächterführern, und den Gefängnisherrn und der Grenzwächtern, den Hausherrn, den Dorfherrn, den Stammesherrn und Landesherrn, und aller Art Dinge des Gesamtkosmos gemacht und wohlgeordnet hatte, da wurden dieser Botschafter- und der Kundenbringer-Gott, welcher von Gott Mihr und der weiblich gestalteten (Gottheit), die des Gottes Ohrmizd Mutter (ist), über sie - - -, dort vor den (Gott) hingestellt, der über jenem Himmel steht und den Kopf jener Götter hält.”<sup>26</sup>

After the creation of the universe, God Mihr entered in to paradise and came in front of its ruler. The ruler ordered the God Mihr to descend again, in order to divide the circulation and protection of the sun and the

<sup>22</sup> Gnoli 1987: 164.

<sup>23</sup> See Böhlig 2007: 33.

<sup>24</sup> See Rudolph 2005: 363–364; Böhlig 2007: 32.

<sup>25</sup> On Ameša Spentas see Puhvel 1996: 105; Stausberg 2001: 95–99.

<sup>26</sup> M 7983 (=T III 260e II); see Böhlig 2007: 108–109.

moon, and to prepare the way for the wind, the water, and the fire.<sup>27</sup> His new task is to set the cosmos in motion for the final redemption of the light parts.

Mihr's fight against demons continues after the creation of the world. In a Middle Persian fragment, one tells how the plants originated from the seed of demons. A part of this seed fell into the sea, creating an ugly and terrible monster that staggered from the sea and began to spread sin in the world. Mihr sent against him one of his five sons ("five gods"), the light-Adamas.<sup>28</sup> This is not mentioned here, but we know from the other sources, that the Light-Adamas defeated and killed this monster.<sup>29</sup>

In texts describing the events of the end-time, we encounter Mihr as a leader in the fight against demons. In a fragment from Mani's work *Šābuhragān*<sup>30</sup> it is reported how darkness covered heaven and earth. Then the god Mihr climbed down into the material world in a solar chariot and produced a call. After that, the gods who ruled over the different parts of the universe began to attack and defeat the opposing beings Az,<sup>31</sup> Ahrmen, and other demons. After the victory, the divine beings went to paradise with their "friends" (probably with the liberated lights). The material world collapsed, and the destruction of evil reached its completion.

In fragment M 3845, which is part of a Manichaean hymn, this event is described in the following:

“And also the Dark  
 ἐνθόμησις, the producer  
 of every sin,  
 (who, by way) of that (terrib)le(?)  
 shape, produces her (ter)rible  
 gang,  
 [...]

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>28</sup> M 7981 I (= T III 260 b I): see Böhlig 110.

<sup>29</sup> See Rudolph 2005: 364.

<sup>30</sup> M 472; see Müller 1904: 17–19.

<sup>31</sup> The personification of concupiscence.

And they will throw her  
 into that furnace and prison,  
 and into eternal bonds,  
 which are made by the Light  
 Architect in the rea(lm)  
 of the (Light) Nou(s),  
 i.e. the New  
 Para(dise), the resting-place  
 of the warlike powers.  
 And Mihr-yazd will bind her  
 with those fast  
 bonds.”<sup>32</sup>

Mihr, who drives the solar chariot, in Middle Persian texts, so does Mihr/Miši in Parthian and Sogdian texts associated to the sun. However, he is identified with the Third Messenger. Although his name may be translated as “the sun god”, Mihryazd is not identical with the sun, but resides there – the sun is his living place.<sup>33</sup> As the sun god, he is praised for his illuminative, light-giving deeds, for his expulsion of darkness, for his regular and reliable revolution in the sky, etc. As the Third Messenger he is a helper and redeemer of mankind, very much like Jesus the Splendor.<sup>34</sup> So is said in a Parthian hymn:

“(a) Oh gerechter und gütiger Gott (bay), vorausschauende Gottheit (yazd),  
 hilf mir und sei mir stets Helfer.  
 Sei gesegnet, erhellender Sonnengott (mihr-yazd), großes Licht.  
 (b) Der Glanz bist Du und die Helligkeit der sieben Gegenden der Welt,  
 Dein Licht strahlt in alle Reiche und Gebiete.”<sup>35</sup>

In the Iranian cultural history, the Third Messenger is equated with the Zoroastrian messenger Nairyosanha<sup>36</sup> and thus bears the name Narisah (Middle Persian) or Narisaf (Parthian),<sup>37</sup> but is also described as similar to Mihr-yazd. As written in another Parthian hymn:

<sup>32</sup> Sundermann 1978: 487–489.

<sup>33</sup> See Geshevtisch 1975: 68–89.

<sup>34</sup> Sundermann 2002 b.

<sup>35</sup> Translated by Walter Bruno Henning; Klimkeit 1989: 91.

<sup>36</sup> On Nairyosanha in the Iranian Mythology see Widengren 1965: 305.

<sup>37</sup> On Narisah in the Manichaeism see *ibid.*

- “Deinem Licht (rōšn) will ich Lobpreis darbringen,  
 (b) Zweite Größe, Gott Narisaf,  
 (g) Schöne Gestalt (didan), Glanz (bām), ...  
 (d) Richter und Zeuge aller ...  
 (h) Tausendäugiges Licht...”<sup>38</sup>

Like Mihr yazd, the god Narisaf also resides on the sun and is called “Rošnšahryazd” (“god, whose kingdom is the Light”).<sup>39</sup>

### The God Mithra in the Zoroastrianism

The God Mithra (Av. Miθra, Old Persian Mithra, Middle Persian Mihr) has played an important role throughout the history of Iran.<sup>40</sup> We encounter him not only in Persia, but throughout the Iranian cultural history, which extended from Asia Minor and Armenia to India. We meet him in the Avesta,<sup>41</sup> in Achaemenid inscriptions,<sup>42</sup> in the reports of the Greco-Roman authors (Herodotus, Xenophon, Strabon, Plutarch, Curtius Rufus),<sup>43</sup> on the reliefs in the Hellenistic Kingdom of Commagene,<sup>44</sup> on the coins of the Kushans,<sup>45</sup> on a Sassanian rock relief in Taq i Bostan,<sup>46</sup> on the coins and seals of the Sassanids<sup>47</sup> and in Pahlavi literature.<sup>48</sup> These sources span a long period of time and are discovered in various areas of Iranian culture. Sources confirm that the figure of Mithras changed over the course of time and also was adapted to meet local differences.

The name Mithras comes from a root *mei-* (which implies the idea of exchange), accompanied by an instrumental suffix. It was therefore a means of exchange, the “contract” which rules human relations and

<sup>38</sup> Translated by Hans-Joachim Klimkeit; Klimkeit 1989: 93.

<sup>39</sup> Böhlig 2007: 59.

<sup>40</sup> See Frye 1978: 62–67.

<sup>41</sup> See Thieme 1975: 501–510; Jafarey 1975: 54–61.

<sup>42</sup> See Lecoq 1997; Schmidt 2007.

<sup>43</sup> See Lahe & Kalda 2016: 130–131; 142–143.

<sup>44</sup> See Wagner 2012.

<sup>45</sup> See Humbach 1975: 135–141; MacDowall 1978: 305–316; MacDowall 1975: 142–150; Grenet 2006; Adrych *et al.* 2017: 106–128.

<sup>46</sup> See Frye 1978: 205–2011; Grenet 2006; Adrych *et al.* 2017: 81–104.

<sup>47</sup> Grenet 2006; Adrych *et al.* 2017: 81–104.

<sup>48</sup> See Lahe & Kalda 2016: 130; 141.

forms the basis of social life.<sup>49</sup> The name of god Mithra is synonymous with the word *mithra*, meaning “contract, covenant”.<sup>50</sup> As a god, Avesta Mithra turns up frequently – according to A. A. Jafarey no fewer than 170 times.<sup>51</sup> In the first line Mithra is the Avesta, the defender and the guardian of *asha*, truth and order – the fundamental principle of earlier Indo-Iranian religion, as well as of Zoroastrianism.<sup>52</sup> Mithra watches over contracts and treaties – he blesses those who do not betray their contractual word and he punishes those who do betray it (*miθradruj-*), who fight against their treaty-partners (*auuimiθri-*) and do not acknowledge the sacredness of solemn vows (*auruuatha-*).<sup>53</sup> For those who do not betray their contractual word, he gives herds of cattle and men (sons and/or servants), progeny, swift horses, and “broad cattle pastures”.<sup>54</sup> Through him the waters rush down (from the mountains and the skies); through him the plants grow.<sup>55</sup> He is a divinity who ensures rain and prosperity and who protects cattle by providing it ample pasturage.<sup>56</sup>

Though Miθra is closely associated with the sun in the Avesta,<sup>57</sup> he is not the sun. The identity of the Avestan Miθra with the sun was argued by Ch. Bartholomae,<sup>58</sup> L. Gray<sup>59</sup> and H. Lommel,<sup>60</sup> but refuted by I. Gershevitch,<sup>61</sup> M. Boyce<sup>62</sup> and M. Stausberg.<sup>63</sup> Boyce and Stausberg emphasize that in the Avesta Miθra and the sun are two different gods. The sun is called *Hvar* in Avesta and is almost always called together with the moon (*Mah*). The identification of Miθra with the sun is first explicitly

<sup>49</sup> Turcan 1996: 197. On the etymology of Names see also Baliley 1975: 15–16; Thieme 1975: 21–33; Schmidt 1978: 345–394; Puhvel 1978: 47–57; Bonfante 1978: 47–57; Mayerhofer 1978: 317–325.

<sup>50</sup> Meillet 1907: 143.

<sup>51</sup> Jafarey 1975: 55.

<sup>52</sup> Gnoli 1987: 579.

<sup>53</sup> Thieme 1978: 502.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* Mithra bears in the Avesta title of *voorugaoyaoiti* – “having wide pastures”, or grasslands.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Gnoli 1987: 579.

<sup>57</sup> See 10. Yasht, 13; 128; 136.

<sup>58</sup> Bartholomae 1904: 1183.

<sup>59</sup> Gray 1929: 96 pp.

<sup>60</sup> Lommel 1962: 360–373.

<sup>61</sup> Gershevitch 1975: 68–89.

<sup>62</sup> Boyce 1979: 41.

<sup>63</sup> Stausberg 2001: 111.

stated in a Greek source. Strabo (first century B.C.) states that in their worship the Persians call the sun Mithres (*Geographica* 15.13.732). Such an identification may also be reflected in the sacrifice of bulls to Zeus and horses to the Sun reported by Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* 8.3.11–12), Zeus standing for Auramazdā and the Sun for Miθra. However, Curtius Rufus (*Historia Alexandri* 4.13.12) has Darius III invoke the Sun, Miθra, and the Fire before the battle. It appears that in Achaemenid times there was no consistent identification of Miθra with the sun.<sup>64</sup>

The Xthe *Yasht*, which is dedicated to Miθra, invokes him as “a god of fighters”. He is a “warrior with white horses and swift arrows”. Miθra is also a “warrior god”, who fight against those who violate a contract, but also against the demons and witches (*Yasht* 10, 26). In *Vendīdād* 19,27 pp. ist Miθra (together with Zurwan and Wohu Manah) a judge of the soul after the death of man.<sup>65</sup>

In the Achaemenidic inscriptions, Mithra has a new role – he becomes the protector of the king and the kingship.<sup>66</sup> As Strabo and the reliefs and inscriptions from Commagene confirm,<sup>67</sup> Mithra is equated with the sun in the 1st century BC. In the era of the Sassanides, in which Manichaeism arose, Mithra was firstly the sun god and fighter against demons,<sup>68</sup> but, as the rock relief from Taq i Bostan shows, he was at the same time, protector of the king and royal power.<sup>69</sup> In the Kushan Empire, Mithra (Miuro) was also the sun-god and a protector of the king.<sup>70</sup>

## The comparison and conclusions

It is not difficult to see that the two divinities in Manichaeism have common traits with the god Mithra in Zoroastrianism. Like Mithra, they are associated with the sun. That they are not identical with the sun is not

<sup>64</sup> Schmidt 2006.

<sup>65</sup> See also Shaked 1980.

<sup>66</sup> See for example inscriptions A2Hb and A 3Pa 24–26.

<sup>67</sup> See the inscriptions on Nemrud Dagi (“Apollon-Mithra-Helios-Hermes” (CIMRM, Vol. 1, Nr. 32 II A)) and in Arsameia (“Mithra-Helios-Apollon-Hermes” (Dörner 1978: 31; Waldmann 1973).

<sup>68</sup> See *Bahman yašt* 7, 31–36; *Jamasp Namag* 77.

<sup>69</sup> See Adrych *et al.* 2017: 81–104.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 106–125.



in accordance with the faith in the time of the Sassanids, but it is in accordance with the Avesta. In the Avesta we also encounter the motive of the sun chariot. Like Mithra in the Avesta,<sup>71</sup> so the god Narisaf, who has equated with Mithra, has a thousand ears. Like Mithra in Avesta and Pahlavi literature, both Manichaean deities are the fighters against demons.

To this day, there is no convincing explanation why the Manichaeans formed two divine beings from the Zoroastrian deity Mithra. The difference in terminology between the Middle Persian and the Parthian Manichean theology has been explained in different ways. W. B. Henning maintained that the Zoroastrian Mithra in 3rd-century Persia had so few elements in common with the contemporary Parthian or Sogdian Mithra that identifications with different Manichean deities seemed inevitable. M. Boyce's explanation leads to the same conclusion: It was among the Parthian Manichaeans that Mithra as a sun god surpassed the importance of Narisaf as the common Iranian image of the Third Messenger. The Manichean missionaries to Parthia consequently "abandoned" the earlier identification of the Living Spirit with Mithra.<sup>72</sup> The theory that Parthian and Sogdian Manichaeans, in contrast to the Persians, called the Third Messenger Mithra, simply because their Mithra was already a solar deity, has been disputed by Ilya Gershevitch, who pointed out that in Sogdian, the sun god is called Mithra only and exclusively in Manichean texts.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the different identification of Mithra in Middle Persian on the one hand and in Parthian and Sogdian on the other, was simply the result of a different interpretation of the nature of the Manichean gods, that is of the Living Spirit and the Third Messenger, by Mani on the one hand and by his missionaries to Parthia on the other.<sup>74</sup> But one thing is certain – it is no accident that the Manichaeans incorporated the Zoroastrian god's name Mithra into their pantheon. As the godhead, who was associated with the sun and who fought against demons, he fit well with "light" beings, who fight against darkness. Although the Zoroastrian Mithra and Manichaean Mihryazd are two different mythical

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<sup>71</sup> See 10. Yasht, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Sundermann 2002 b.

<sup>73</sup> See Gershevitsch 1975: 68–89.

<sup>74</sup> Sundermann 2002 b.

beings,<sup>75</sup> it is certain that Mithra had been the prototype of Mihryazd. But it is also no accident that the deity Mihryazd is documented in Manichaeism only in Iranian cultural literature. For the missionary reasons, the Manichaeans have always emphasized the similarities between their teachings and the local religions, whose adherents they wished to gain for their doctrine.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, in the regions where Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion, they used the concepts, ideas, and mythological figures, borrowed from Zoroastrianism. The Manichaeans have thoroughly redesigned these materials and made them usable for solely for their purposes.

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<sup>75</sup> The main difference between Mithra and Mihryazd is, that Mithra is not a creator god in the Zoroastrianism. In this respect Mihryazd resembles the Mithras in the Roman Mithras-cult (see CIMRM, Vol. 2, Nr. 2007: “Io(vi) S(oli) invi(cto) / deo genitori.”; see also Porphyrios, *De antr.* 6).

<sup>76</sup> S. Böhlig 2007: 54–70; Sundermann 2009.

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# Mitras Erstbenennung in der Indoarischen Götterliste im Vertrag von Hattuša?

JAAN LAHE, VLADIMIR SAZONOV

**Abstract** In 1907, a treaty was found in the Hittite royal archive in Boğazköy. It was forged between the Hittite king Šuppiluliuma I and the Mitanni king Šatiwaza. Among the deities named in this contract is DINGIR.MEŠ Mi-it-ra-aš-ši-il. This is usually understood to refer to the god Mitra. However, the authors of this article draw attention to the fact that the name occurs in the plural form; the divine classifier DINGIR (god” before Mitra’s name) is written in the plural form DINGIR.MEŠ, meaning “gods” They are of the opinion that it should not be understood as a proper name but as a denomination of a group of deities that one could translate as “gods of the treaties”.

**Keywords** gods of treaties, Hittites, Indo-Europeans, Mitra, state of Mitanni, Šatiwaza, treaty, Šuppiluliuma I

Als im Jahre 1907 in Hattuša (heute Boğazköy in der Türkei) das königliche Archiv der Hethiter entdeckt wurde, wurde neben anderen Texten auch ein Vertragstext gefunden, der heute als CTH 51 bekannt ist<sup>1</sup> und jetzt im British Museum in London liegt. Dieser Vertrag wurde zwischen dem hethitischen König Šuppiluliuma I (regierte etwa 1355–1320 v. Chr) und dem Mitanni-Herrscher Šatiwaza<sup>2</sup> geschlossen. Unabhängig von den genauen Regierungsjahren des Königs Šuppiluliuma wurde dieser Vertrag nach übereinstimmender Ansicht der Forscher ins 14. Jahrhundert v. Chr. Datiert.<sup>3</sup> Im Vertrag verspricht Šuppiluliuma dem

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<sup>1</sup> S. Text: Wilhelm 2005: 113–121. Zu dem geschichtlichen Hintergrund des Vertrages s. Wilhelm 2005: 113–114; Thieme 1960: 301–317; Mayerhofer 1974; Wilhelm 1982; der Vertragstext wurde sowohl in der akkadischen als auch in der hethitischen Sprache abgefasst. Die akkadische Fassung ist besser erhalten – Beckman 1999: 41.

<sup>2</sup> Früher hat man seinen Namen auch als Matiwaza oder Kurtiwaza gelesen.

<sup>3</sup> Thieme 1960: 301; Vermaseren 1965: 9; Merkelbach 1994: 4; Clauss 2012: 14; Schwertheim 1979: 8; Turcan 1981: 7; Turcan 1996: 196; Gordon 2012: 287; Duchesne-Guillemin

Mitanni-König, der bei ihm Zuflucht gefunden hatte, ihn auf den Thron seines Vaters zurückzuführen und gibt ihm als Unterpfand dieses Versprechens seine Tochter zur Frau. Als Zeugen werden am Ende des Vertrages eine Reihe von Göttern angerufen.

Während die Gottheiten, die im Vertrag genannt werden, meistens hethitischer und mesopotamischer (assyrisch, babylonisch, hurritisch) oder syrischer Herkunft sind, ragen die vier Namen dadurch hervor, dass sie deutlich indoiranischer Herkunft sind. Da diese Namen unterschiedlich transkribiert wurden, werden hier sechs unterschiedliche und divergierende Transkriptionen dargeboten:

- Kuzmina: Mitraššil, Uruwanaššil, Indara, Našatianna;<sup>4</sup>  
 Oldenberg: Mi-it-ra, U-ru-w-na, In-dar, Na-sa-at-ti-ia;<sup>5</sup>  
 Thieme: mi-it-ra, u-ru-ua-na, in-dar, na-ša-a(t-ti-ia);<sup>6</sup>  
 Dumézil: mi-id-ra-aš-šil, u-ru-wa-na-as-ši-el;<sup>7</sup>  
 Beckman: the Mitra-gods, the Varuna-gods, Indra, the Nasatya-gods;<sup>8</sup>  
 Wilhelm: Mitraššil-Götter, Uruwanaššil-Götter, Indar, Našatijanna-Götter.<sup>9</sup>

Die Forscher haben die Aufmerksamkeit darauf gelenkt, da die oben genannten Namen in den Veden Äquivalente haben: Mitra-, Varuna-, Indra- und Nasatya-<sup>10</sup>. Diese Tatsache ist an und für sich genommen keine Überraschung, wenn wir aus der Hypothese herausgehen, dass das Mitanni-Reich von Königen geherrscht wurde, die indoiranischer Herkunft waren. Diese Hypothese stützen die folgenden Argumente: Manche Herrschernamen der Mitanni (wie z.B. Artatama, Tušratta), Fachterminologien der Pferdezucht in Texten aus dem Mitanni-Reich und die Bezeichnung mairya-, die man dort für Mitglieder der kriegerischen Aristokratie benutzt hat, sind indoiranischer Herkunft.<sup>11</sup> Sie werden von

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1979: 187; Witschel 2012: 201; Vollkommer 1992: 583.

<sup>4</sup> Kuzmina 2007: 133.

<sup>5</sup> Oldenberg 1983: 24.

<sup>6</sup> Thieme 1960: 303.

<sup>7</sup> Dumézil 1988: 66.

<sup>8</sup> Beckman 1999: 47; 53.

<sup>9</sup> Wilhelm 2005: 120.

<sup>10</sup> Thieme 1960: 303; Puhvel 1996: 49; Vannuci 2011: 42; Nissen 2012: 111; Wilhelm 2005: 120, Anmerkung 45.

<sup>11</sup> Nissen 2012: 110–111; Kalda 1999: VI–VII; Thieme 1960: 301; Puhvel 1996: 49; Kalda 1999: VIII; Widengren 1965: 23.

den Historikern als “Para-Inder” oder “Proto-Arier” bezeichnet.<sup>12</sup> Die Philologen bezeichnen sie als Stämme, die indoarische oder proto-ari-sche Sprachen gesprochen haben.<sup>13</sup> Die oben genannten Götternamen hat man als die älteste Götterliste der frühen indoiranischen Stämme charakterisiert.

Seit dem “Vater” der neuzeitlichen Mithras-Forschung, Franz Cumont, herrscht unter den Forschern der Konsens, dass der Vertrag zwischen Šuppiluliuma I. mit Šatiwaza von Mitanni die älteste Quelle ist, die den Gott Mitra erwähnt<sup>14</sup>. Schwertheim meint, dass das Vorhandensein von Mitra im Vertragstext kein Zufall sei, sondern mit der Bedeutung seines Namens (das altindische Appellativum “mitram” bedeutet als Neutrum “Vertrag” oder “Freundschaft”, als Maskulinum “mitrah” “Vertragspartner” oder “Freund”) in Einklang stehe.<sup>15</sup> Auch Rainer Vollkommer meint, dass man das Vorhandensein von Mitra im Vertrag dadurch erklären kann, dass er “Gott des Bundes” war.<sup>16</sup> Für Stephan Schlenzog, der sich auf die Theorie von Georges Dumézil beruft, die sich auf eine Dreiteilung der indogermanischen Gesellschaft und eine “dreiteilige Ideologie” (“idéologie tripartite”) der Indoeuropäer beruft,<sup>17</sup> stehen die im Vertrag genannten indoarischen Gottheiten mit einer funktionalen Dreiteilung des indoeuropäischen Pantheons im Einklang. Es sei für das indoeuropäische Weltbild charakteristisch, dass man hier drei unterschiedliche Göttertypen vertreten finden kann: die Götter mit der Funktion der magischen und juristischen Herrschaft; die Götter mit der Funktion der kriegerischen Kraft und die Götter der Fruchtbarkeit und des wirtschaftlichen Gedeihens. Danach vertreten Varuna und Mitra die magische und richterliche Herrschaft, Indra die kriegerische Macht und die Nasatyas die nährenden Funktion.<sup>18</sup> Allerdings kommen nach

<sup>12</sup> Thieme 1960: 301.

<sup>13</sup> Thieme 1960: 301; Puhvel 1996: 49.

<sup>14</sup> Cumont 1975: 2–3; Vermaseren 1965: 9; Schwertheim 1979: 8; Merkelbach 1994: 4; Clauss 2012: 14; Turcan 1996: 196; Vollkommer 1992: 583; Gordon 2012: 966; Hensen 2013: 7; Vannucci 2011: 42–43; Witschel 2012: 201.

<sup>15</sup> Schwertheim 1979: 8.

<sup>16</sup> Vollkommer 1992: 583.

<sup>17</sup> S. dazu: Dumézil 1988: 13–14; Dumézil 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Schlenzog 2006: 30. Auch Widengren meint, dass “Mitra und Varuna die Herrschermacht vertreten, wobei Varuna die magische zukommt, Mitra die juristisch-priesterliche Tätigkeit vertritt” (Widengren 1954: 23). Dem kann man aber nicht zustimmen, weil beide Götter die Inhaber des *Maya* (magische Kraft) sind (s. z.B. RV III,61,7; V, 63,3, 4 u. 7).

Meinung von Christensen die vorher genannten Gottheiten im Vertrag nicht als jene Gottheiten vor, die mit den unterschiedlichen Bereichen, die im Vertragstext behandelt wurden, in Verbindung stehen, sondern einfach als die Hauptgötter der "Parainder" im Mitanni-Reich.<sup>19</sup>

Doch gibt es eine Tatsache, auf die bisher kein Forscher aufmerksam gemacht hat: alle Forscher reden vom Vorhandensein des Gottesnamens in der Singularform "Mitra", aber tatsächlich findet sich der Name im Text in der Form des Plurals, den nur die Übersetzung Wilhelms und Beckmans wiedergegeben hat ("Mitraššil-Götter/the Mitra-gods"). Die Name des Gottes ist im akkadischsprachigem Vertragstext aus vier Komponenten zusammengestellt: 1) Determinativ DINGIR ("Gott", "Gottheit"); 2) der Pluralendung MEŠ; 3) dem nichtakkadischen Wort "Mitra" und 4) der hethitischen Namensendung -šil. Doch selbst Wilhelm hat das in seinem Kommentar nicht erklärt, sondern verweist nur auf den Gottesnamen "Mitra" (im Singular). Die Namensform "Mitra" im Vertrag ist also eigentlich ein philologisches Rätsel, das noch nicht gelöst ist, aber einer Erklärung bedarf. "Die Mitraššil-Götter" oder "the Mitra-gods" sind sicherlich eine Göttergruppe. Ohne hier einen Überblick zur Etymologie des Gottesnamens Mitra und ihre unterschiedlichen Übersetzungsmöglichkeiten zu bieten,<sup>20</sup> bieten die Autoren des vorliegenden Aufsatzes eine neue Übersetzung und Erklärung des akkadischen Ausdrucks DINGIR.MEŠ Mi-it-ra-aš-ši-il. Sie gehen davon aus, dass das Wort Mitra sowohl in der vedischen als auch in der awestischen Sprache "Vertrag" oder "Bund" bedeutet. Sie schlagen vor, dass der Ausdruck DINGIR.MEŠ Mi-it-ra-aš-ši-il nicht als Eigenname, sondern als "Vertragsgötter" zu übersetzen ist. In diesem Fall wäre das Ausdruck nicht die Erstbenennung des Gottes Mitra, sondern ein Hinweis auf eine Gruppe der unbekanntenen Götter, deren Funktion die Beschützung der Verträge oder der Bünde war.

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<sup>19</sup> Dumézil 2001: 108.

<sup>20</sup> S. dazu: Puhvel 1978: 335–355; Schmidt 1978: 345–394; Bonfante 1978: 47–57; Thieme 1975: 21–33.

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# The Syriologist Arthur Vööbus – a Perspective from Tartu

AMAR ANNUS

**Abstract** The Syriologist Arthur Vööbus began his academic studies at the theological faculty of the University of Tartu in 1928. He defended his doctoral dissertation in 1943 and in the following year left Estonia before Soviet occupation. From 1948 to 1977 he served as professor at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. During that period he made 34 research expeditions to Middle East and photographed 695 unique manuscripts, which contained previously unknown or otherwise important material. The Vööbus collection of Syriac manuscripts on film contains approximately 60 000 unique photos, or approximately 120 000 pages of manuscripts. At present the collection is hosted by the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library in Collegeville, Minnesota, which organization is dedicated to digitally preserving ancient manuscripts around the world.

**Keywords** Arthur Vööbus, Syriac manuscripts, Theological Faculty of the University of Tartu, Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Professor Arthur Vööbus Collection of Syriac Manuscripts on Film, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library in Collegeville

## Introduction

The Estonian scholar Arthur Vööbus was born in a village in Vara county near Tartu in 1909, and died in Chicago, 1988.<sup>1</sup> Vööbus became a world-renowned expert of New Testament textual criticism and of Christian Syria. Vööbus is the most notable alumnus of the pre-war theological faculty of the University of Tartu. In the forewords of his scholarly

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<sup>1</sup> A. Vööbus' name is written Vööbus in the original Estonian (o with tilde on it). This is a letter unique for the Estonian alphabet, corresponding in sound to Turkish ı or Russian ы. However, the traditional orthography is retained in this paper for the sake of convenience.



books, Vööbus frequently speaks of the inspiring scholarly milieu at the theological faculty of the University of Tartu. It was “happy and blissful scholarly atmosphere” that he felt characterized the faculty before the Second World War. One quote from the *Preface* to his first volume on the history of asceticism in Syria exemplifies his sentiments:

“I think with deep gratitude of my teachers and colleagues, of all the deep and rich spiritual atmosphere at the University of Tartu, which I was privileged to inhale. This atmosphere instilled in me the courage to lay plans for a long-range work like this and the will to bring them to realization. The inspiration of my Alma Mater has had a lasting impact on my life. It has instilled something in me that has remained with me on all roads which I have had to wander”.<sup>2</sup>

Vööbus began his studies at the faculty of theology in 1928, and in 1934 he completed a *magister artium* with a thesis on Søren Kierkegaard’s views of Christianity. During the early thirties, he started his studies of the Syriac language and Eastern Christianity with the aim of writing a doctoral thesis on the Syrian asceticism. The classes of Syriac language were given by his fellow scholar Uku Masing (1909–1985), and were regularly attended by 2–3 students.<sup>3</sup> Vööbus remembers that his work on Syrian asceticism began in June 1932. After some studies in the history and expansion of Christianity in Syria the importance of the subject increasingly began to impress itself upon him. He recounts his moment of illumination: “I still remember – so vividly – that early morning hour, so full of excitement and illumination, when the perspectives for research in this *terra incognita* opened themselves to my eyes. I then devoted myself to the pursuit of this project”.<sup>4</sup> The sense of excitement characterized Vööbus’ scholarship through all ages. Moreover, he was able to convey this sense also to others and win more souls for the field of Syriology.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Vööbus 1958: ii.

<sup>3</sup> Kasemaa 2007: 147.

<sup>4</sup> Vööbus 1958: i

<sup>5</sup> See Brock 1989.

## Vööbus's work in Tartu

The dissertation on asceticism in the ancient Mesopotamia and Syria was originally written in Estonian, and was defended in Tartu, January 23th, 1943. Some substantial parts of his original dissertation in Estonian were recently published in a book.<sup>6</sup> This work served as a preliminary basis for two voluminous monographs in English, *History of the Asceticism in the Syrian Orient I–II*.<sup>7</sup> The third volume was published posthumously in 1988, but the whole series was planned to consist of five volumes. The publication of the work optimistically started “with the hope that the edition of the complete work will not be extended to a long period”.<sup>8</sup> Part of the reason, why the last two volumes never materialized was the sense of commitment that Vööbus felt towards his Estonian past (see below).

Already during his Tartu period, Vööbus began extensive studies of the Syriac Bible, especially of the gospel texts. He became interested in the earliest layers of Syriac translation of the Bible, the so-called *Vetus Syra*. For that purpose, he also started to make preparations for the concordance of Syriac gospels.<sup>9</sup> Since 1933 he made extensive studies in the Syriac patristic literature, which led him repeatedly to vestiges of the Old Syriac gospel versions quoted in it. Two years later he decided to extend his investigations into the area of gospel manuscripts themselves.<sup>10</sup> He started to make research plans for decades, conceiving projects not only for his own manifold undertakings, but also for such grand plans, which realization demanded team work. Forty years later he recollected:

“... as a very young scholar in my youthful enthusiasm I conceived the idea of founding a Syriac Institute at the University of Tartu in order to foster research in this area. Indeed, this was conceived in the spirit of exuberant enthusiasm when my research very early had led me to exciting discoveries which opened up new vistas, novel avenues and virgin terrains. These results were so overwhelming that they determined the course of my entire scholarly life”.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Vööbus 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Vööbus 1958; 1960.

<sup>8</sup> Vööbus 1958: xiv.

<sup>9</sup> Vööbus 1962: 55.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*: 51.

<sup>11</sup> Vööbus 1982a: 54.

This hypothetical institute was envisioned to carry out the *Vetus Syra* project as well as many other related Syriological projects. He describes his erstwhile idea as follows:

“Particularly with regard to the *Vetus Syra* project, it was clear to me that such an undertaking required nothing less than the organization of research through an institution provided with a staff for the collation of materials and facilities that could handle the enormous problem of utilizing manuscript treasures abroad. This vision inspired me and gave me the strength to continue preparing the ground for a foundation upon which such an organized and coordinated undertaking could be established. In my youthful enthusiasm I decided to make the scope of this planned institute as wide as possible”.<sup>12</sup>

It might be interesting to speculate, how Vööbus’ plan materialized, if Estonia could escape the Soviet occupation like Finland after the Second World War. Even in a hypothetically non-Soviet and independent Estonia, Vööbus would have encountered enormous problems with the funding of this kind of institute. The University of Tartu and its theological faculty can be famous for some of their bright individual professors and researchers, but have never stood out as wealthy research centers. It is difficult to see, how Vööbus could have raised funds from the public sources or private donors for his humanistic undertaking in Estonia.

As a citizen of Estonia, Arthur Vööbus’ destiny as a scholar depended much on his choices he made in his personal life. It seems that his foresight for what Soviet occupation would mean for the biblical scholarship was more accurate than that of many of his colleagues. He was able to escape the Soviet occupations of Estonia two times, the first in 1941 and the second in 1944. His second escape proved to be the final one, for Vööbus never visited his homeland again. By making a difficult decision at the right time, Vööbus avoided the shackles of the Soviet regime, which many of his fellow scholars at the theological faculty failed to do. For example, in his book on the *Department of Theology at the University of Tartu* (1963), Vööbus writes about his last encounter with one of his teachers, Siegfried Aaslava (1899–1957). Aaslava was the professor of New Testament studies at the University of Tartu, who elected in 1944

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<sup>12</sup> Vööbus 1962: 52.

to remain in occupied Estonia. A quote from the book gives a vivid description of the situation, one in which very difficult decisions must be made within a very limited time.

“I saw my colleague for the last time on September 21, 1944, the very last day of freedom for Tallinn, the Estonian capital, for the following morning Soviet tanks captured the city. Our conversation was short but heartrending. The imminent threat of the Soviet advance and the expectation of the worst had broken his usual alertness and alacrity. He, like many others during these hours of despair, was like one paralyzed. He asked me what I planned to do. I told him that, in any case, I would risk death rather than annihilation or misuse at the hands of the Soviets. I urged him to do the same – to go along the shore towards Haapsalu or to the islands to seek for some boats. He told me that he could not leave his scholarly materials and books. I knew too well the depth of this pain. I replied by saying that staying would in any event, mean death or prison in Russia and that, without our scholarly materials and books. Further, if despite the risks, a way was opened to the West, we might be able to restore the losses of our scholarly research and gain new books. But I could not persuade him. So we parted. It was very sad to leave a colleague who just could not make this painfully risky decision”.<sup>13</sup>

Professor Aaslava, who was only ten years older than Vööbus, died in 1957, after spending several years in Soviet prison camps of Siberia. Vööbus, however, succeeded to flee to Germany in a flight that completely changed his destiny as a scholar. Although he had to leave his personal library including card files and other collected materials, he could take with him some of his work that was in manuscript.<sup>14</sup> Vööbus’ personal library resurfaced about 20 years later in Tartu, when a person accidentally found a collection of books in the attic room of a house on Roosi street. No other materials were reported about. These few remaining books are now part of the University of Tartu library.

### **Vööbus’ work in Germany and the United States**

During 1944–1948 Vööbus served as a professor of the Baltic University in Hamburg, which was later transferred to Pinneberg, Germany. This university was a cooperative effort of professors from former Baltic

<sup>13</sup> Vööbus 1963: 104.

<sup>14</sup> Vööbus 1962: 52; 1963: 97–98.

universities but was eventually liquidated by the British authorities.<sup>15</sup> At a conference in Germany during that period, Vööbus met professor Theodore Bachmann from Chicago Lutheran Seminary, who persuaded the academic council of his home institution to choose Vööbus as his successor when he retired in 1948.<sup>16</sup> Vööbus served as the Professor of New Testament and Early Church History at Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago until 1977. For six years after that he was the visiting professor of Syriac at the University of Chicago.

Professor Vööbus was a very productive scholar: he published more than 80 books and hundreds of scholarly papers. People who personally knew him have said that Vööbus did not have a notion of 'spare time'; he was committed to work incessantly.<sup>17</sup> His most enduring passion was devoted to the study of Syriac manuscripts. Vööbus became first acquainted with the Syriac manuscripts during his visit to Berlin's Staatbibliothek in 1935. While working there and in other European collections, he became increasingly aware that the Syriac manuscripts that were located in the libraries of Europe were only a part of the total extant works that could be made available for scholarship. As Vööbus later commented, no one in the West besides himself "had conceived the idea of the need of an exploration for new manuscripts in the Syrian Orient".<sup>18</sup>

After relocating to the United States, Vööbus made 34 research expeditions to Middle East. He sought in various places of learning for Syriac manuscripts previously unknown to western scholars. He did not intend to buy the manuscripts, but only to photograph the portions of them that contained previously unknown or otherwise important sources. The *Professor Arthur Vööbus Collection of Syriac Manuscripts on Film* is the legacy of these very remarkable research expeditions. In 1979 the *Institute of Syriac Manuscript Studies* was founded at the Lutheran School of Theology in Vööbus' honour, but after his death in 1988 work at the institute virtually ceased. In 2005 the Lutheran School of Theology entered into an agreement with the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago in which the latter assumed responsibility for the long-term preservation and use of the collection. Under the terms

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<sup>15</sup> Vööbus 1963: 98–99.

<sup>16</sup> Hollerich 1989.

<sup>17</sup> Kasemaa 2007: 147–148.

<sup>18</sup> Vööbus 1982.

of the contract, the Oriental Institute acquired all rights to this archive, including rights to access, reproduction, and publication, but not actual ownership, which was retained by the Lutheran School of Theology. In return for these rights, the Oriental Institute agreed to take on two principal responsibilities: (1) scanning the archive, thereby reproducing the images in a digital format, which will make them easier to preserve over time, and (2) cataloging the archive, thereby making it accessible for the first time to scholars throughout the world.<sup>19</sup>

The Oriental Institute launched the *Syriac Manuscript Project*, which was tasked with digitizing the images and cataloging the collection. Two research associates of the Oriental Institute, Dr. Stuart Creason and Dr. Abdul-Massih Saadi were in charge of this project. The director of the Oriental Institute, Gil J. Stein described the project as one of priority among text-based research in this academic institution: “By making digital scans of the images on the decaying emulsion film of the photographic archive, we will be able to preserve this extraordinary heritage and make it available to both scholars and to modern Syriac-speaking communities around the world”.<sup>20</sup> However, the articles describing the progress of the project ceased to appear in the *Oriental Institute Annual Reports* since 2010.

Thanks to this project conducted by the Oriental Institute in Chicago, some more important information is known about this collection. Altogether Vööbus photographed 695 different manuscripts from 23 different locations in the countries of Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, India, and Israel. The entire collection of images contains approximately 60 000 unique photos, or approximately 120 000 pages of Syriac manuscripts (Creason 2009). The Vööbus collection remains almost entirely unpublished and contains between 5000 and 10000 photographs of manuscripts that have since been destroyed (Creason 2005). In the assessment of Dr. Stuart Creason given in 2008:

“the collection needs organizing and cataloging, and about 60% of the films need to be rephotographed. It is a painstaking and time-consuming task, but once completed, it will be an invaluable resource for the study of Syriac and Eastern Churches. When the necessary work has been accomplished – and

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<sup>19</sup> Creason 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Stein 2007: 7.

more than \$300,000 is still needed for its completion – the collection will be located at the Antiochian Village Museum and Library, and inter-net access will make it available to scholars all over the the world”.<sup>21</sup>

The value of Vööbus collection has enormously increased after the inception of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. It is to be expected that many more of the original manuscripts that Vööbus photographed in Middle East have been lost forever during the civil war and due to prolonged ISIS domination in parts of the Middle East. According to most recent information communicated to the author of this paper by Stuart Creason the Vööbus collection was relocated to a new host institution in 2016. This is the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, which is a non-profit organization dedicated to digitally preserving ancient manuscripts around the world. In the electronic mail sent to me on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017, Stuart Creason described the history of Vööbus collection since 2010 as follows:

The Syriac Manuscript Project made slow progress over the years since 2010, finishing the physical inventory of the film, digitizing 7000 images, and cataloging 1000 of those images. However, the proposed partnership with the Antiochan Village Museum and Library never came about. In the fall of 2016, the agreement between the Oriental Institute and the Lutheran School of Theology was terminated with all rights to the film reverting the Lutheran School. Shortly after that the Lutheran School gave all the film, the supporting materials prepared by the Oriental Institute, and the digitized images to the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library in Collegeville, Minnesota. It is currently being stored there in a climate-controlled facility, but no work has begun yet.

During his lifetime, Vööbus could publish only the most exciting parts of his manuscript discoveries. The scope of these discoveries is quite remarkable. Vööbus made a lasting contribution to the text history of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. His very significant contributions to the study of *Vetus Syra* as the oldest layer of the Bible in Syriac were accomplished in several monographs. He was convinced that the reconstructable parts of the *Vetus Syra* versions of the New Testament still contained the Aramaic language as spoken during the first Christian

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<sup>21</sup> Dalack 2008: 10.

centuries in Palestine.<sup>22</sup> Professor Vööbus was a member of the international editorial committee of Knut Aland's *Greek New Testament* from 1955 to 1966.

Vööbus contributed significantly to Septuagint research. In the second century AD Alexandria, Origenes and his team of scholars composed a great critical work on the text of the Bible in six columns, called *Hexapla*. Each column held a different version, and the fifth one contained the text of Septuagint, as it was known during that time. The entire work was lost, but the fifth column remained extant in the translation from Greek into Syriac made by Paul of Tella in about 615 AD. This Syriac translation of the early Septuagint is called the Syro-Hexapla version. However, the text of Syro-Hexapla was poorly known before the discoveries made by Vööbus during his research expeditions. In Midyat, Iraq, he found a manuscript containing the full Pentateuch in Syro-Hexapla version.<sup>23</sup> In Saint Mark monastery of Jerusalem he found the book of Isaiah in this version.<sup>24</sup> From Mardin in Turkey he discovered two lectionaries containing numerous passages from the Syro-Hexapla text form.<sup>25</sup> All these manuscripts and many others were published in facsimile editions by the series *Corpus scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* in Leuven.

Professor Vööbus also discovered many historical sources of primary importance. Among them stands out the unique manuscript that Vööbus discovered in Damascus, which contains conciliar acts of the West Syrian Church as well as a big collection of previously unknown documents.<sup>26</sup> Among other findings are the new manuscripts of the celebrated Syro-Roman law book, text editions of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* in Syriac, and many legislative documents related to asceticism in the Syrian Orient.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Vööbus 1987.

<sup>23</sup> Vööbus 1975.

<sup>24</sup> Vööbus 1983.

<sup>25</sup> Vööbus 1985.

<sup>26</sup> See Vööbus 1975–1976.

<sup>27</sup> See Vööbus 1982–1983; Vööbus 1979.



## Conclusion

During his work in Germany and United States, Vööbus wanted to be a voice for his occupied homeland and its suffering people. Some years after his relocation to the United States, Vööbus published a popular book *The Communist Menace, the Present Chaos, and our Christian Responsibility*, in which he stated that the articulated disapproval of the crimes of the communist regimes is a Christian responsibility.<sup>28</sup> Arthur Vööbus, who had first-hand experiences of the communist terror, felt personal responsibility to write the comprehensive history of the Estonian people, and to publicize the atrocities committed by the Soviet regime. According to his accurate view, irreversible damage was being done to the Estonian people and culture during the Soviet occupation. Therefore he dedicated much of his valuable time to writing the history of the Estonian people, a study which was published in altogether 16 volumes in English. This commitment forced him to postpone many important Syriological works, including e.g. *The History of Syriac Literature*, which was planned in three volumes as well as many other publications. Two years before his death he explained:

“Unlike so many of my colleagues who have been allowed to conduct their research at will, I have felt myself bound to discharge heavy ethical obligations, which have weighed on my heart like heavy stones, obligations having to do with the fate visited upon my native land. Out of compassion for the people of my homeland and out of suffering over the tragedy which has been visited upon my country whose life and culture have been profoundly affected and stand in perilous danger, I have felt it mandatory for me to do what I could about it. Since I had been a pastor in the martyr church of my nation, I became a voice for the voiceless. ... Having received so much from my own country, I considered it requisite to salvage what could be salvaged from the ruins and to write a comprehensive history of my people, a task which turned out to be as taxing as it was arduous.”<sup>29</sup>

What Vööbus could not foresee was the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union only a few years after his death. If he had luck to live some more years, he could have witnessed the beginning of the new era of the Biblical scholarship in Estonia. The theological faculty of the

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<sup>28</sup> Vööbus 1955.

<sup>29</sup> Vööbus 1987: v–vi.

University of Tartu was reopened in 1991, and the excellence of Vööbus scholarship is much appreciated in this academic institution.

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# Some Details on the Composition of the Persian Manuscripts Collection at the Library of the University of Tartu

LIDIA LEONTJEVA

**Abstract** The Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books of the Library of the University of Tartu in Estonia holds collections of Persian manuscripts that are modest in size but significant, the oldest of which dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Along with a number of Arabic and Turkish manuscripts, there are eleven manuscripts altogether which are fully or partially written in Persian and which can be regarded as Persian manuscripts. Most of the manuscripts were donated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the re-establishment of higher education at the University of Tartu (Universitas Dorpatensis) in 1802. The donation provided a strong impulse for Oriental studies in Estonia. Most of the contributors were remarkable persons of historical importance belonging to Baltic German noble families. The important role of the manuscript donors in 19<sup>th</sup> century society gives additional historical importance to the study of the process of compiling the current manuscripts collection. In this article, I will focus on how the collection was assembled, taking into account the significant role of contributors' personalities, and including a brief overview of the collection and its constituent manuscripts.

**Keywords** Persian manuscripts, University of Tartu, manuscript donors.

According to Al-Fourqan Islamic Heritage Foundation data<sup>1</sup>, which contains the most comprehensive worldwide data on Islamic manuscript collections worldwide, the Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Fourqan 2018.

of the Tartu University Library holds a collection of forty nine manuscripts in total, which is the largest collection of Islamic manuscripts in the Baltic States. There is a small collection of seven Arabic manuscripts in the Latvian National Library, but they have not been examined by specialists and their contents are unknown. Only the handwritten inventory is currently available. According to the Al-Fourqan data, there are no Islamic manuscript collections in Lithuania. The collection at the University of Helsinki contains the largest number of Islamic manuscripts in Finland. They were mainly purchased by the Finnish arabist Georg August Wallin (1811–1852) in Egypt during the 1840s, and supplemented by later acquisitions by Stefan Baranowski, Dr. Hybennet and other donators. There are 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century copies of the Qur'an as well as works on jurisprudence, grammar and lexicography, history and geography. There are 17 manuscripts in total in Persian, all of which are described by Jussi Aro<sup>2</sup> and Harry Halen.<sup>3</sup> There are also some smaller collections of manuscripts in Finland.<sup>4</sup>

According to an alphabetical card catalogue composed by librarian Leili Punga in 1994, the Tartu collection contains eleven manuscripts which are registered in the general inventory book. After precise examination it was concluded that the alphabetical card catalogue contains mistakes. Under number Mscr 304 we have a lithograph, not a manuscript. In addition, Mscr 175 is a lithographic booklet, and Mscr 176 is a letter. Both documents could be dated to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Mscr 59 is a short document of *firman*. Mscr 98, listed in the alphabetical card catalogue, in fact is an Arabic manuscript. Mscr 80, not mentioned in the alphabetical card catalogue, contains *Diwan* of Saadi Shirazi. It is possible to conclude that the total number of Persian manuscripts is nine. There is a possibility that some of the Arabic or Ottoman manuscripts may be partially written in Persian, but, although the catalogue of Arabic manuscripts composed by D. Jermakoff is available<sup>5</sup>, Ottoman manuscripts remain uncatalogued. Thematically, it is reasonable to divide the Persian manuscripts in the Tartu University library into several topics: poetical *diwan* or collections of various poets

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<sup>2</sup> Aro 1958.

<sup>3</sup> Halen 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Fourqan 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Jermakoff 1991.

(six manuscripts), vocabularies (one manuscript) and two non-fictional written evidences.

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, oriental studies were concentrated into the Faculty of Theology of the University of Tartu, where theologians were engaged in studying oriental languages, religions, history, and philosophy. One of the first professors, Johann Wihelm Friederich Hezel (1754–1824), taught occasional courses on the Persian language in 1810, 1813 and 1814, although they were not regular, as most attention belonged to Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic. Professors Samuel Gottlieb Rudolf Henzi (1784–1829) and Adolph Friedrich Kleinert (1802–1834) were not teaching Persian, despite being familiar with the language. At that time, Persian teaching flourished at Helsinki University as a result of professor Gabriel Getlin's (1804–1871) devoted work and research.<sup>6</sup> Instruction in Persian at the University of Tartu was organized by professor Johann Christoph Wilhelm Volck (1835–1904) during the period of 1861–1866, but attention was later drawn again to Semitic languages. We can conclude that there were no systematic Persian language courses organized at the University of Tartu in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and only some occasional courses were held. An explanation for the dominance of the Semitic languages can be found in the general interest in Old Testament studies, to which Semitic languages are more applicable. This also reflected the difference in manuscript numbers; there are only nine Persian manuscripts, but the number of Arabic manuscripts is twenty-seven in total. There is no evidence of any research at the University of Tartu in the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century that was specifically devoted to Persian studies.

In the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the growth of the University of Tartu was accompanied by the systematic development of astounding library holdings. Wealthy individuals invested their private fortunes into the book collections, and manuscripts were valued as exotic artefacts that deserved to be stored in library collections. All of the nine Persian Manuscripts entered the Tartu University Library in 19<sup>th</sup> century. The oldest layer of this collection was established in 1801, soon after re-establishment of the University of Tartu.

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<sup>6</sup> Aalto 1971.

One of the first contributors was Friedrich von Adelund (1768–1843), a linguist, historian and bibliographer best known for his works in Sanskrit grammar. Born in 1768 in Stettin, Germany, he was an honorary professor at the University of Tartu (*Universitas Dorpatensis*) and a patron of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Imperium, which was the first college in Europe at that time to teach Persian and Turkish languages. He was also a famous collector of manuscripts and coins. His son, Karl von Adelung (1803–1829), joined the Russian diplomatic service and was killed together with Alexander Gryboedov. Friedrich von Adelung never visited Persia himself. It is supposed that Adelung gifted this manuscript along with another as a sign of respect to the University upon refusing an offered professorship.<sup>7</sup> His donation in 1807 was a Persian-Turkish rhyme vocabulary with examples of Persian and Arabic poetry.<sup>8</sup>

Professor of Theology Johann Wihelm Friederich Hezel, mentioned above, donated an Arabic-Persian vocabulary (Mscr 4) to the University. This manuscript was purchased by J.W. Hezel at an auction from Professor Johann Ernst Neubaueur, and the origin of this manuscript can be traced to its first owner in Europe, famous German orientalist and theologian Christian Ravis (1613–1677). Ravis spent some time in Smyrna and Constantinople assembling manuscripts on his own account, and he returned to England in 1641. The manuscript was bought by J.W.Fr. Hezel for a relatively high price, and he stressed its value due to the large and old vocabulary it contains. It is possible to conclude that his main reason for obtaining this manuscript was its importance as a source of Arabic vocabulary. In 1807 the University contracted to buy some oriental manuscripts, most of which were copies of the Qur'an. No Persian manuscripts were bought at that time<sup>9</sup>. Mscr 59 was donated in 1818 by Philippo Paulucci (1779–1841), an Italian marquis who was in the Russian army and later became Governor General of Georgia (1812), Livonia (1812–1830) and Estonia (1819–1830). He participated in the Russo-Turkish wars and campaigns against the Persians (1806–1812). Mscr 59 is a permission letter, called a *firman*, from a tribal leader.

<sup>7</sup> Rand 2002: 341.

<sup>8</sup> Mscr 6.

<sup>9</sup> Rand 2002: 344.



According to the content of this *firman*, we can conclude that it was acquired by the marquis during his campaign against Persia. There are no facts that can prove any particular interest of Paulucci in oriental studies, but, as Governor General, he was involved in University of Tartu activities; for example, he granted scholarships to some departments. It is hard to determine his reason for donating this *firman* to the University, as Pulucci did not contribute with any other manuscripts, either Arabic or Ottoman. Precise examination of the content of the *firman* may provide an answer.

One of the key contributors to the collection of oriental artefacts was Otto Friedrich von Richter (1791–1816), an orientalist and traveler who died of disease in Izmir in the Ottoman Empire at a young age. His collection of manuscripts and various artefacts was donated to the library by his father, Otto Magnus Johann von Richter, in 1819. It is reasonable to compare Richter's activity to that of Georg August Wallin, despite the fact that Wallin was born 19 years later.<sup>10</sup> Both travelled to the East and explored it with their own eyes. Richter contributed only three Persian manuscripts of poetry: Mscr 80, Mscr 99, Mscr 100, all of which were obtained by Richter at auctions in Western Europe. It is known that Richter never visited Persia, and his main interest was mostly in Egypt or Turkey, from which he brought back numerous artefacts.

There is also one manuscript donated by Faddei Bulgarin (1789–1859), a famous Russian journalist and writer. In 1833, he donated Mscr 177, which contains a Djami poem of *Haft-awrang*. It is known from the dedicatory inscription that this manuscript was originally gifted to Russian diplomat and writer Alexander Griboyedov by Khosrow Mirza (1810–1883), a Persian prince of the Qajar dynasty. Alexander Gryboedov was familiar with the Persian language and also served as a diplomat in Persia. Due to his wide contacts with Persians, he received numerous gifts from them. F. Bulgarin and A. Gryboedov remained close friends during their lifetimes, so we can conclude that later the manuscript was likely gifted to Bulgarin. In 1828, Bulgarin bought Karlova Manor near Tartu and was the owner of this manor until his death. Persian manuscript was donated by F. Bulgarin to the University of Tartu in 1833 along with a number of other manuscripts and

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<sup>10</sup> Aalto 1971.

documents of significance. Despite the fact that the relationship between F. Bulgarin and the University was complicated, as described in the Boris Veizenen's article "Faddey Bulgarin and the Baltic Germans", the same source confirms that Bulgarin was interested in University activities.<sup>11</sup> This gift may to some extent reflect his interest and wish to have closer connections with the University as the centre of intellectual activities in Tartu.

The last manuscript of Persian poetry to be donated is registered under Mscr188 by Magnus Gabriel Bernhard Von Brevern (Rus. Magnus Ivanovich Brevern) (1825–1878). He was descended from the De Lagardi noble family on his mother's side and received military education in St. Petersburg. As a major-general in the Russian Empire, he participated in several Russian Empire military campaigns, including the Russo-Turkish War in 1877–1878. The donation date is recorded by the library as 1837, which is hardly possible. Given that he was born in Alu, Harjumaa county, his connection with Estonia is obvious, and it is probable that the manuscript was somehow obtained during war and not as a result of any special research interest.

## Conclusion

To conclude, it is possible to say that the collected Persian manuscripts were valued mostly as artefacts of oriental culture as well as pieces of art. Manuscripts are considered suitable for museum collections, and this is especially true of Persian manuscripts, which have more illuminations and less theological importance than those in Arabic. The collection process was rather chaotic. Given that most of the contributors were not familiar with the Persian language, we can conclude that the content of any particular manuscript was not the key factor for initially obtaining the manuscript. There are two main sources through which the manuscripts were obtained by the donors: auctions in Western Europe and war campaigns in Turkey or Persia. The fate of these manuscripts once in the University collections shows us that Persian manuscripts were not regarded at that time as sources for research, study, or translation. Nevertheless, Persian manuscripts were carefully registered, stored, and sometimes repaired and re-foliated.

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<sup>11</sup> Veizenen 2013.

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# The Role of the Interpretation of Fuzuli's Texts in the Formation and Development of the Literary School of Fuzuli

AYNURA MAHMUDOVA

**Abstract** In Azerbaijani literary studies the role of Fuzuli's texts in the formation and development of the literary school of Fuzuli is one of the issues yet to be studied. The resonance and traces left by Fuzuli's works in the history of literature and in the reader's mind can be pointed out as one of the reasons for the longevity of the literary school of Fuzuli. Fuzuli's literary texts have been understood differently in different periods by different groups of readers and these texts have made their impact accordingly. The reader's way of thinking, sometimes not coinciding with the poet's primary goal and sometimes approaching it too closely, has provided a multiplicity of interpretations of Fuzuli's texts. Hence, the existence of different interpretations of Fuzuli's texts.

**Keywords** text, interpretation, reader, literary school, intention

Attitudes to Fuzuli's works are closely interrelated with the existence of the literary school of Fuzuli. Since the formation and dissemination of Fuzuli's works, the literary school of Fuzuli has been exposed to a special approach, a special attitude. Consequently, it has been distinguished by its specific features at each stage. Just as each period demonstrates a different attitude to Fuzuli's works that remain peculiar to it, Fuzuli's proponents have likewise followed the flow of time. The single mainstream of each period has generated distinct stages in the literary school of Fuzuli. Thus, there is a need to clarify readers' attitudes to Fuzuli's works and how they exemplify those of the time.

“Each period makes a judgement about the writer accordingly, accepts the literary essentials close to it in his works. The historical presence of literary events is distinguished by great complexity”<sup>1</sup>

In the 16<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries the functionality of Fuzuli's texts was especially attractive.

“Since, like any other text, the literary text is not confined to the frames of the provided reality either: the potential bearer of meaning is visible in the literary text, and the conditions necessary for the formation of “the area of existence” of the text is called the actualization of this meaning in the mind of the subject who receives the text”<sup>2</sup>

In other words, the text can express more things than are apparent at first sight, and in the discovery of this feature the role of the person, the reader who understands and receives the text, is undeniable.

In reviewing the works of Fuzuli's proponents in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries we see that the interpretation of Fuzuli's texts did not yet take any distinct form. Fuzuli was still being interpreted and there were attempts to understand Fuzuli's text, his spirit. Meanwhile, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, his texts were simply varied; their interpretation took place in a restricted frame, being repeated, also as “an interpretation of the interpretation” which became a characteristic feature of the literary school of Fuzuli in this period. In the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries Fuzuli's texts still maintained their potential to demonstrate their purity and novelty to the reader. Each period generated a certain perspective of these texts through its own vision, its own attitude, and it is due to the fact that each period viewed Fuzuli through its own frame that different periods suggested different attitudes in Fuzuli's texts. A genuine work of art, a masterpiece, is a timeless treasure.

“The contact of a voluminous literary work with the esthetic idea of other periods generates a more complex idea, esthetic relations and attitudes. Its individual components, sides lose their vital, active esthetic significance, the others are re-assessed, and the third ones often acquire another voice. Most often the ideational, artistic inceptions of the work which seemed

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<sup>1</sup> Khrapchenko 1982: 31.

<sup>2</sup> Shchirova, Goncharova 2007: 8.

secondary, peripheral or unattractive to its contemporaries come to the forefront. On the other hand, the sides, which were accepted as very important, are most often backgrounded or become esthetically neutral”.<sup>3</sup>

Creativity is a complex process. Although we can see what the poet does in his work, we can only guess at what he intends to do. The work of art begins its own independent life after its departure from the creator. The way it will be reflected in the mind of its reader, the way it will evoke reactions, entail much that is unexpected. Also, one can only hypothesize that a certain work will enjoy a long life in history.

“So, in one or other cultural system only the texts with high informative importance can perform the function of ‘good poetry’ for it which presupposes the conflict, tension, struggle with the reader’s expectation, finally making the reader accept what is more important than the literary system he/she is accustomed to”.<sup>4</sup>

When we speak about interpretations of Fuzuli’s texts we imply both the creative interpretations and the interpretations aimed at understanding him. Through its existence, each work aims to confirm something to a certain degree, express some vision of people, events and life in general. Meanwhile, nature is imitated, i.e., nature acts as a primary source. And for the creativity of the representatives of the literary school of Fuzuli, his creativity assumes the role of nature. Fuzuli’s proponents imitate the nature they see in the light of Fuzuli’s works, describe the world as seen through Fuzuli’s eyes, take the quiverings of Fuzuli’s soul as their own. From this point of view, we come to the conclusion that studying the readership’s attitude to the poet’s works, with all their different tastes and visions in each period, is one of the issues of great significance in the study of the formation and development of the literary school of Fuzuli.

“In order to provide an adequate historical characteristic of the writer’s works and his/her role in the literary process, it is necessary to study the

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<sup>3</sup> Khrapchenko 1982: 221.

<sup>4</sup> Lotman 1999: 130.

acquisition of his/her works by the readers, also the peculiar features and tastes of his/her audience".<sup>5</sup>

Fuzuli's proponents have attempted to understand, interpret, variegated, sometimes negate him and argue with him. Here, such poets try to express themselves based on Fuzuli's text, and through Fuzuli they approve themselves and instil in the reader their world outlooks in Fuzuli's style.

"It is owing to their historical stability and the maintenance of their core of meaning, resisting attempts to interpret them differently, that the works of the classical authors continue to live in the memory of generations. Due to the lack of endless flexibility of its meaning and not being plastic enough to let in the other's creative will-power and a different conception of reality, the classical work allows the creation of a new work when addressed by a creative individual".<sup>6</sup>

When dealing with the attitude of representatives of the literary school of Fuzuli to Fuzuli's texts, we should point out that Fuzuli's proponents are also his readers. However, we should not forget Fuzuli's ordinary readers either, i.e., people not involved in literary activities. These readers make up the majority and have a role to play in the formation of some ideas related to Fuzuli's works and the literary school of Fuzuli. Readers' attitudes to Fuzuli's texts and their understanding of him have varied. This attitude lies at the bases of literary creativity, comes forth from its characteristics.

"Literary creativity is as 'inaccurate' as is required for the creative compatibility of the reader, audience or listener. Any artistic creativity contains the basis for the potential compatibility of creative activities. Therefore, deviations are necessary for the reader or listener to restore or animate the rhythm creatively in his/her vision. Deviations from the style are important for the creative acquisition of the style. The inaccuracy of the character is necessary for the creative accomplishment of this character through the reader or listener's creative acquisition of it".<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Reitblat 2001: 98.

<sup>6</sup> Esin 1991: 128.

<sup>7</sup> Likhachev 1976: 17.

Fuzuli's works have created such an opportunity for his readers and provided understanding of the texts in a different way for each period. Readers, who have obtained from Fuzuli's works what they desired, what they needed, have accepted them as religious texts, lyrical pieces glorifying the feelings of love, couplets capable of matching the satirical content, and as art that advocates realistic or idealistic views. In the last few centuries readers of Fuzuli have also somewhat acted as "authors" in the understanding of Fuzuli's works.

By their very nature, Fuzuli's works generate favourable conditions for the reader to be a co-author – more precisely, for the reader to "find" and understand Fuzuli's mission by discovering him. Hence, there appear different explanations and interpretations of Fuzuli. Although the scientific research has guided public opinion related to Fuzuli in one direction, there have always been subjective attitudes, subjective approaches and views. Thus, we are of the opinion that each period has its own Fuzuli and each reader his/her own Fuzuli.

"The facts of art history, above all the history of world literature, demonstrate most often considerable inadequacy in the impact of the poet's mission and his works on his contemporaries, let alone on subsequent generations".<sup>8</sup>

Fuzuli's text was both very familiar as well as unknown to its readers. Fuzuli's works, whose traditionalism did not evoke negativity, revolt, protest, struggle or tension in readers, and which was appropriate to the poetic taste to which readers were accustomed and did not "distort" it, could have earned the respect of the medieval reader just through it. However, through his works Fuzuli managed to remain unknown to his future readers. He was able to address not only his contemporary readers, but also his other readers who were just a cycle of this tradition lasting for centuries.

In conclusion we can state that a literary work is not an exclusive, extraordinary object divorced from relations and contacts. Although it continues its own life separately, it interacts with other works and ideas, is exposed to some relations according to the era, and can both be enriched insightfully and influence public and literary views in different ways in different periods.

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<sup>8</sup> Khrapchenko 1981: 217.



“Through the process of their social existence great literary works not only lose something but also generously demonstrate their internal richness. That is why it is hardly fair to think that a literary work is always understood more profoundly by its contemporaries. Each coming generation is ready to protest this stance and, above all, the following generations have serious grounds for that”.<sup>9</sup>

In light of the diverse requirements of each period, Fuzuli's works are reviewed each time, articulated with the labels of the new period, and undergo some questioning about their urgency. Despite all the testing of Fuzuli's texts, facing the challenges of the period, we can speak of Fuzuli's works and the literary school of Fuzuli in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. For, Fuzuli has also lived in several centuries following the 16<sup>th</sup> century, contacted his readers, maintained urgency and reached our time not only in writings and books but also as a living monument.

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# Between the Orient and the Occident: Visions of Arab Emigration Writer Ameen Rihani

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**Abstract** Ameen Rihani, nowadays mainly known as the forerunner of Kahlil Gibran, was the first Arab emigration writer who wrote in English, starting the tradition of Arab American literature with his novel, *The Book of Khalid* (1911). At the same time, Rihani was well known in the Arab world as a leading writer and thinker of Al-Nahda, or the Arab Renaissance. It is thought that his most significant contribution to Arabic literature was the introduction of prose poetry that transformed the established tradition and deeply influenced modern Arabic literature. It is much less known today, however, that he was a traveller and a politician as well as the author of many works discussing religion, culture, politics, and philosophy. In particular, Rihani explored the influence of various ideologies, including Pan-Arabism, Wahhabism, Bolshevism, and Western materialism on potential leaders, their followers, and the wider society. He focused on the mentality, motivation, and methods of extremists, at the same time proposing peaceful solutions to actual problems mainly by the establishment of mutual understanding, cultural exchange, and, finally, by hybridization of antagonistic cultures. A forerunner of Edward Said in some sense, Rihani counteracted widespread preconceptions about the Orient at a time when Anglophone audiences were not quite ready to hear any criticism of these ready opinions. In this study, Rihani's views presented in *The Book of Khalid* (1911), *The Descent of Bolshevism* (1920), and *The Path of Vision* (1921) are discussed in the context of the background and environment that shaped the writer's beliefs.

**Keywords** Arab Mahjar, The Pen League, Arab Renaissance, Arab diaspora in the U.S.A., cultural hybridization, unification of religions, multiculturalism, globalization

## Life and work of Ameen Rihani<sup>1</sup>

Ameen Rihani<sup>2</sup> (1876–1940), the eldest son of a raw silk manufacturer, Maronite Christian Faris Rihani, was born in Freike, a village in Mount Lebanon near Beirut. In this picturesque valley, he spent a quiet childhood and attended a French school.<sup>3</sup> In 1888, together with his paternal uncle and his teacher Naoum Mukarzel,<sup>4</sup> Rihani travelled to the U.S.A., where he rather fast adapted to the foreign culture.<sup>5</sup> The family rented a modest flat in a basement in Lower Manhattan, and Rihani attended American public schools<sup>6</sup> for two years; after that, he started work as a “chief clerk, salesman and interpreter in his father’s and uncle’s merchandise business.”<sup>7</sup> Before long, the young Rihani “found this occupation tedious”<sup>8</sup> and decided to continue his education independently, focusing on literature, history, and philosophy; his favorite authors were “Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, Rousseau, Washington Irving and Carlyle.”<sup>9</sup> Emerson and Thoreau inspired him to write essays, Whitman moved him to express his feelings in prose poetry, while Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Battuta, Lawrence, and Thesiger served as examples in writing travel literature.<sup>10</sup> Nineteen years old, Rihani developed a passion for theater and joined a travelling troupe for about a year; two of his favorite roles were Hamlet and Macbeth.<sup>11</sup> After that, determined to pursue a professional career, Rihani returned to New York and entered the New York Law School; however, he was not able to continue studies because of a

<sup>1</sup> Discussed in detail in Arabic: Dīb 1941

<sup>2</sup> أمين الريحاني – transliterated as *Amīn ar-Riḥānī* or *ar-Rayḥānī*.

<sup>3</sup> More about the family and childhood of Ameen Rihani is available in the publication of Institute of Lebanese Thought “The Biography of Ameen Rihani and His Most Important Literary Works” (in Arabic), *Sīra Amīn ar-Riḥānī wa abraz munğizātuh*. <http://www.ndu.edu.lb/Library/Assets/Micro/Files/ILTMicrosite/AmeenRihani/Biography.pdf> [05.04.2018].

<sup>4</sup> نعوم مكرزل – alternatively transliterated as *Nā’ūm Mukarzil*.

<sup>5</sup> Bushrui 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Kaufman 2004: 209.

<sup>7</sup> Bushrui 1999.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

lung infection and was sent to recover at his home in Mount Lebanon in 1898.<sup>12</sup>

During the two years in Lebanon, Ameen Rihani relearned Arabic and re-discovered Arab history and literature with which he was barely familiar, for, as the writer explained in his Introduction to *Arab Kings*,<sup>13</sup>

As a child, I knew little about the Arabs, and what little I knew was derived from what mothers tell their children about the Bedouin in an attempt to frighten them into behaving properly (“Shush, the Bedouin is here”). Consequently, when I arrived in America I had nothing but fear for those whose language I speak and whose blood runs in my veins. The only other culture I knew anything about was the French, and this only superficially, my information being derived from the French school I attended in Lebanon which taught me that France was the greatest nation in the world...<sup>14</sup>

According to Suheil Bushrui, Rihani’s interest in Arab culture paradoxically originated from his wide reading in American literature, for, namely, “it was an American, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who more than anyone was responsible for encouraging Rihani’s interest in English literature, and introduced him to the nineteenth-century English writer Thomas Carlyle,”<sup>15</sup> whose writings, in turn, “instilled in Rihani a desire to know more about Muhammad” and, consequently, “to find out more about his own people and their cultural background.”<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, fascinated by the tales in Washington Irving’s *The Alhambra* (1832), “Rihani began to dream of the glory of his past, his Arab cultural heritage, and to find in it sustenance for his life in the present.”<sup>17</sup>

Despite Rihani’s interest in Anglophone literature, his first publications were in Arabic; for that reason, in the beginning of his literary career, he gained renown as an Arab writer.<sup>18</sup> As early as 1898, Rihani’s articles appeared in the emigrant newspaper *Al-Huda*,<sup>19</sup> founded by

<sup>12</sup> “Ameen Rihani.” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ameen-Rihani#accordion-article-history>

<sup>13</sup> ar-Rihānī 1987,

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Bushrui 1999.

<sup>15</sup> In particular: Carlyle (1899).

<sup>16</sup> Bushrui 1999.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Wail S. Hassan 2011: 38.

<sup>19</sup> Translated from Arabic as *The Guidance*.

Rihani's teacher, Naoum Mukarzel,<sup>20</sup> "to serve the cause of a Christian, Maronite-dominated Lebanese nation under French tutelage, independent of the Ottoman Empire."<sup>21</sup> However, having observed Arab society in both Mount Lebanon and the U.S.A., Rihani started criticizing Arab traditions and the state of affairs in politics, religion, and philosophy in the Arab world, which, in his opinion, suffered from stagnation, bigotry, and corruption.<sup>22</sup> After his return to New York in 1900, Rihani started a period of fervent literary activity, publishing rather controversial short stories and articles in various journals in New York and Beirut.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Rihani's "hard-hitting speech" on religious tolerance at a meeting of the Maronite Society in New York caused a "considerable stir," which brought him popularity and attracted many supporters.<sup>24</sup> The rebellious articles and speeches were followed by several controversial books, the first of which was *A Treatise on the French Revolution* (1902, *Nubḍa 'an-i- tawrat al-faransīya*).<sup>25</sup> His next work, *The Triple Alliance in the Animal Kingdom* (1903, *al-Muḥālaḥa at-tulātīya fī al-mamlaka al-ḥayawānīya*) contained such bitter criticism of religious authorities that the book was burned, and the writer was excommunicated by the Maronite Church.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, Rihani continued his literary activity and became one of the leading Arab Renaissance thinkers and writers<sup>27</sup> whose work helped to shape modern Arabic literature.<sup>28</sup> His collected Arabic works fill twelve volumes and include poetry, short stories, philosophical essays, literary criticism, and travel memoirs as well as several books on the history of Arabs.<sup>29</sup> According to Schumann, Rihani's ideas on a wide range of topics were disseminated via Arabic magazines and newspapers issued in Cairo and New York, which, in the beginning of the twentieth

<sup>20</sup> Hajjar 2010: 23.

<sup>21</sup> See Hassan 2011: 40.

<sup>22</sup> Bushrui 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Kaufman 2004: 209; also, *Sīra*...: 3

<sup>24</sup> Bushrui 1999.

<sup>25</sup> Available in Arabic in: ar-Riḥānī 1981.

<sup>26</sup> Bushrui 1999.

<sup>27</sup> The contribution of Ameen Rihani to Arab literature is thoroughly discussed in Iman-gulieva 2009.

<sup>28</sup> See also Hajjar 2010: xiv.

<sup>29</sup> Hassan 2011: 38.

century, bound together the “imagined intellectual community”<sup>30</sup> and helped the new Arab intellectuals to build their reputations as writers and thinkers. With the help of these media, Arabic “became the lingua franca for intellectual debates and modern poetry exchanged between the Arab homelands, in particular Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt, and the Syrian colonies in France, Brazil, Argentina, and the United States.”<sup>31</sup> The main restrictions on this communication, however, were posed by the strong religious and political affiliations of most Arabic papers<sup>32</sup> and, as Schumann argues, their “low intellectual standards” as well as the tendency to engage in gossip, slander, and sectarian strife.<sup>33</sup>

Ameen Rihani spent much effort trying to bring about a reform of Arabic poetry; in particular, his essays in literary criticism discussed the role of the poet and the nature of poetry in “the age of iron and electricity.”<sup>34</sup> For instance, he tried to revive the role of poet-prophet<sup>35</sup> which was “long forgotten” in Arabic culture,<sup>36</sup> but which was also paralleled and reinforced by the Romantic notion<sup>37</sup> of the poet as a link between ignorant common people and God as the source of sublime knowledge – the poet functions as a spiritual leader, prophet, philosopher, and priest with a great mission.<sup>38</sup> However, Rihani urged poets to avoid thoughtless emulation of classical poems; in particular, he advised against overusing clichés and overly emotional images such as “pools and lakes of tears” at the thought of the lost love.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, he attempted to introduce new rhythms and themes in the most conservative form of Arabic literature by composing an entirely new kind of poetry himself. Rihani’s first Arabic prose poem in the free, lyrical style of Walt Whitman was printed

<sup>30</sup> Schumann 2016: 275.

<sup>31</sup> Schumann 2016: 275.

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, Hassan 2011: 40.

<sup>33</sup> Schumann 2016: 275.

<sup>34</sup> ar-Riḥānī 2013: 8..

<sup>35</sup> Nu’ayma 1991: 73–74. Nuaima defined the poet’s role as “a prophet, philosopher, moldier, musician, and soothsayer.”

<sup>36</sup> Moreh 1976: 83.

<sup>37</sup> Discussed in detail: “Ameen Rihani and His Role in the Formation of Arab Romanticism” in Imangulieva 2009: 85–108.

<sup>38</sup> Badawi 1975: 186.

<sup>39</sup> “Poet’s Tears,” in: *You Poets*: 35

in 1905; with it, he earned the title of “the father of prose poetry.”<sup>40</sup> One of the ways in which Arabic prose poetry was popularized was Rihani’s travels in Arab world, during which he recited excerpts from his poems in his speeches.<sup>41</sup>

At the same time,<sup>42</sup> Rihani started the anglophone Arab American literary tradition<sup>43</sup> with the first ever poetry collection, *Myrtle and Myrrh* (1905), the first novel, *The Book of Khalid* (1911), and the first play, *Wajdah* (1909), written by an Arab immigrant in English.<sup>44</sup> For that reason, Rihani is also known as the “pioneer Arab-American author”<sup>45</sup> and “father of Arab American literature.”<sup>46</sup> According to Alice Birney,

Rihani was the first American of Arab heritage to devote himself to writing literature ... and the first Arab author to write English essays, poetry, novels, short stories, art critiques and travel chronicles. He was the author of 29 volumes in English. His early writings in English mark the beginning of a body of literature that is Arab in its interest, culture and characteristics, English in language and American in spirit.<sup>47</sup>

Since then, “Arab-American literature has emerged as a literature in its own right”<sup>48</sup> and is regarded not only as an important part of American ethnic or multicultural literature<sup>49</sup> but also as a part of the English literary canon along with other literary works written in English by non-native English speakers.<sup>50</sup>

In addition, Ameen Rihani was the first Arab who translated Arabic poetry into English.<sup>51</sup> He started with the works of his favorite poet, philosopher, and freethinker, the blind Syrian Abu’l-Ala Al-Maarri (973–1057), whom he described as “the Lucretius of Al-Islam, the

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<sup>40</sup> Boullata 1976: 27. However, Badawi: 1975 (pp. 226–227) mentions several other Arab poets who experimented with prose poetry as well.

<sup>41</sup> Moreh 1976: 297.

<sup>42</sup> Dīb 1941.

<sup>43</sup> Darraj 2005: 180.

<sup>44</sup> Hassan 2011: 38.

<sup>45</sup> Birney 1999.

<sup>46</sup> Abinader 2000.

<sup>47</sup> Birney 1999.

<sup>48</sup> Majaj, 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Abinader 2000.

<sup>50</sup> Kachru 2001: 519–523.

<sup>51</sup> Hassan 2016: 369.

Diogenes of Arabia and the Voltaire of the East,<sup>52</sup> and, as Rihani argued, the forerunner of Omar Khayyam.<sup>53</sup> The *Quatrains of Abu'l-Ala* were published in 1903 and followed by *The Luzumiyat of Abul-'Ala* in 1918. A characteristic example of Al-Maarri's poetry that resounds in Rihani's works and thought is the quatrain,

A church, a temple, or a Kāba Stone,  
Koran or Bible or a martyr's bone –  
All these and more my heart can tolerate  
Since my religion now is love alone.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, Rihani inspired and supported the foundation of a literary society dedicated to the renewal of Arabic literature, *Al-Rabīta al-Qalamiyya* (the Pen League or the Bond of the Pen).<sup>55</sup> Both Arab and American critics agree that the main part of Mahjar<sup>56</sup> literature, or Arab emigrant literature in the Americas, which emerged by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and flourished in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>57</sup> was produced by writers related to this “group of prominent Arab American literary figures during the 1910 to 1930s” in the U.S.<sup>58</sup> However, Rihani gradually shifted his attention to Arab politics rather than literature, so he would mainly “serve as a supporter and occasional advisor to the group.”<sup>59</sup> Most important, Rihani for a long time was the “teacher”<sup>60</sup> and role model of Kahlil Gibran, whom he met in Paris in 1910 for the first time, and who later became one of the main activists of the Pen League. At that time, Rihani was already a well-known traveler in Arab and Western lands and an established writer in English and Arabic, just having completed his book of philosophical essays in Arabic, *al-Rihaniyyat* (1910) and preparing for publication the first Arab emigrant novel in English, *The Book of Khalid* (1911), the first edition of which was illustrated by Gibran. Furthermore, in June 1910, Kahlil Gibran visited

<sup>52</sup> Rihani 1903: vi (“Preface”).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*: xviii–xix.

<sup>54</sup> Rihani 1903: 42.

<sup>55</sup> See Badawi 1975:182 on Rihani's role in *al-Rabīta al-Qalamiyya*.

<sup>56</sup> In Arabic, the word *mahğar* (مَهْجَر) means ‘the place of exile or emigration’.

<sup>57</sup> Badawi 1975: 179–180. See also Nijland 1998: 492.

<sup>58</sup> “Mahjar”. In: Cortés & Sloan 2013: 1396.

<sup>59</sup> Bushrui 2010: 175–191.

<sup>60</sup> On Rihani's role in Gibran's life see Bushrui & Jenkins 1998.



London with Ameen Rihani and Yusuf Huwayyik and actively participated in their discussions about literature, art, politics, religion, and philosophy, experimenting with ideas that shaped his later work.<sup>61</sup> As Bushrui and Jenkins explain, in London, “the three men laid plans for nothing less than the cultural renaissance of the Arab world,” mainly based on stopping religious strife and promoting universal values.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to his being a well-known writer, literary critic, translator, philosopher, and traveler, Rihani was a charismatic political activist<sup>63</sup> who dedicated his life to promoting peace, tolerance, and cultural exchange both within and between the two worlds to which he belonged equally.<sup>64</sup> Rihani’s greatest ambitions were, first, reconciliation between the East and the West by the means of cultural translation, and, second, liberation and unification of the Arab world.<sup>65</sup> His writings show deep insights into the nature of Middle Eastern politics, problems, the future of Arabs as a nation, and the potential rise of Islamic fundamentalism, for instance, in *The Kings of Arabs* (*Mulūk al-‘Arab*, 1924), *The Disasters* (*An-nakabāt*, ١٢٩١), and *The Modern History of Najd* (*Ta’rīḥ Nağd al-ḥadīṭ*, ١٢٩١). Rihani explored the origins and potential of globalization as well as cultural and religious hybridization both in the West and in the Arab world. His ideas, adapted for Anglophone readers, are expressed mainly in the novel *The Book of Khalid* (1911) and in two little collections of essays written in English, *The Descent of Bolshevism* (1920) and *The Path of Vision: Pocket Essays of East and West* (1921), which are discussed in detail further in this paper. According to Suheil Bushrui, Kahlil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace at the University of Maryland, “Had [Rihani’s] voice been listened to more attentively, the political and social tragedies in the region over the past 50 years would have been diminished and might even have been averted altogether.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Bushrui 1999.

<sup>64</sup> Hajjar 2010: xi.

<sup>65</sup> Hassan 2011: 39.

<sup>66</sup> Bushrui 1999.

### ***The Book of Khalid* (1911) as Rihani's spiritual autobiography**

*The Book of Khalid* (1911) appears to be a largely autobiographical work, paralleling many events of Rihani's life and reflecting, often ironically, his thoughts, aspirations, and failures. The central character of the novel is an immigrant of Syrian origin<sup>67</sup> in New York named Khalid<sup>68</sup> who has written a manuscript on philosophy, religion, and politics in a rather elated manner, proposing solutions to all the ailments of the East and West. He starts with the formulation of a new, hybrid world religion; next, he condemns the dishonesty of the Christian church, criticizes the spiritual decline of the West, depicts corruption in both the East and the West, outlines the mission of America as the new source of guidance to the world, and concludes with a failed attempt to reform Islam and revive the great Arab Caliphate by "Wahhabism, pure and simple."<sup>69</sup> The story of Khalid is composed by some unnamed Editor from fragments of Khalid's manuscript and the *Histoire Intime*, memoirs of Khalid's companion Shakib, also a Syrian immigrant in New York and a poet who (just like Ameen Rihani himself) composes poetry in Whitman's style<sup>70</sup> and "intersperses his Arabic with fancy French."<sup>71</sup> Khalid, Shakib, and the Editor might be considered different aspects of Rihani's personality, where Khalid is the idealistic, enthusiastic, emotional, and reckless dreamer; Shakib is the hardworking, systematic, and practical writer; and, finally, the Editor is the critical, mature voice of self-reflection. From this point of view, the novel might be regarded as Rihani's retrospection on his own naivety, illusions, and daydreams of youth, which he developed into remarkable achievements in politics and literature later in life.

Khalid as the central character of the novel is described as a sufferer for the truth in the mock-heroic style, using combined allusions to both Christian and Islamic beliefs about the coming of a prophet or a savior and redemption of the sins of the world. First of all, the enthusiastic, impractical dreamer Khalid, in reality, is sarcastically called by

<sup>67</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mount Lebanon was a part of the Syrian Province of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>68</sup> خالد (*Ḥālīd*) – "the eternal one" (Arabic).

<sup>69</sup> Rihani 1911: 321.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*: 49–50.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*: 9.

some dwellers of a “hasheesh-den” of the Red Quarter of Cairo “the new Muhdi”<sup>72</sup> and “Our Prophet.”<sup>73</sup> In this case, it appears that “Muhdi” is an alternative spelling of the name “Mahdi,”<sup>74</sup> ‘the Messiah of Islam,’ the long-awaited Savior, who, according to some Islamic traditions, will bring knowledge, peace, and justice worldwide together with Jesus Christ.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, the remark that Khalid had “lived in a cave in the wilderness of New York for five years”<sup>76</sup> refers to the meditations of the prophet of Islam, Muhammad, before revelation in a cave in the mountainous wilderness near Mecca. Khalid’s voyage to America is called “the Via Dolorosa of the emigrant,”<sup>77</sup> and his adventures “In the Exchange” might remind readers of the famous moneychangers mentioned in the Bible,<sup>78</sup> in particular, taking into account the “World-Temple” described in the first paragraph of the chapter:

Look up, therefore, and behold this World-Temple, which, to us, shall be a resting-place, and not a goal. On the border-line of the Orient and Occident it is built, on the mountain-heights overlooking both. No false gods are worshipped in it, – no philosophic, theologic, or anthropomorphic gods. Yea, and the god of the priests and prophets is buried beneath the Fountain, which is the altar of the Temple, and from which flows the eternal spirit of our Maker...<sup>79</sup>

Thus, not unlike Bunyan’s Pilgrim<sup>80</sup>, Khalid travels through allegorical places; indeed, he characterizes his manuscript as “a book of travels in

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*: 8.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> With a possibility that Rihani indeed meant the Arabic word *Muhdi* (مُهْدِي) – “the one who gives a present” (cf. [https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/\(مُهْدِي\)](https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/(مُهْدِي))).

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, Sonn 2004: 208–210. More on the Shiite view: Nasr 1989: 19.

<sup>76</sup> Rihani 1911: 8.

<sup>77</sup> “The voyage to America is the Via Dolorosa of the emigrant; and the Port of Beirut, the verminous hostelries of Marseilles, the Island of Ellis in New York, are the three stations thereof. And if your hopes are not crucified at the third and last station, you pass into the Paradise of your dreams.” Rihani 1911: 28–29.

<sup>78</sup> “And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.” Matthew 21: 12–13, KJV.

<sup>79</sup> Rihani 1911: 5.

<sup>80</sup> *The Pilgrim’s Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come; Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream* (1678) is a Christian allegory by John Bunyan, a Puritan preacher.

an impalpable country, an enchanted country, from which we have all risen, and towards which we are still rising ... the chart and history of one little kingdom of the Soul.”<sup>81</sup> Plagued like the majority of people by a multitude of unreliable “social and political guides, moral and religious dragomans,”<sup>82</sup> Khalid attempts to become a guide of humanity and revive the world through the union of Eastern and Western thought<sup>83</sup> in religion, culture, and politics. However, his efforts are futile, his ideas are scorned, and his proposals incite only anger, which seems a natural ending to the quest of a martyr-like figure.

*The Book of Khalid* deals with serious problems in a seemingly jocular manner that does not expose the author to attack for his professed views; however, this is perfectly explicable by Rihani’s bitter experience with publishing critical pamphlets about the Church and politics.<sup>84</sup> Possibly, using as a source of inspiration *The Praise of Folly* by Erasmus of Rotterdam who faced a similar situation and successfully presented his critique in then-fashionable form of fool’s literature,<sup>85</sup> Rihani chooses for his novel a style that reminds of the famous essay and, at the same time, resembles Rudyard Kipling’s writing, in particular, *Kim* (1901).<sup>86</sup> Fascinating to intellectuals who savor ‘Oriental exotics,’ intricate intertextuality, black humor, and indirect discussion of tabooed matters, Rihani’s novel contains sarcastic banter in a mix of languages, demonstrating the writer’s wide reading and comprehensive knowledge of both cultures. At first glance, it is a thrilling story about the adventures of two Syrian emigrants, peddlers in Lower Manhattan, who struggle to adapt in the U.S.A. and return to their homeland just after the Young Turk Revolution. However, detailed description of the daily routines, feelings, and impressions of emigrant life, starting with childhood and ending with a return to the homeland, are interwoven with allusions to political and intellectual actualities of the day and decorated with a bounty of Oriental motifs, allusions, and quotations. In this ostensibly playful

<sup>81</sup> Rihani 1911: iii.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*: vii.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*: 245.

<sup>84</sup> Such as the already mentioned *A Treatise on the French Revolution* (1902, نبذة عن الثورة، الفرنسية), *The Triple Alliance in the Animal Kingdom* (1903, المحالفة الثلاثية في المملكة الحيوانية), and other works published by Rihani in this period.

<sup>85</sup> Allen 1913: i–iv.

<sup>86</sup> Rihani was familiar with Kipling’s works; see, for instance, Hassan 2011: 43–44.

way, the author discusses provocative topics such as corruption in politics and in the church, the spiritual crisis of the West and the East, and liberation of the Middle East from Ottoman rule. The Editor hints at the nature of the novel, saying that “the Author of the Khedivial Library Manuscript can make his Genius dance the dance of the seven veils, if you but knew,” and “when his Genius is not dancing the dance of the seven veils, she is either flirting with the monks of the Lebanon hills or setting fire to something in New York.”<sup>87</sup> The discrepancy between the style and the content is directly explained in the beginning of the novel, as the Editor gives a piece of his mind to the reader about the manner in which significant matters should be discussed “nowadays,” in particular, the “most Important in the history of nations and individuals” as well as “time-honoured truths and moralities”<sup>88</sup>:

... no matter how important or trivial these, he who would give utterance to them must do so in cap and bells, if he would be heard nowadays. Indeed, the play is always the thing; the frivolous is the most essential, if only as a disguise. – For look you, are we not too prosperous to consider seriously your ponderous preachment?<sup>89</sup>

Rihani’s manner sometimes borders on blasphemy, for instance, starting the book with “Al-Fatihah” or “the opening chapter” which in the novel is “the Opening Word of Khalid himself”<sup>90</sup> recalls Surah al-Fatihah of the Quran, which, in turn, is defined in Islam as the direct speech of God. However, presented in such a context, radical opinions on science, religion, and politics could not be unequivocally understood as the author’s stance, but rather perceived either as controversial ideas ridiculed or exposed in the novel or as disputable matters presented to the audience for re-evaluation and further discussion. Nevertheless, the dedication of Khalid’s manuscript “to my Brother Man, my Mother Nature, and my Maker God”<sup>91</sup> points to the serious intent of the writer, and the role of the book is defined as “a propylon through which my race and those above and below my race, are invited to pass to that higher Temple

<sup>87</sup> Rihani 1911: 6–7.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*: 5.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*: 5. Apparently, another allusion to *The Praise of Folly* (“in cap and bells”).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*: v.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

of mind and spirit.”<sup>92</sup> The publication of similar ideas ten years later in Rihani’s *The Descent of Bolshevism* (1920) and *The Path of Vision: Pocket Essays of East and West* (1921) might serve as a proof that the author tested the reception of such ideas by the Anglophone audience, first presenting them in an outwardly humorous fashion.

### Ameen Rihani and the imaginary ‘exotic’ Orient

Being an immigrant of Syrian origin in American society in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century meant continuous fighting against prejudice. Arabs were thought to be racially inferior, “not quite white”<sup>93</sup> people who would be considered to be roughly of equal standing with the Anglophone majority only if of noble birth, great wealth, or notable talent.<sup>94</sup> At the same time, Orientals aroused interest, as they represented the imaginary Orient constructed by Western culture, a mythical, enigmatic, charming, exotic place teeming with sages, disguised princes, supernatural beings, and mystics.<sup>95</sup> For that reason, there were few possible respectable roles for Orientals in Western society, such as Eastern sage, prophet, or nobleman. As Kathleen Raine explains, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were already two well-formed tendencies of Western civilization: the first was “the final triumph of rational materialism based on natural science as the accepted orthodoxy of the Western and Westernized world” combined with conservative Christianity; and the other, “a powerful counter-current,” that was “flowing ... as if some collective spiritual power found agents where it could” towards different versions of Eastern mysticism that was either found in new teachings such as the Baha’i Faith or fused with traditional religions. For instance,

In India there were ... men equal to any teachers of her golden age – Rama-krishna, Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, and Mahatma Gandhi’s inspired faith in the power of non-violence to change the world;

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*: “Al-Fatihah.”

<sup>93</sup> Arab Americans were considered racially inferior. See, for instance, the publication of Arab American Institute, “Not Quite White: Race Classification and the Arab American Experience,” 2010.

<sup>94</sup> A vivid description of the place of “not quite white” people in American society of the time might be found in “Aloha Oe” (1908), a short story by Jack London.

<sup>95</sup> Kathleen Raine’s Foreword, in: S. Bushrui & J. Jenkins, 1998: i–vi. Cf. *Orientalism*: 20–32.

Yeats' friend Æ's vision of a world where the "politics of time" would be conducted according to the "politics of eternity"; ... Gibran, revising Christianity in the light of Islamic (Sufi) mysticism, is of this group...<sup>96</sup>

Fascination with Eastern religions was further stirred by F. Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1892), as it was based on the legends of Zoroastrianism and designed for those disappointed in Christianity.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the Baha'i Faith, brought to the U.S.A. by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from Persia, united the great religions, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism. At the same time, Theosophy, with *The Secret Doctrine, the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy* by Helena Blavatsky published in 1888, revived interest in esotericism and popularized Buddhism and Hinduism as well as the practice of expecting wisdom from Eastern teachers, prophets, and reincarnated gods.<sup>98</sup> What is more, Blavatsky's follower, Annie Besant,<sup>99</sup> adopted a Brahmin child, Jiddu Krishnamurti, as she believed that he was destined to become a World Teacher, an incarnation of Lord Maitreya.<sup>100</sup> It is not surprising in such a context that Americans saw in Gibran, then just a teenager from Boston ghettos, some "peculiar power" and "peculiar beauty" of a potential prophet, and that they believed legends about his noble birth and aristocratic life in exotic lands.<sup>101</sup> This might largely explain the success of *The Book of Khalid* (1911) as well as the popularity and influence of Gibran's *The Prophet* (1923), which continues the tradition.

Thus, "the first generation of Arab-American writers" adapted roles that were possible for Orientals within the pre-existing ideological framework. As Evelyn Shakir explains, they "dressed carefully for their encounter for the American public, putting on the guise of prophet, preacher, or man of letters. They could not hide their foreignness, but they could make it respectable."<sup>102</sup> According to Wail S. Hassan,

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Stack 1983: 80–84

<sup>98</sup> Godwin 2013: 17–20.

<sup>99</sup> Jayakar 1986: 22.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*: 30–59.

<sup>101</sup> Bushrui & Jenkins 1998: 3.

<sup>102</sup> Shakir, Evelyn. "Pretending to Be Arab: Role-Playing in Vance Bourjaily's 'The Fractional Man.'" MELUS 9:1 (Spring 1982), 6, quoted. in Hassan 2011: 41.

Some of the roles (such as Gibran's posture as a mystic or Oriental sage) are, of course, among the stereotypes circulating within the Orientalism's regime of truth, while others (Rihani as man of letters and Abraham Rihbany as a Protestant minister) were carefully calculated to challenge aspects of it, in an effort not only to "make foreignness respectable," but also to redefine the relationship between "East" and "West." The implied message was, "Here we are, we can produce literature that draws upon the most distinguished Western writers ... but we, too, are Orientals."<sup>103</sup>

Hence, the role of an Oriental sage was at the time one of the most appropriate for an Arab intellectual in the West, as there was a great interest in Eastern spiritual teachings. In this context, it appears that Rihani learned to exploit these preconceptions to negotiate his own position in American literary and artistic circles; in particular, he made good use of the stock image of a spiritual teacher from the East. In *The Book of Khalid* (1911), for instance, the main character, Khalid, "the new Muhi,"<sup>104</sup> his disciple poet Shakib, and the narrator of the book speak words of wisdom in a rather sarcastic way, interspersed with Oriental anecdotes and scenes overflowing with exotic and historical detail.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, in *The Book of Khalid*, Rihani uses his own Oriental background to expose widespread Western clichés about the mystical East, at the time perpetuated in literature and public opinion. Leaving the ordinary Western reader puzzled and overwhelmed, he oversaturates the eclectic novel with Oriental images and expressions, understanding of which requires some knowledge of Arabic as well as familiarity with Arab culture and politics. Similarly to Kipling, Rihani casually mentions Oriental terms in whole series without explanation, for instance, "the mudir of the District,"<sup>106</sup> "thy hammals under their burdens shall thank the heavens,"<sup>107</sup> or "the mudirs and kaiemkams of the Lebanon make these zabties, whose duty is to serve papers, serve, too, in their homes."<sup>108</sup> Oriental scenes overflow with exotic detail such as consulting

<sup>103</sup> Hassan 2011: 41.

<sup>104</sup> Rihani 1911: 8.

<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, in his anglophone essay booklets published ten years later, *The Path of Vision* (1921) and *The Descent of Bolshevism* (1920), Rihani adopts the role of the sage himself and presents similar ideas earnestly and confidently as his own thoughts.

<sup>106</sup> Rihani 1911: 269

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*: 246.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*: 270.



a sand-diviner in Cairo,<sup>109</sup> visiting the Khedivial library,<sup>110</sup> and vivid scenes such as the following description of an Eastern bazaar:

In the city, life is one such picturesque languid stream. The shop-keepers sit on their rugs in their stalls, counting their beads, smoking their narghilahs, waiting indifferently for Allah's bounties. And the hawkers shuffle along crying their wares in beautiful poetic illusions, – the flower-seller singing, "Reconcile your mother-in-law! Perfume your spirit! Buy a jasmine for your soul!" the seller of loaves, his tray on his head, his arms swinging to a measured step, intoning in pious thankfulness, "O thou Eternal, O thou Bountiful! " The sakka of licorice-juice, clicking his brass cups calls out to the thirsty one, "Come, drink and live! Come, drink and live!"<sup>111</sup>

Often, the reader encounters lists of names and facts such as in the following excerpt, which strongly resembles the mock-learned style of *The Praise of Folly*,<sup>112</sup>

... how can we interest ourselves in his fiction of history concerning Baalbek? What have we to do with the fact or fable that Seth the Prophet lived in this City; that Noah is buried in its vicinity; that Solomon built the Temple of the Sun for the Queen of Sheba; that this Prince and Poet used to lunch in Baalbek and dine at Istachre in Afghanistan; that the chariot of Nimrod drawn by four phoenixes from the Tower of Babel, lighted on Mt. Hermon to give said Nimrod a chance to rebuild the said Temple of the Sun? How can we bring any of these fascinating fables to bear upon our subject?<sup>113</sup>

However, the exotic world is described in a rich colloquial language that establishes affinity with the reader. As the Editor of the book further explains, "the material is of such a mixture that here and there the raw silk of Syria is often spun with the cotton and wool of America," and, apparently, to make serious matters more entertaining, the musings on history, religion, and politics are interspersed with "a slabbering of

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*: 8.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*: v.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*: 16.

<sup>112</sup> See, for instance, *The Praise of Folly*, p. 3: "Polycrates commended the cruelty of Busiris; and Isocrates, who corrects him for this, did as much for the injustice of Glaucus. Favorinus extolled Thersites, and wrote in praise of a quartan ague. Synesius pleaded in behalf of baldness; and Lucian defended a sipping fly."

<sup>113</sup> Rihani 1911: 20.

slang.”<sup>114</sup> The opening chapter introduces the reader to this style through the bold claim that the “modern Arabic Manuscript” written by Khalid was found “in the Khedivial Library of Cairo, among the Papyri of the Scribe of Amen-Ra and the beautifully illuminated copies of the Koran.” The mentioned “enigmatic drawings” on the cover, such as “a New York Skyscraper in the shape of a Pyramid”<sup>115</sup> and “a dancing group” with a caption, “The Stockbrokers and the Dervishes,”<sup>116</sup> might not only mock the fashionable use of stylized Oriental images,<sup>117</sup> but also suggest the familiarity of the author with occult symbolism and conspiracy theories of the day. The text also contains allusions to literary works supposedly well known to the reader, as, for instance, “And where, if not in the Lebanon hills, in which it seemed always afternoon, can he rejoin the Lotus-Eaters of the East?”<sup>118</sup> In this manner, reality is juxtaposed with the “imaginative geography” of the Orient<sup>119</sup> as constructed in Romantic literature, presenting scenes familiar to the reader and evoking feelings appropriate to the genre.

In fact, *The Book of Khalid* undermines and ridicules the whole array of popular stock images and stereotypes related to the Orient in Anglophone society, as they must have appeared absurd to Rihani as a person born and raised in so-called ‘exotic’ lands. By the end of the nineteenth century, many Westerners were fascinated with ‘the mystical Orient’; in particular, writers and artists were inspired by “the great poets of the West embracing the East,” mainly, “Yeats’s translation of the *Upanishads* and Eliot’s epiphany as he first read the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*.”<sup>120</sup> This sometimes grew into an obsession; for instance, the artists and intellectuals of Boston “dabbled with spiritualism and orientalism against an ‘exotic’ backdrop of Turkish carpets, jade bowls, water pipes, fezzes, pointed slippers, and Maeterlinck’s Neoplatonic broodings on death and preordained love.”<sup>121</sup> A characteristic, though possibly

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*: i.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*: i.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*: i.

<sup>117</sup> See, for instance, *ibid.*: 88.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*: 129; “Lotus-Eaters” might be a combined allusion: first, to Homer’s *Odyssey*, and second, to the famous poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson “The Lotos-Eaters” (1832).

<sup>119</sup> The term coined and explained by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (Said 1978: 49–70).

<sup>120</sup> Bushrui & Jenkins 1998: 1.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*: 4

exaggerated case is described in the chapter “With the Huris” of *The Book of Khalid*, where “a fair-spoken dame,” a “Medium” being “at the threshold of her climacteric,” a person who “dotes on the occult and exotic,” makes Khalid “a member of the Spiritual Household, which now consists of her and him, the Medium and the Dervish.”<sup>122</sup> The lady, “in an effort to seem Oriental,”<sup>123</sup> calls Khalid “the Dervish,” “My Syrian Rose,” “My Desert Flower,” “My Beduin Boy,” and so forth, “always closing her message with either a strip of Syrian sky or a camel load of the narcissus.”<sup>124</sup> While her beloved “now wears his hair long and grows his finger nails like a Brahmin” and “is beginning to have some manners,”<sup>125</sup> she daydreams about an imaginary East that has little relation to reality:

...one day we shall travel together in the Orient; we shall visit the ruins of vanished kingdoms and creeds. Ah, to be in Palmyra with you! Do you know, Child, I am destined to be a Beduin queen. The throne of Zenobia is mine, and yours too, if you will be good. We shall resuscitate the glory of the kingdom of the desert.<sup>126</sup>

As stated in the novel, Khalid “and the Medium are absorbed in the contemplation of the Unseen, though not, perhaps, of the Impalpable;” the pair “gallivant in the Parks, attend Bohemian dinners, and frequent the Don’t Worry Circles of Metaphysical Societies” where they “make long expeditions together to the Platonic North-pole and back to the torrid regions of Swinburne” and “perform their zikr and drink at the same fountain of ecstasy and devotion.”<sup>127</sup> These flowery phrases hint at a possible sexual affair between Khalid and “the medium,” which would be considered scandalous in the society of the time for several reasons at once. Unmarried sex was taboo; in addition, the situation would be even more complicated due to differences in the age, social status, and race<sup>128</sup> of the partners.

<sup>122</sup> Rihani 1911: 84.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*: 88.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*: 88–89.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*: 85.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*: 86.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*: 85.

<sup>128</sup> “Not Quite White: Race Classification and the Arab American Experience” 2010.

## Ameen Rihani as the forerunner of Edward Said

In fact, despite the already mentioned Romantic fascination with the Orient,<sup>129</sup> this also was “an age of rampant xenophobia”<sup>130</sup> and racial prejudice<sup>131</sup> combined with persistent stereotypes that might be supported or confronted, but never ignored. It must be noted that Rihani was well aware of the role of propaganda in the colonization of the East by what he calls “Christendom,” by which he, apparently, means Western civilization; therefore, he might be also considered a forerunner of Edward Said in some sense, as demonstrated by the following quotation from *The Book of Khalid*:

Not to Christian Europe as represented by the State, therefore, or by the industrial powers of wealth, or by the alluring charms of decadence in art and literature, or by missionary and educational institutions, would I have you turn for light and guidance. No: from these plagues of civilisation protect us, Allah! No: let us have nothing to do with that practical Christianity which is become a sort of divine key to Colonisation; a mint, as it were, which continually replenishes the treasuries of Christendom. Let us have nothing to do with their propagandas for the propagation of supreme Fakes.<sup>132</sup>

This topic was explored frankly and in depth more than half a century later in Edward Said’s famous *Orientalism* (1978), exposing the ruling discourse that supported the superiority of the West and its *mission civilisatrice*. Edward Said argued that even scholarly studies that appeared objective and detached compiled and analyzed bits of agreed-on factual or fictitious knowledge about the Orient contained in previous studies. Instead of systematic, objective exploration of the real Orient, Orientalists constructed an unreal image of Orient in some imaginary space, which was transferred from work to work in consecutive citations by European writers and scholars.<sup>133</sup> Facts or interpretations that disagreed with this image were dismissed as inappropriate or irrelevant, as they could undermine the official ideology that permitted Western domination and colonization worldwide. In other words, the Orientalist attitude

<sup>129</sup> Bushrui & Jenkins 1998: 1–4.

<sup>130</sup> Shakir, 1996: 6., quoted in Hassan 2011: 41.

<sup>131</sup> “Not Quite White: Race Classification and the Arab American Experience” 2010.

<sup>132</sup> Rihani 1911: 317.

<sup>133</sup> Said 1978: 20–23.

“shares with magic and mythology the self-containing, self-reinforcing character of a closed system, in which objects are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can either dislodge or alter.”<sup>134</sup> For that reason, as Said maintained, the study of the Orient in Western universities was in no way purely theoretical or scholarly but rather an active attempt of the West to justify colonization, as it promoted “the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures”<sup>135</sup>:

Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying ‘us’ Europeans against all ‘those’ non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness.<sup>136</sup>

However, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Orientalism in the sense later criticized by Said was “a powerful discourse,” yet unchallenged, and the Anglophone readers “had already formed their ideas about that distant culture.”<sup>137</sup> In particular, in 1911, concepts like *white man’s burden*, or the image of *East and West* as homogeneous, separate, opposite entities for most Westerners seemed indisputable and self-evident as demonstrated by, for instance, Rudyard Kipling’s writings. On these grounds, “a white middle-class Westerner” believed that it was “his human prerogative not only to manage the non-white world but also to own it, just because” non-Westerners were “not quite as human” by definition.<sup>138</sup>

Not able to criticize the discourse of Orientalism as Edward Said did in 1970s, Rihani attempted to question, expose, and subtly undermine its tenets in his literary works, and thus he established a whole tradition. While Rihani and Arab American writers who came after him operated

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*: 70.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*: 7.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Hassan 2011: 41.

<sup>138</sup> Said 1978: 108.

mainly within the mentioned system of stock images and prejudices, they also asserted that they were more qualified to speak about the Orient than Western scholars, attempting “to replace the Orientalist as interpreter or translator of the Orient as a way of claiming cultural space and voice, countering the negativity associated with the Orient, and mediating between it and the West for the sake of greater cross-cultural understanding.”<sup>139</sup> As Wail S. Hassan explained further,

They accepted the Orientalist distinction between the contrasting essences of East and West, the former seen as passive, mystical, spiritual, traditional, backward, and the latter correspondingly as aggressive, rational, materialistic, modern, progressive. What they wanted to contest was the hierarchy of values attached to the poles of this binary. They were angry at, and rebellious against, the oppressive rule of the Ottoman Empire and highly critical of social and political conditions on Syria and the rest of the Arab world. They correspondingly admired the social, political, and technological advances of western European countries and the United States. But they were also very conscious and proud of a great civilization’s past history and rich literary heritage, to which they contributed through their Arabic prose and poetry, written in the United States. They could not, therefore, accept the idea of the East’s inferiority.<sup>140</sup>

Obviously, a characteristic example of such an approach is *The Book of Khalid* in its entirety. Unable to break out of the established ideological framework, Rihani uses his mouthpiece, Khalid, in an attempt to construct a more positive image of an Oriental. Necessarily, the writer uses elements that would feel familiar and unquestionable to the Western reader. For instance, he describes “the lofty spirituality of the Orient” based in “the beautiful ancient virtues” and “the supreme truths of the Books of Revelation” such as “continnence, purity of heart, fidelity, simplicity, a sense of true manhood, magnanimity of spirit” as well as “a healthiness of body and mind.”<sup>141</sup> In this case, apparently, Rihani exploits the fact that both the Bible and Quran originated in the Middle East. Furthermore, he uses the first-person voice to persuade the reader that the following characteristic must be true, for instance, “we Orientals

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<sup>139</sup> Hassan 2011: 42.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*: 290.

differ from Europeans and Americans; we are never bribed into obedience. We obey either from reverence and love, or from fear. We are either power-worshippers or cowards, but never, never traders.”<sup>142</sup> Next, the author argues that the perceived vices of Orientals are not worse than those of Westerners, similarly to the following example: “It might be said that the masses in the East are blind slaves, while in Europe and America they are become blind rebels. And which is the better part of valour, when one is blind – submission or revolt?”<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, Rihani does mention “loafing” as an Oriental quality,<sup>144</sup> thus ostensibly supporting the negative stereotype depicting Orientals as “the Lotus-Eaters of the East,”<sup>145</sup> however, he attempts to invert it by arguing that it is not laziness, but rather physical inactivity that accompanies intense work of mind and soul – in case of Khalid, at least. The reasoning is based on another set of stereotypes that present the creative process of composing a book as hard, but honorable work:

And Khalid once said to me, ‘In loafing here, I work as hard as did the masons and hod-carriers who laboured on these pyramids.’ And I believe him. For is not a book greater than a pyramid? ... A man who conceives and writes a great book, my friend, has done more work than all the helots that laboured on these pyramidal futilities. That is why I find no exaggeration in Khalid’s words. For when he loafs, he does so in good earnest. Not like the camel-driver there or the camel, but after the manner of the great thinkers and mystics: like Al-Fared and Jlal’ud-Deen Romy, like Socrates and St. Francis of Assisi, Khalid loafs.<sup>146</sup>

It must be noted that this justification provides grounds to the reader to think that it might be applicable to other cases of Eastern loafing as well, so it is a step towards building a positive generic image of an Oriental. Most probably, a more radical attempt to break the stereotypes would be rejected by the Anglophone audience of that period.

Next, by juxtaposing references to historical events and persons of both the Middle East and the West, Rihani might aim to prove to the

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*: 112.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*: 55: “Khalid is gradually reverting to the Oriental instinct.”

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*: 11: “And where, if not in the Lebanon hills, “ in which it seemed always afternoon,” can he rejoin the Lotus-Eaters of the East?”

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*: 10.

reader that (at least some) Arabs should not be considered inferior, contrary to the widespread prejudice of that time. A vivid example of such a method is the enumeration of great Arab philosophers, scientists, poets, and leaders together with their Western counterparts, for instance, in “Book the Second” of *The Book of Khalid*. Baalbek is described as the city that “gave the world many a saint and martyr along with its harlots and poets and philosophers,” for instance, “St. Minius, St. Cyril and St. Theodosius,” as well as “Al-Iman ul-Ouzai the scholar; al-Makrizi the historian; Kallinichus the chemist, who invented the Greek fire,” and, finally, “Kosta ibn Luka, a doctor and philosopher” who “were as famous in their days as Ashtarout or Jupiter-Ammon.”<sup>147</sup> Or, for instance, “the noted Sheikh Taleb of Damascus” is portrayed with qualities that the Western reader would recognize in him the eccentric wise man, or a hermit; Rihani compares him to Socrates, an authority to the Western reader:

A Muslem, like Socrates, who educates not by lesson, but by going about his business. He seldom deigns to write; and yet, his words are quoted by every writer of the day, and on every subject sacred and profane. His good is truly magnetic. He is a man who lives after his own mind and in his own robes; an Arab who prays after no Imam, but directly to Allah and his Apostle; a scholar who has more dryasdust knowledge on his finger ends than all the ulema of Cairo and Damascus; a philosopher who would not give an orange peel for the opinion of the world; an ascetic who flees celebrity as he would the plague; a sage who does not disdain to be a pedagogue; an eccentric withal to amuse even a Diogenes.<sup>148</sup>

In fact, Rihani’s depiction of notable Arabs as indisputably equal to other distinguished scholars and heroes recognized by Westerners recalls the concept of equality of “strong men” professed in R. Kipling’s famous “The Ballad of East and West” (1889)<sup>149</sup>,

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,  
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment Seat;  
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*: 19–20.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*: 305–306.

<sup>149</sup> R. Kipling, in the researcher’s opinion, also attempted to break the stereotypes as much as it was possible in his time within the established ideological framework.



When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends  
of the earth!<sup>150</sup>

Presented in this way, Arab scientists, philosophers, and leaders acquire features and qualities familiar and fully comprehensible to a Western reader, including the set of stock characters with their necessary attributes, such as the charismatic leader, the wise recluse, the eccentric learned man, and others. This process is opposite to defamiliarization or dehumanization, and represents a characteristic case of cultural translation, in which information is modified according to the experience and values of the audience for the sake of peace and harmony, though based on quasi-understanding. In addition, this kind of cultural translation includes portrayals of symbols, images, historical events, and social roles in an often-inadequate way based on superficial resemblance, which might be the greatest danger of such a method. Even though some of the represented social roles seem to be roughly equivalent according to certain criteria, complete identity should never be assumed; for instance, a mullah is not a Catholic priest, and a caliph is not the King of England, however similar their roles might seem at first glance. Yet it appears that in intercultural communication, such adapted images should be preferred, as these would hide aspects considered objectionable by the other culture; besides, understanding and acceptance of controversial detail might be reached only by extensive studies of the foreign culture, which does not seem feasible for wider audiences.

### **Ameen Rihani on ailments and riches of the West**

As already explained, Rihani outwardly re-constructs the binary opposition between the generic West and the generic East, necessarily operating within the framework of Orientalist discourse and largely using Western truisms; however, he attempts to negotiate slightly different roles for both that would raise the status of the Orient and undermine the superiority of the Occident.<sup>151</sup> To perform this intellectual trick, Rihani lavishes naïve praise on Western science and technology, subtly relating

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<sup>150</sup> Of this poem, mainly, the first line is quoted as representative of British imperialistic ideology, overlooking the end of the stanza that undermines it.

<sup>151</sup> Similarly to R. Kipling.

it, however, to the Biblical city of Babylon, using as a clue the controversial symbolism of the Statue of Liberty.<sup>152</sup> Definitely, such a connection felt natural to Christian audiences of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as it was already a widespread cliché in press, literature, and sermons.<sup>153</sup> The U.S.A. was usually compared to the New Babylon: <sup>154</sup> rich, multi-cultural, but depraved, with skyscrapers seen as ziggurats<sup>155</sup> and Wall Street businessmen described as “the merchants of the earth ... waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”<sup>156</sup>

Thus, in *The Book of Khalid*, Rihani describes an immigrant’s amazement and awe at the first sight of the New York harbour:

“And is this the gate of Paradise, “ he asks, “ or the port of some subterrestrial city guarded by the Jinn? What a marvel of enchantment is everything around us! What manifestations of industrial strength, what monstrosities of wealth and power, are here! These vessels proudly putting to sea; these tenders scurrying to meet the Atlantic greyhound which is majestically moving up the bay; these barges loading and unloading schooners from every strand, distant and near; these huge lighters carrying even railroads over the water; these fire-boats scudding through the harbour shrilling their sirens; these careworn, grim, strenuous multitudes ferried across from one enchanted shore to another; these giant structures tickling heaven’s sides;

<sup>152</sup> Rihani shows his understanding of this controversial symbolism in *The Book of Khalid*, pp. 35 and 258. More on legends and superstitions related to Lady Liberty see, for example, McCullough, Raymond. *The Whore and her Mother: 9/11, Babylon, and the Return of the King*. Precious Oil Publications, 2011 as well as Hieronimus, Robert & Cortner, Laura E. *The Secret Life of Lady Liberty: Goddess in the New World*. Toronto, Destiny Books, 2016.

<sup>153</sup> Wilson 2016: 69–72.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> A hint to this cliché might be the mention in “Al-Fatihah” (*The Book of Khalid*, p. ii) drawings on the cover of Khalid’s manuscript as “curious, if not as mystical, as ancient Egyptian symbols” that was “supposed to represent a New York Skyscraper in the shape of a Pyramid.” Another quotation demonstrates that Rihani indeed meant Egyptian pyramids (tombs) rather than Mesopotamian ziggurats (temples): “And when he pulls down the pyramids to build American Skyscrapers with their stones, where shall we bury then our Muhdi?” (*The Book of Khalid*, p. 9; the conversation takes place in Egypt). Therefore, this might point at the Masonic symbolism, with which Rihani was known to be familiar (see, for instance, Shmuel Moreh, *Modern Arabic Poetry: 1800–1970; the Development of Its Forms and Themes*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976, pp. 96–100, or one of the sources S. Moreh used, M. Naimy’s autobiography *Saba’in*).

<sup>156</sup> Rev. 18:3 (KJV).

these cable bridges, spanning rivers, uniting cities; and this superterrestrial goddess, torch in hand ...Salaam, this enchanted City!"<sup>157</sup>

Furthermore, he pronounces Americans the true heirs of the spirit of Phoenicians, manifest in the great American accomplishments such as geographical discoveries, navigation, work with precious metals, and trade; although this spirit is facing degradation because of selfishness and greed:

These dealers in tin and amber, these manufacturers of glass and purple,<sup>158</sup> these developers of a written language, first gave the impetus to man's activity and courage and intelligence. And this activity of the industry and will is not dead in man. It may be dead in us Syrians, but not in the Americans. In their strenuous spirit it rises uppermost. After all, I must love the Americans, for they are my Phoenician ancestors incarnate ... I believe that the spirit which moved those brave sea-daring navigators of yore, is still working lustily, bravely, but alas, not joyously – bitterly, rather, selfishly, greedily – behind the steam engine, the electric motor, the plough, and in the clinic and the studio as in the Stock Exchange.<sup>159</sup>

In this manner, praise of Western civilization is combined with open criticism of its negative sides. Khalid laments the spiritual poverty of the West, in particular, of the U.S.A., in words that are strongly reminiscent of the Book of Revelation,<sup>160</sup> stating that America worships "false and unspeakable divinities" such as "the gods of wealth, of egoism, of alcohol, of fornication."<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, he calls "lust of gain" "a plague,"<sup>162</sup> which also recalls the verse, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."<sup>163</sup> The riches corrupt

<sup>157</sup> Rihani 1911: 34–35.

<sup>158</sup> Compare with the description of riches of the Babylon in Rev. 18:3 (KJV): "And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men."

<sup>159</sup> Rihani 1911: 140.

<sup>160</sup> "...is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her." Rev. 18:2–3 (KJV).

<sup>161</sup> Rihani 1911: 288.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*: 197.

<sup>163</sup> Rev. 18:4 (KJV),

everyone who approaches the Promised Land, and America is likened to “Circe with her golden horns of plenty,” where “one can not as much as keep his blood in circulation without damning the currents of one’s soul?”<sup>164</sup> The reason is worship of success and material gain, as described in Khalid’s manuscript,

O Success, our lords of power to-day are thy slaves, thy helots, our kings of wealth. Every one grinds for thee, every one for thee lives and dies... Thy palaces of silver and gold are reared on the souls of men. Thy throne is mortised with their bones, cemented with their blood. Thou ravenous Gorgon, on what bankruptcies thou art fed, on what failures, on what sorrows! The railroads sweeping across the continents and the steamers ploughing through the seas, are laden with sacrifices to thee. Ay, and millions of innocent children are torn from their homes and from their schools to be offered to thee at the sacrificial-stone of the Factories and Mills. The cultured, too, and the wise, are counted among thy slaves. Even the righteous surrender themselves to thee and are willing to undergo that hideous transformation. O Success, what an infernal litany thy votaries and high-priests are chanting to thee ... Thou ruthless Gorgon, what crimes thou art committing, and what crimes are being committed in thy name!”<sup>165</sup>

Greed has taken place of religion, so, as Khalid sarcastically remarks, Americans are “neither Pagans ... nor fetish-worshipping heathens”<sup>166</sup> but rather “they are all true and honest votaries of Mammon, their great God, their one and only God,” so “the Demiurgic Dollar should be the national Deity of America.”<sup>167</sup> Lust of gain, therefore, is epitomized in “the Cash Register” as “the Host of the Demiurgic Dollar,” in this context understood as the Communion bread of materialistic society.<sup>168</sup> Rihani further ironizes,

Indeed, the omnipresence and omnipotence of it are not without divine significance. For can you not see that this Cash Register, this Pix of Trade, is prominently set up on the altar of every institution, political, moral, social, and religious? Do you not meet with it everywhere, and foremost in the sanctuaries of the mind and the soul? In the Societies for the Diffusion of

<sup>164</sup> Rihani 1911: 128.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*: 77.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*: 112

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*: 130.

Knowledge; in the Social Reform Propagandas; in the Don't Worry Circles of Metaphysical Gymnasiums; In Alliances, Philanthropic, Educational; in the Board of Foreign Missions; in the Sacarium of Vaticinatress Eddy; in the Church of God itself; – is not the Cash Register a divine symbol of the credo, the faith, or the idea?<sup>169</sup>

In addition, Europe, which has for centuries served as the intellectual and spiritual basis of the Western civilization, being “high, noble, healthy, pure, and withal progressive” and known for “the deep and inexhaustible sources of genius ... of reason and wisdom and truth”<sup>170</sup> such as “the divine idealism of German philosophy, the lofty purity of true French art, the strength and sterling worth of English freedom,”<sup>171</sup> in Rihani’s opinion is deteriorating as well. It is “being de-religionised by Material Science; disorganised by Communion and Anarchy; befuddled by Alcoholism; enervated by Debauch”<sup>172</sup> and, therefore, has lost its role. Furthermore, Europe is starting to be recognized mainly by its vices, while its virtues are neglected and forgotten:

But alas, what are we doing to-day? Instead of looking up to the pure and lofty souls of Europe for guidance, we welter in the mud with the lowest and most degenerate. We are beginning to know and appreciate English whiskey, but not English freedom; we know the French grisettes, but not the French sages; we guzzle German beer, but of German wisdom we taste not a drop.<sup>173</sup>

As a result, total confusion and chaos are imminent; Rihani vividly describes the situation as follows:

We are pestered and plagued with guides and dragomans of every rank and shade; – social and political guides, moral and religious dragomans: a Tolstoy here, an Ibsen there, a Spencer above, a Nietzsche below. And there thou art left in perpetual confusion and despair. Where wilt thou go? Whom wilt thou follow? ... For Society must be redeemed, and many are the redeemers. The Cross, however, is out of fashion, and so is the Dona Dulcinea motive. ...The work can be done, and speedily, if we could but choose. Wagner can

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*: 130.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*: 317.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*: 317–318.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*: 288.

do it with music; Bakunin, with dynamite; Karl Marx, with the levelling rod; Haeckel, with an injection of protoplasmic logic; the Pope, with a pinch of salt and chrism; and the Packer-Kings of America, with pork and beef.<sup>174</sup>

### **Ameen Rihani on pan-Arabism, extremism, and revival of the Caliphate**

*The Book of Khalid* contains a bitterly sarcastic description of the failed attempt of Khalid to become the new Arab leader who would unite the nation, liberate it from Ottoman rule, and reclaim the lands of the First Caliphate. This extremely controversial topic is discussed in an obscure and ambiguous manner, so that the author's stance is not easily discernible. It might be understood as a serious proposition, presented cautiously for fear of persecution, or as mockery of pan-Arabist and Islamist ideas with a vivid depiction of the necessary end of such enterprises in the Arab world.<sup>175</sup> Besides, it seems quite possible that the mature, realistic Rihani laughed at his own earlier daydreams, enthusiasm, and admiration of Arab glory of the past<sup>176</sup> after reading the chapter of Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship* on "Prophet Mahomet"<sup>177</sup> and Washington Irving's *The Alhambra*. However, the already discussed attempts to shift the perception of Orientals in the West might be discerned in these parts of the novel as well. The Western concept of the backward, stagnant, and indolent Orient, including "the gorgeous besottedness of Oriental life, and literature, and religion,"<sup>178</sup> is countered by the attractive Romantic image of Arabs portrayed by Khalid as "a great race who has fallen on evil days,"<sup>179</sup> characterized by "the barbaric grandeur, the magnanimity and fidelity,"<sup>180</sup> and just awaiting "the renaissance of Arabia; the reclaiming of her land" as well as, finally, "the resuscitation of her glory."<sup>181</sup> He believes that:

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*: vii–viii.

<sup>175</sup> Rihani's opinion on various extremist movements may be found in his *The Descent of Bolshevism* (Rihani 1920).

<sup>176</sup> Bushrui 1999.

<sup>177</sup> "Lecture II. The Hero as Prophet. Mahomet: Islam."

<sup>178</sup> Rihani 1911: 317–318.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*: 310.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*: 295.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*: 310.

A little will-power, a little heroism, added to those virtues I have named, the solid virtues of our ancestors, and the Orient will no longer be an object of scorn and gain to commercial Europe. We shall then stand on an equal footing with the Europeans. Ay, with the legacy of science which we shall learn to invest, and with our spirituality divested of its cobwebs, and purified, we shall stand even higher than the Americans and Europeans.<sup>182</sup>

Khalid argues that the decline of Arabs as a nation is caused by Ottoman oppression, adding that “Indeed, nothing is duller, more stupid, more prosaic than a modern absolutism,”<sup>183</sup> characterized by backwardness, total control,<sup>184</sup> and corrupt officials who “can better read a gold piece than a passport.”<sup>185</sup> Therefore, “The Turk must go – at least out of Arabia,”<sup>186</sup> and by any means. As Khalid ardently exclaims,

We need another Saladin to-day, – a Saladin of the Idea, who will wage a crusade, not against Christianity or Mohammedanism, but against those Tataric usurpers who are now toadying to both.<sup>187</sup>

Passionately, he exclaims, “No; the Arab will never be virtually conquered. Nominally, maybe. And I doubt if any of the European Powers can do It. Why? Chiefly because Arabia has a Prophet. She produced one and she will produce more.”<sup>188</sup> He proceeds,

But out in those deserts is a race which is always young, a race that never withers; a strong, healthy, keen-eyed, quick-witted race; a fighting, fanatical race; a race that gave Europe a civilisation, that gave the world a religion; a race with a past as glorious as Rome’s; and with a future, too, if we had an Ali or a Saladin. But He who made those heroes will make others like them, better, too. He may have made one already, and that one may be wandering now in the desert.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*: 291.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*: 17.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*: 24

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*: 303.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*: 302.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*: 304.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*: 303.

Khalid further characterizes this new hero as the one who would repeat the great deeds of the ancestors and return their lands to the rightful owners. His aim would be the renewal of the first Caliphate, which spread over the Middle East and North Africa in less than a century and united all nations of these lands with one language, the sacred Classical Arabic, and one ideology, that of Islam. However, this new “Saladin,” “the builder of a great Asiatic Empire,” should possess both ““The soul of the East” and “The mind of the West,”<sup>190</sup> that is, Oriental spirituality and Western rational thinking and attitude to business, science, and technology.<sup>191</sup> Feverishly, Khalid envisions himself as a possible candidate,

... and why not? especially if backed with American millions and the love of a great woman. He is enraptured. He can neither sleep nor think: he can but dream. He puts on his jubbah, refills his cigarette box, and walks out of his room. He paces up and down the hall, crowning his dream with wreaths of smoke.<sup>192</sup>

As Khalid argues:

Now think what can be done in Arabia, think what the Arabs can accomplish, if American arms and an up-to-date Koran are spread broadcast among them. With my words and your love and influence, with our powers united, we can build an Arab Empire, we can resuscitate the Arab Empire of the past. Abd’ul-Wahhab, you know, is the Luther of Arabia; and Wahhabism is not dead. It is only slumbering in Nejd. We will wake it; arm it; infuse into it the living spirit of the Idea. We will begin by building a plant for the manufacture of arms on the shore of the Euphrates, and a University in Yaman.<sup>193</sup>

Khalid believes that the combination of Wahhabism and Western science would lead to “the awakening of the East; of puissant Orient nations rising to glorify the Idea, to build temples to the Universal Spirit – to Art, and Love, and Truth, and Faith.”<sup>194</sup> He sees Wahhabism as “Islam in its

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*: 301.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*: 310.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*: 301.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*: 303.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*: 325–326.



pristine purity ... the Islam of the first great Khalifs,"<sup>195</sup> the real Islam, "free ... from its degrading customs, its stupefying traditions,"<sup>196</sup> which serves as "a direct telegraph wire between mortal man and his God."<sup>197</sup> In fact, Khalid supposes likeness between Luther's ideas and subsequent Reformation and the reformation of Islam proposed by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and "the most fanatical" among "Wahhabis of Nejd."<sup>198</sup> Furthermore, he awaits that "one day" the followers of Wahhabism might build "a great Arab Empire in the border-land of the Orient and Occident, in this very heart of the world, this Arabia, this Egypt, this Field of the Cloth of Gold"<sup>199</sup> where "the Male and Female of the Spirit shall give birth to a unifying faith, a unifying art, a unifying truth."<sup>200</sup> However, Khalid overlooks the restrictions of ultra-conservative Wahhabism that would inevitably impede any introduction of Western philosophy and hybridization of religion, allowing as the "unifying faith" only one version of Islam. A bright example is the situation in Saudi Arabia today, where proposing any change in existing traditions and religious practice, even as the result of profound studies of the Quran and hadiths, causes extreme problems,<sup>201</sup> not speaking of any innovation in religion.

Taking into account the current (and perpetual) turmoil in the Middle East, the mentioned discussion of re-establishment of the Caliphate feels eerily relevant to the recent events; in particular, as a text written more than a hundred years ago, it seems even prophetic. What is more, the scene of Khalid's speech at the "grand Mosque Omayyah"<sup>202</sup> presents a curious image of "Arab spring":

The Mosque is crowded; and the press of turbans is such that if a pea were dropt from above it would not reach the floor. From the pulpit the great Mohammedan audience, with its red fezes, its green and white turbans, seemed to Khalid like a verdant field overgrown with daisies and poppies. "It is the beginning of Arabia's Spring, the resuscitation of the glory of Islam," and so forth... For as he stood in the tribune, the picture of the field

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<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*: 308.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*: 320.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*: 308.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*: 308.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*: 342.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>201</sup> See, for instance, Hubbard 2016.

<sup>202</sup> Rihani 1911: 315.

of daisies and poppies suggested the picture of Spring. A speaker is not always responsible for the frolics of his fancy. Indeed, an audience of some five thousand souls, all intent upon this opaque, mysterious Entity in the tribune, is bound to reach the very heart of it; for think what five thousand rays focused on a sensitive plate can do.<sup>203</sup>

The term ‘Arab Spring’ itself is rather familiar to the 21<sup>st</sup> century readers after the series of revolutions in Arab countries in 2010–2011, and it seems a weird coincidence that Rihani uses these words in such a context.

Portraying Khalid as a passionate but misguided and pathetic idealist, Rihani, as it seems, distances himself from the ideas professed by “the new Muhdi.” Taking into consideration the fact that Rihani was recently excommunicated by the Catholic Church, one might perfectly understand his reluctance to engage in direct religious disputes with Islamic fundamentalists as well. Rihani does not directly support or criticize the ideas of re-establishing the Arab Caliphate with “Wahhabism, pure and simple,”<sup>204</sup> “American millions,”<sup>205</sup> and “American arms;”<sup>206</sup> which, as it seems, was quite common by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in some circles of Arab nationalists. On the contrary, the radical views are cautiously presented as delusions of some questionable, overly zealous character; the author steps back, leaving Khalid to follow his disastrous plans to the inevitable end. Rihani vividly depicts the fate of anyone who would challenge traditions and call for reforms in politics and religion while speaking to Middle-Eastern audiences without sufficient preparation and in an improper way. The “great Mohammedan audience” at the “grand Mosque Omayyah”<sup>207</sup> turns out to be absolutely intolerant; as Khalid touches several taboo topics, he is followed by the angry crowd, which throws stones at him as at ash-Shaytan ar-Rajeem,<sup>208</sup> the Accursed Satan of Islamic tradition.<sup>209</sup> In the end, expelled by the

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*: 316.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*: 320.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*: 301.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*: 303.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*: 315.

<sup>208</sup> “The one who must be killed by stoning [lapidation]” (Arabic).

<sup>209</sup> Rihani 1911: 330.

Ottoman authorities and rejected by everyone, Khalid disappears into the desert.

However ambiguous the author's stance might appear in the novel, the proof that Rihani supports neither Wahhabism nor revolutions and, therefore, depicts Khalid's failed quest critically and perhaps even as a warning against similar attempts, can be found in his 1920 brochure, *The Descent of Bolshevism*:

The Wahhabys of today continue to rule in Hasa, maintaining their independence even against the new King of Hijaz. And under their Mohammedan puritanism is the smouldering fire of the Karmathians. They, too, once captured and sacked the Holy City of Mecca and still nourish, under the guise of piety and the assumption of learning, the most dangerous designs against it and Islam.<sup>210</sup>

Rihani's attention to Bolshevism and extremist movements of the Middle East is not surprising; as Schumann explained, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia was "the historical watershed" that strongly influenced the "intellectual trends in the Arab World," including the Arab Renaissance.<sup>211</sup> The immediate effect was the domination of Arab thought "intellectually, politically, and economically by the conflict between free-market capitalism and socialism on the global level,"<sup>212</sup> at the same time, "nationalism emerged as a pronounced anticolonial movement with World War I and has remained the dominant ideology in the region until today."<sup>213</sup> The success of the Bolshevik Revolution inspired dissidents in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire, which must have been a concern to Rihani in 1919–1920. It must be noted that, at least in *The Book of Khalid*, he criticizes "a political revolution" that is not "preceded by a spiritual one" because, otherwise, "things will revert to their previous state of rottenness as sure as Allah lives"<sup>214</sup> and the revolution itself turns into a farce. He illustrates his point by his bright, sarcastic description of events after the proclamation of the First Ottoman

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<sup>210</sup> Rihani 1920: 26.

<sup>211</sup> Schumann 2016: 272.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*: 290.

Constitution, when “the country was rioting in the saturnalia of Freedom and Equality”<sup>215</sup>:

I beheld my old friend the Spouter dispensing to the turbaned and tarboused crowd, among which were cameleers and muleteers with their camels and mules, of the blessing of that triple political abracadabra of the France of more than a century passed. Liberty, Fraternity, Equality! ... Live the Era of Concord and peace and love! Live the Dastur<sup>216</sup>! Hurrah for the Union and Progress Heroes! Come down to Beirut and do some shouting with your fellow citizens.<sup>217</sup>

In *The Descent of Bolshevism*, Rihani analyzes the origin and ideology of several radical movements and sects such as the Khawarij, the Kar-mathians, and the Assassins, of which Wahhabism, in the writer’s opinion, is another characteristic example. He likens these religious sects to the Bolsheviks, who had recently risen to power in Russia, and argues that even Mazdakism should be considered “the Bolshevism we meet with, as early as the fifth century, in Persia.”<sup>218</sup> He explains that such movements have originated in “the ancient as well as the modern world,” and that the “only difference is in the background and the surroundings, which give the movements distinct local colors and strange sounding names.”<sup>219</sup> They start as people rebel against injustice and reject “the restraints of laws and creeds,”<sup>220</sup> following “leaders, undoubtedly sincere at first” who tempt them with “the utopian dream” and declare “themselves the exponents of its ideals, the promised messengers of its blessings.”<sup>221</sup> Thus, “the vision of the Perfect State, which awakens a people from the stupor of slavery, arouses them to revolt, fires them with dazzling promises, and leads them to self-sacrifice, to martyrdom, to destruction.”<sup>222</sup> However, soon after the revolt, a period of what Rihani calls “communism and red terror in the hope of realizing ultimately the

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*: 277.

<sup>216</sup> “Constitution” (Arabic).

<sup>217</sup> Rihani 1911: 278–279.

<sup>218</sup> Rihani 1920: 1.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*: xii.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*: ix.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*: ix.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*: x.

Perfect State,”<sup>223</sup> characterized by “creative destruction,”<sup>224</sup> is inevitable, and both leaders and their followers become “apostles of violence,”<sup>225</sup> corrupted by power. In the end,

The extremists, no matter how long and brilliant their temporary success, have gone the way of all political despots and all religious impostors. And their culpability is not in plunging a nation into anarchy and crime, but in debasing the ideals of utopia, by yoking them with the destructive agencies of negation in a people.<sup>226</sup>

### **Ameen Rihani as a cultural ambassador and mediator**

Rihani proposed peaceful solutions<sup>227</sup> to the problems of both the Orient and the Occident mainly by the establishment of mutual understanding and cultural exchange, the facilitation of which he saw as his mission in life, and by ensuing hybridization of the antagonistic cultures. Apparently, as Rihani felt at home both in the U.S.A. and in Lebanon, his loyalty was divided equally between the countries, and he would not promote one at the expense of the other. He had a “dual Arab-American identity” and travelled between his two homelands frequently<sup>228</sup> until his death at his house in Freike, Lebanon, in September 1940.<sup>229</sup> Thus, with his very existence as a living example of the possibility of cultural hybridization, Rihani challenged Kipling’s statement about the opposition of East and West.<sup>230</sup> This double affiliation is expressed by Khalid as follows:

... the West for me means ambition, the East, contentment: my heart is ever in the one, my soul, in the other. And I care not for the freedom which does not free both; I seek not the welfare of the one without the other.<sup>231</sup>

He explains further,

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*: ix.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*: x.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*: x.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*: xi.

<sup>227</sup> Rihani 1911: 318–319.

<sup>228</sup> Hajjar 2010: xi.

<sup>229</sup> Bushrui 1999.

<sup>230</sup> Rihani’s address at the American University of Beirut, “Where East and West Meet,” 1927, quoted. in Hassan 2011: 43–44.

<sup>231</sup> Rihani 1911: 241.

The Orient and Occident, the male and female of the Spirit, the two great streams in which the body and soul of man are refreshed, invigorated, purified – of both I sing, in both I glory, to both I consecrate my life, for both I shall work and suffer and die.<sup>232</sup>

Obviously, Rihani's identity and lifestyle, in particular, writing for both Arab and Anglophone readers, necessitated constant translation and cultural interpretation that shaped his concept of "cultural ambassador and mediator."<sup>233</sup> Besides, the idea of cultural exchange between East and West was familiar to Rihani since his childhood, for he, being Maronite Christian from Mount Lebanon, was brought up in a hybrid environment from birth.<sup>234</sup> The idea of enriching Arab culture with elements of Western thought, in fact, continues the tradition of Islamic Golden Age, as scholars collected and translated into Arabic all available literary and scientific works of other civilizations. However, cultural hybridization as proposed by Rihani stems from the beginnings of the Arab Renaissance in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Khedive of Egypt Muhammad Ali (1769–1849), decided to send Islamic scholars to France to learn European science.<sup>235</sup> Having returned to Egypt, these scholars disseminated knowledge that they believed to be compatible with Islamic values and traditional ways of life.<sup>236</sup> Quite naturally, but, as it seems, unexpectedly for religious authorities, familiarity with European science lead to increased interest in European philosophy and literature as well, which, translated in great quantities, brought Western thought and lifestyles to Arab society. The subsequent cultural hybridization in Egypt resulted in a renewal – but also profound Westernization – of Arab literature and culture, the Arab Renaissance, which spread to the Christians of Mount Lebanon and coalesced with their pro-Western culture, fostered by missionaries.<sup>237</sup> Thus, the idea of merging East and West promoted by Rihani appears to be as hybrid as the proposed results. Namely, it originates from the Arab Renaissance superposed upon

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*: 245–246.

<sup>233</sup> See, for instance, Bushrui 2012: xi.

<sup>234</sup> Bushrui 1999.

<sup>235</sup> Hassan 2011: 39.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> Somel 2005: 254–269. Also, see Moreh 1976: 86.

Lebanese Christian culture; at the same time, it may be perceived as some kind of an extended, reciprocal *mission civilisatrice* between the East and the West where both sides have their specific *burdens* of responsibility towards their ‘less developed’ brethren, in some aspects.

Life between two cultures involved growing awareness of prejudices and weaknesses of each; for that reason, possibly, Rihani thought that these might be cured by the introduction of characteristic traits and values of the other culture.<sup>238</sup> At first, apparently unsure about the reception of such ideas, Rihani presented them as quotations from Khalid’s manuscript. For instance,

Give me, ye mighty nations of the West, the material comforts of life; and thou, my East, let me partake of thy spiritual heritage. Give me, America, thy hand; and thou, too, Asia. Thou land of origination, where Light and Spirit first arose, disdain not the gifts which the nations of the West bring thee; and thou land of organisation and power, where Science and Freedom reign supreme, disdain not the bounties of the sunrise. ... If the discoveries and attainments of Science will make the body of man cleaner, healthier, stronger, happier, the inexhaustible Oriental source of romantic and spiritual beauty will never cease to give the soul of man the restfulness and solacement it is ever craving. And remember, Europa, remember, Asia, that foreign culture is as necessary to the spirit of a nation as is foreign commerce to its industries. Elsewise, thy materialism, Europa, or thy spiritualism, Asia, no matter how trenchant and impregnable, no matter how deep the foundation, how broad the superstructure thereof, is vulgar, narrow, mean – is nothing, in a word, but parochialism.<sup>239</sup>

As explained by the narrator of the novel, “the principal aim of Khalid” was “to graft the strenuosity of Europe and America upon the ease of the Orient, the materialism of the West upon the spirituality of the East.”<sup>240</sup> The fusion of the two opposites was seen by Rihani as a positive process both for whole nations and for individuals, as he believed that such compound beings would possess the best qualities of both, while the worst qualities would balance each other. As Khalid argued, “My Brothers, the most highly developed being is neither European nor Oriental; but rather he who partakes of the finer qualities of both the European genius

<sup>238</sup> Hassan 2011: 39.

<sup>239</sup> Rihani 1911: 246.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*: 238.

and the Asiatic prophet.”<sup>241</sup> Responding to Nietzsche’s ideas, which were fashionable at that time, Rihani offered his own vision in Khalid’s manuscript,

Ay, in this New World, the higher Superman shall rise. And he shall not be of the tribe of Overmen of the present age, of the beautiful blond beast of Zarathustra ... in this New World, I tell you, he shall be born, but he shall not be an American in the Democratic sense. He shall be nor of the Old World nor of the New; he shall be, my Brothers, of both. In him shall be reincarnated the Asiatic spirit of origination, of Poesy and Prophecy, and the European spirit of Art, and the American spirit of Invention.<sup>242</sup>

Ten years later, in *The Path of Vision*, Rihani describes the process of cultural hybridization, claiming that “Whatever the characteristics of the age we live in, its principal tendency is one of exchange – exchange of culture as well as commodities.”<sup>243</sup> He imagines this exchange as a “circling stream” that “is ever flowing between the civilized nations of the world” and sometimes changes not only its direction “but also its quality, its temper, its spirit.”<sup>244</sup> In the past, “mighty currents” brought religion to Europe “from the fountain head of the soul,” the East; they were balanced by “counter-currents” that carried trade and “intellectual freedom” to the East.<sup>245</sup> Rihani argues, “The new source to-day is America; and the mighty currents, which flowed from the East to the West in the past, are now flowing from the West to the East”<sup>246</sup> bringing “pure mind” from “the fountain head of the mind,” and they are “tempered to-day with a counter-current of spirituality.”<sup>247</sup> As the result, “while the Western world is experiencing at present a spiritual revival, the East is going through the puerperal pains of nationalism and freedom.”<sup>248</sup> Finally, Rihani describes the fusion of national cultures and predicts globalization:

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<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*: 246.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*: 113.

<sup>243</sup> Rihani 1921: 165.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*: 165.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*: 165–166.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*: 166.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*: 165–166.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*: 165–166.



... the national spirit in its purity and vigor, is the spirit of individuals representative of its traditions and its culture. This is so even in America ... Like Greece and Rome, America is developing itself from a conflux of various nations and antithetical elements. The Melting Pot certainly has a soul. And this soul will certainly have a voice. And the voice of America, it can safely be said without exaggerating potentialities, is destined to become the voice of the world. Its culture, too, its arts and its traditions, which, in spite of the present passion of Americanization, are being colored and shaded, impregnated with alien influences, will embody the noblest expression of truth and beauty that the higher spirit of the Orient and the Occident combined is capable of conceiving. They will embody also a universal consciousness, multifarious, multicolor, prismatic ... Hence the cosmopolitanism of the American of the future. Hence too his culture, which will harmonize with, nay, re-inforce, the culture of every race. This may take a hundred or two hundred years, but it is bound to come. It is the ultimate destiny of the Melting Pot – its future soul and voice.<sup>249</sup>

### **Ameen Rihani on hybridization of religion**

One of the most important aspects of cultural hybridization would be, in Rihani's opinion, the merging of major religions, which would stop sectarian strife, eradicate the corruption of religious authorities, and counteract the bigotry of ordinary people.<sup>250</sup> The Book of Khalid contains a severe criticism of both Christianity and Islam as interpreted by narrow-minded, selfish believers, priests, and mullahs; Khalid claims that in most religious communities, even at monasteries, there is "much ungodliness, much treachery."<sup>251</sup> He urges, "Come out of the superstitions of the sheikhs and ulema; of the barren mazes of the sufis; of the deadly swamps of theologues and priests."<sup>252</sup> Khalid describes Islam as degraded from its initial "pristine purity" by its acquired "degrading customs, its stupefying traditions. Its enslaving superstitions, its imbrutening chants."<sup>253</sup> Even on the Hadeeth, the Editor of *The Book of Khalid* scathingly remarks,

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*: 171–172.

<sup>250</sup> Rihani's stance explained in *The Path of Vision*, which confirms that Khalid, on this topic, expresses the author's own opinion.

<sup>251</sup> Rihani 1911: 225.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*: 291.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*: 320.

Ay, Shakib relates quoting al-Makrizi, who in his turn relates, quoting one of the octogenarian Drivellers, Muhaddetheen (these men are the chief sources of Arabic History) that he was told by an eye and ear witness that when this celebrated Muazzen was once calling the Faithful to prayer, the camels at the creek craned their necks to listen to the sonorous music of his voice. And such was their delight that they forgot they were thirsty. This, by the way of a specimen of the Muhaddetheen.<sup>254</sup>

However, Christianity is not spared as well; in the novel, Jesuits of Mount Lebanon are portrayed as petty-minded, malicious, and greedy people whose daily business is money extortion by any means, forging false accusations, and working as informers for security services, both Ottoman and foreign; furthermore, according to Khalid, “For the Padres, in addition to their many crafts and trades, are matrimonial brokers of honourable repute. And in their meddling and making, their baiting and mating, they are as serviceable as the Column Personal of an American newspaper.”<sup>255</sup> Khalid detests the murky, intricate mazes of “ascetic theology” and “eremitic logic,” accompanied by “bigotry and crass superstition”<sup>256</sup> that he discovers in a hermit. Finally, he writes, renouncing mortification of the flesh and humility required by the Catholic faith,

O Monsieur Pascal,

I tried hard to hate and detest myself, as you advise, and I found that I could not by so doing love God. 'Tis in loving the divine in Man, in me, in you, that we rise to the love of our Maker. And in giving your proofs of the true religion, you speak of the surprising measures of the Christian Faith, enjoining man to acknowledge himself vile, base, abominable, and obliging him at the same time to aspire towards a resemblance of his Maker... Au-revoir, Monsieur Pascal. Remember me to St. Augustine.<sup>257</sup>

At the same time, Rihani never presents atheism as a possible option; in *The Book of Khalid*, it is called an unnatural ideology used by its adepts

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*: 21.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*: 176.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*: 212–213.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*: 56.

only for profit,<sup>258</sup> and the avaricious atheists are called “not free thinkers, but free stinkards.”<sup>259</sup> As described by Shakib,

For at bottom, atheism is either a fad or a trade or a fatuity. And whether the one or the other, it is a sham more pernicious than the worst. To the young mind, it is a shibboleth of cheap culture; to the shrewd and calculating mind, to such orators as Khalid heard, it is a trade most remunerative; and to the scientists, or rather monists, it is the aliment with which they nourish the perversity of their preconceptions.<sup>260</sup>

On the contrary, Khalid defends religion if it leads to the development of moral qualities and noble feelings; for instance, he shows the role of Islam in Bedouin life as follows,

Take the lowest of the Arab tribes, for instance, and you will find in their truculent spirit a strain of faith sublime, though it is only evinced at times. The Beduins, rovers and ravens, manslayers and thieves, are in their house of moe-hair the kindest hosts, the noblest and most generous of men. They receive the wayfarer, though he be an enemy, and he eats and drinks and sleeps with them under the same roof, in the assurance of Allah. If a religion makes a savage so good, so kind, it has well served its purpose.<sup>261</sup>

Similarly, the two main characters of *The Book of Khalid* are described as people “from the land in which God has always spoken to our ancestors” who are “constitutionally incapable of denying God”,<sup>262</sup> for that reason, they are presented as rather qualified to express opinions on religion in general. Shakib argues, juxtaposing Christian and Islamic terms, “I am a Christian by the grace of Allah, and my ancestors are counted among the martyrs of the Church. And thanks to my parents, I have been duly baptized and confirmed.”<sup>263</sup> From this position, he comments on attending atheist meetings, “Now, is it not absurd that I should come here

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<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*: 64–65.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*: 66.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*: 64.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*: 294–295.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*: 66.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*: 64.

and pay a hard dollar to hear this heretical speechifier insult my parents and my God?"<sup>264</sup>

Khalid glorifies religions as messages of God brought by prophets, and, in his opinion, "every religion is good and true, if it serves the high purpose of its founder. And they are false, all of them, when they serve the low purpose of their high priests."<sup>265</sup> For that reason, he declares that he is "both a Camel-driver and Carpenter" and also "a Bahaist in a certain sense" and would "renounce falsehood, whatsoever be the guise it assumes" and "embrace truth, wheresoever" he would find it.<sup>266</sup> Thus, the new religion would be composed from "shattered fragments" of various teachings so that it resembles a "beautiful parti-colored sun-flower;"<sup>267</sup> with the basic principle that "Everything in life must always resolve itself into love" because "love is the divine solvent" and "the splendour"<sup>268</sup> of God,<sup>269</sup> which reminds of the New Testament.<sup>270</sup> Another basic principle that he acknowledges is the innate feeling of the proper and the virtuous, the instinctive morality that is given from birth, also manifesting in pure, chaste love. As Khalid explains, "Our instincts ... never lie. They are honest, and though they be sometimes blind."<sup>271</sup> Therefore, "honesty in thought, in word, in deed" should be considered "the cornerstone" of Khalid's "truth," and "moral rectitude" should be placed "above all the cardinal virtues."<sup>272</sup> He depicts the path of humanity as a journey towards "that higher Temple of mind and spirit,"<sup>273</sup> built "on the border-line of the Orient and Occident it is built, on the mountain-heights overlooking both. No false gods are worshipped in it, – no philosophic, theologic, or anthropomorphic gods."<sup>274</sup> Khalid recounts his own search of spiritual truth as follows,

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*: 64.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*: 294.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*: 294.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*: 227.

<sup>268</sup> An allusion to Baha'i Faith, as Baha'u'llah is literally "The Splendor of God" (Arabic/Persian).

<sup>269</sup> Rihani 1911: 295.

<sup>270</sup> "Love does no harm to the neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the Law." Romans 13:10 (New Living Translation).

<sup>271</sup> Rihani 1911: 67.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*: 67.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*: ii.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*: 5.

In the religious systems of mankind, I sought thee, O God, in vain; in their machine-made dogmas and theologies, I sought thee in vain; in their churches and temples and mosques, I sought thee long, and long in vain; but in the Sacred Books of the World, what have I found? A letter of thy name, O God, I have deciphered in the Vedas, another in the Zend-Avesta, another in the Bible, another in the Koran. Ay, even in the Book of the Royal Society and in the Records of the Society for Psychical Research, have I found the diacritical signs which the infant races of this Planet Earth have not yet learned to apply to the consonants of thy name. The lisping infant races of this Earth, when will they learn to pronounce thy name entire? Who shall supply the Vowels which shall unite the Gutturals of the Sacred Books? Who shall point out the dashes which compound the opposite loadstars in the various regions of thy Heaven? On the veil of the eternal mystery are palimpsests of which every race has deciphered a consonant. And through the diacritical marks which the seers and paleologists of the future shall furnish, the various dissonances in thy name shall be reduced, for the sake of the infant races of the Earth, to perfect harmony.<sup>275</sup>

Twenty years later, Ameen Rihani explicitly stated that humanity needs a new, unified religion that would be free from dogma and corruption. It is obvious that many ideas about the hybridization of religions were first presented in *The Book of Khalid* as quotations from Khalid's manuscript, formulated in various essays and, finally, summarized in Rihani's "Literary Will" (1931):

I am a believer in the unity of religion, for in its mirror I see reflected the images of all Prophets and Messengers: Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Socrates, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and Baha'u'llah... They have all come from one source, and their faces merge and unite and become reflected in one unified face, a most holy symbol representing the face of God Himself. I counsel you to adhere to unity. In theoretical terms, religion is that luminous living link between man and his one and only God. In spiritual terms, religion is the joy derived from discovering, without mediation, the mysteries that lie behind this unique link. In practical terms, religion is, above all, the recognition of the Divine Truth spoken by whoever has taught a single letter from the book of love, of piety, and of charitable deeds. It is also in following the example of those teachers and emulating them in thought, word

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<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*: 219.

and deed – each of us according to his capacity; for God has burdened no soul with more than it can endure.<sup>276</sup>

### Solutions proposed by Ameen Rihani to global problems

It is possible to summarize the cures for the ailments of the Orient and the Occident proposed by Rihani in his numerous literary works. The first and most obvious move is a change in human mentality towards what Rihani calls the combined ideals of European and Eastern thought, embodied in hybrid culture and unified religion in concordance with the “theory of immanent morality,” as discussed throughout the novel.<sup>277</sup> No revolution can reach the idealistic goals of its leaders, and Utopia cannot be established as long as people stay unkind, aggressive, “one-sided,” ignorant, and corrupt,<sup>278</sup> in particular, “only by reforming the religion on which it is based, is political reform in any way possible and enduring.”<sup>279</sup> Khalid ardently argues that, “not until man develops his mental, spiritual and physical faculties to what Matthew Arnold calls ‘a harmonious perfection,’ will he be able to reach the heights from which Idealism is waving to him.”<sup>280</sup> He envisions the transformation as follows:

I say with thee, O Goethe, ‘Light, more light!’ I say with thee, O Tolstoi, ‘Love, more love!’ I say with thee, O Ibsen, ‘Will, more will!’ Light, Love, and Will – the one is as necessary as the other; the one is dangerous without the others. Light, Love, and Will, are the three eternal, vital sources of the higher, truer, purer cosmic life... Ay, in the Lakes of Light, Love, and Will, I would baptise all mankind. For in this alone is power and glory, O my European Brothers; in this alone is faith and joy, O my Brothers of Asia!<sup>281</sup>

... In thy public-squares, O my City, I would raise monuments to Nature; in thy theatres to Poesy and Thought; in thy bazaars to Art; in thy homes, to Health; in thy temples of worship, to universal Goodwill; in thy courts, to Power and Mercy; in thy schools, to Simplicity; in thy hospitals, to Faith;

<sup>276</sup> Quotation translated from Arabic and edited by S. B. Bushrui and A. Mutlak, in Bushrui 1999.

<sup>277</sup> See, for instance, Rihani 1911, pp. 80, 82, 91, 102, 110, and 131.

<sup>278</sup> Rihani 1920: xi.

<sup>279</sup> Rihani 1911: 320.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*: 59–60.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*: 247.

and in thy public-halls to Freedom and Culture. And all these, without Light, Love, and Will, are but hollow affairs, high-sounding inanities.<sup>282</sup>

Thus, Khalid pronounces Rihani's own call for return to the values of Enlightenment in their best sense, to rational thinking, instinctive morality, and genuine humanism which should be reached in a peaceful way by individual, conscious effort of everyone, professing his "faith in man ... as strong as" his "faith in God,"<sup>283</sup>

Each of you, O my Brothers, can make it light his own hut, warm his own heart, guide his own soul. Never before in the history of man did it seem as necessary as it does now that each individual should think for himself, will for himself, and aspire incessantly for the realisation of his ideals and dreams. Yes, we are to-day at a terrible and glorious turning point, and it depends upon us whether that one star in the vague and dusky sky of modern life, shall be the harbinger of Jannat or Juhannam.<sup>284</sup>

To conclude, the essence of Rihani's message to humanity might be expressed in Khalid's appeal, which appears pertinent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well,

I tell thee then that Man, that is to say Consciousness, vitalised and purified, in other words Thought – that alone is real and eternal. And Man is supreme, only when he is the proper exponent of Nature, and spirit, and God: the three divine sources from which he issues, in which he is sustained, and to which he must return.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*: 248.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*: 113.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*: 141–142. "Jannat or Juhannam": Paradise or Hell (Arabic).

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*: 242.

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*Sīra... = Sīra Amīn ar-Riḥānī wa abraz munġizātuh*. al-Mu'assassa al-fikr al-Lubnānī fī ġāmi'at Sayyidat al-Luwayza.

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# The Position of the Alawites in Islam

ÜLLAR PETERSON

**Abstract** The Alawite religion was born in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and by the 13<sup>th</sup> century the core of the Alawite religious texts had been formed. The Alawite religion differs considerably from Sunnism. The Sunni attitude to the Alawites has nowadays been shaped by Ibn Taimiyya's *fatwā* that has had a palpable influence among Sunnis last decades, placing the Alawites outside of the fold of Islam. Since the 1970s the Syrian Alawite regime has tried to manipulate the Alawites into Islam via *Šī'ah*, which has not been acceptable to hardline Sunni circles.

**Keywords** Alawites, *Nuṣayrīya*, Syria, *ḡulāt*, Sunnism, Ibn Taimiyya

## The birth of the Alawite religion

The Alawite (until the 1920-s instead of “Alawite” only the name used was “Nusayrī”, Ar. *Nuṣayrīya*, but as it is derogatory throughout the article here “Alawite” is used) religion was born in the 9<sup>th</sup> century in the melee of numerous *ḡulāt*<sup>1</sup> sects. It evolved over the following centuries and by the 13<sup>th</sup> century the core of Alawite religious texts (around ninety in total, of which more than sixty have survived and are available now for researchers) had been formed.<sup>2</sup> The sect's eponymic founder was Abū Šū'ayb Muḥammad bin Nuṣayr al-'Abdī al-Bakrī an-Numayrī who lived in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and is better known in historical sources as Muḥammad bin Nuṣayr or Ibn Nuṣayr. The Alawites consider him the spiritual successor of the Alīds and the receiver of sacred knowledge of the tenth *Šī'ah* Imām 'Alī al-Hādī (d 254/868) and his successor, the eleventh Imām Ḥasan al-'Askarī (d 873)<sup>3</sup>. Several of Ibn Nuṣayr's religious writings, or writings attributed to him or imparting his views, have

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<sup>1</sup> About *ḡulāt* EI, II: 1093–95 *GHULAT*. Moosa 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Concentrated overview of the main Alawite texts: Friedman 2010: 241–297.

<sup>3</sup> al-Ḥaṣībī 1991: 367.

been preserved.<sup>4</sup> From his time on the Alawites have been known by the eponymic name of *Nuṣayrīya* in Sunni as well as in Šī'ah sources (after a brief period of them being called an-Numayrīya)<sup>5</sup>. In Western sources the Alawites became known as *nossorites*, *neceres* and other similar denominations<sup>6</sup>, but in the 1920s a new name *al-'Alawīyūn* (the Alawites) was adopted, instigated by the French.

Ibn Nuṣayr's followers existed as a small, erratic *ḡulāt* group near to extinction until the movement was consolidated by Abū 'Abd-Allāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥamdān al-Ḥaṣībī<sup>7</sup> (d 969) and spread from Iraq to Syria under the protection of the Šī'ah Ḥamdānid dynasty in Aleppo. In Alawite sources and in contemporary Alawite historiography al-Ḥaṣībī is considered the true spiritual founder of the Alawite religion and his texts are considered central to the Alawite religion.<sup>8</sup> Due to the demise of the Ḥamdānids at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Alawites began to spread to other cities and rural areas in Syria, especially to al-Ġabal al-'Alawī (al-Ġabal) under the next Alawite spiritual leaders like

<sup>4</sup> Four of them are included in *Silsilat*, of which up to now 12 volumes have been published: *Kitāb al-akwār wa al-adwār an-nūrāniyya* (*Silsilat* 1: 33–205); *Kitāb al-miṭāl wa as-sūra* (*Silsilat* 1: 207–34); *Kitāb al-maḡālis an-numayrīya* (*Silsilat* 12: 7–76). And synopsis of these works and concerning other writings attribute to him: *Silsilat* 1: 23–25.

<sup>5</sup> Only few medieval sources call them *an-Numayrī*: al-Aṣ'arī 1980: 15. al-Baḡdādī: 252.

<sup>6</sup> Their names in the Western sources up to 20<sup>th</sup> century have different forms. In the crusader sources they are *Nossorite* (Dussaud 1900: 21–27); *neceres* in the first modern account of them (Maundrell 1703: 12–143). There is at least dozen different names in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> century European books: in Latin they are *Nazaræorum* (Assemani 1721, 2: 318–320). In English at least half a dozen different spellings are found: *Nesseary* (Silk Buckingham 1825: 507), *Noceres* (Pococke 1745). We also find the name *Anseyreeh* (Lyde 1853). But in the first scientific account about the Alawites the same author Lyde uses two different names as *Ansaireeh* and *Nuṣayri* alternatively (Lyde 1860). Also you may find names as: *Nassairier*, *Ansāriyya*, *Ansarians*, *Ainsiaree*, *Ensyrians*, *Nassariss*, *Anzaris*; also there are different names for the area they inhabit.

<sup>7</sup> *Iranica* vol.1: 68–70. In more detail: Friedman 2001: 91–112; also Friedman 2010: 17–34. The Alawite sources about him: al-Ḥaṣībī 1991: 5–22. Concerning the spread of the movement in Syria and Iraq: *La diffusion...* 2011: 19–52.

<sup>8</sup> For his position according to nowadays Alawite scholars see aṭ-Ṭawīl 1979: 257. Al-Ḥaṣībī's detailed description of Muḥammad, 'Alī and 12 imāms is found in al-Ḥaṣībī 1991 which exhibits Šī'ah canons. Al-Ḥaṣībī's second work *Dīwān al-Ḥaṣībī* has not been explored until now except by few scholars, it is said to exhibit all the central Alawite dogmas – Friedman 2010: 251–3. Al-Ḥaṣībī's other works as *ar-Risāla al-rāstbāsiyya* and *Fiqh ar-risāla ar-rāstbāsiyya* are found in *Silsilat* 2: 16–156.

Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Ġillī<sup>9</sup> and Maymūn ibn al-Qāsim aṭ-Ṭabarānī<sup>10</sup> (d 1034/35).

During the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Alawites were heavily pressured by the Kurds, crusaders and local Ismā‘īlis; internal dissent also spread among them. Most of the canonical Alawite texts had been composed by the time the movement was revitalized by Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf al-Makzūn as-Sinġārī<sup>11</sup> (1164–1240) who came to al-Ġabal with his army, saved the Alawites from the marauding Kurds, and expelled the Ismā‘īlis from some of their castles there. From the members of his army, some of the main Alawite tribes like Matāwirah, an-Numaylātiya, al-Haddādīn, al-Muhālība, ad-Darāwisa and Banū ‘Alī reckon their progeny.<sup>12</sup> And as-Sinġārī is the last noteworthy composer of Alawite religious texts.

With the advent of the Mamluks in the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Alawites were confined to al-Ġabal, living there in solitude and poverty until the end of the Ottoman era. Even the neighbouring Christians, Sunnis and other locals knew little concerning the Alawites who, similarly to other smaller Islamic sects, keep their religion secret from the outside world. Although the latest remarkable research on the Alawites argues that the Alawites were not outcasts, as generally claimed before, and actually participated with other communities in Syrian social life, extensively interacting with non-Alawites during the Ottoman era<sup>13</sup>, socio-cultural and religious bias towards the Alawites is clearly felt in Ottoman archival material. Alawites also lived in small numbers outside al-Ġabal in

<sup>9</sup> Friedman 2010: 35–40; about his texts: Friedman 2010: 254–7. Alawite pseudo-historical exaggerations about him: aṭ-Ṭawīl 1979: 259–61.

<sup>10</sup> About him: Friedman 2010: 40–42. Overview of his religious texts: Friedman 2010: 260–264 and Bar-Asher & Kofsky 2005: 43–65. *Silsilat* 3: 208–412. See also aṭ-Ṭawīl 1979: 263–264.

<sup>11</sup> There are some considerable Western writings concerning him: Nwyia 1974; also Friedman 2010: 51–56, 268–269. Mostly Lebanese Šī‘ahs and the Alawites there have written about him, starting with the popular account Ramadān, Yūnus Ḥasan 1913. *Ta’rīḥ al-Makzūn* (I was not able to use this work here) that is based on Alawite 17th–19th century sources; work of Lebanese researcher ‘Alī 1972 is based largely on aforementioned *Ta’rīḥ al-Makzūn*. See also PhD thesis: ‘Alī 2007. As-Sinġārī’s writings are collected in: ‘Uṡmān 1972 and in aforementioned ‘Alī 1972.

<sup>12</sup> Modern synopsis of these tribes’ connection to al-Sinġārī: Āl Ma’rūf 2013: 9–18.

<sup>13</sup> Winter 2016. This work claims that in fact the Alawites were considerably well integrated into local Syrian social life.

nearby cities<sup>14</sup> and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century their community was formed in the Alexandretta area that was separated from Syria in the 1930s and might be considered by now to be an inhabitat of distinct group of Alawites.<sup>15</sup>

### Muslim discovery of the Alawites and Sunni *ḥukm* on them

Both Sunni and Šī'ah Muslims had quite a vague conception of the Alawites during the middle ages. The Alawites are first mentioned in Šī'ah sources as a group of *ḡulāt* being expelled from the Šī'ah Iraq community due to their extremist ideas and sexual misbehaviour. Later Šī'ah sources keep their overtly negative attitude to Ibn Nuṣayr and his circle but are not so sharply critical of the Alawites of the next centuries who adopted *taqiyya* and sometimes lived among the Šī'ahs as outstanding Šī'ah scholars.<sup>16</sup>

The Alawites remained essentially unknown to the Sunnis for a long time. There are only a few medieval works with more than a vague idea of them, but all of these works unanimously agree that the Alawites lie outside of Islam. The first noteworthy mention of the Alawites in Sunni texts is 'Abd al-Qāhir bin Tāhir al-Baḡdādī (d. 1037) *al-Farq bayna al-firaq* which clearly puts them outside the fold of Islam<sup>17</sup>; similar stance

<sup>14</sup> Mainly in Aleppo city and Hama countryside, but also in other parts of Syria. We should be careful of their own claims in modern historiography that vast Syrian areas are the native prehistoric land of the Alawites which they were forced to leave and retreat to al-Ġabal when Syria was attacked by Tamerlane or the Ottomans. Such ideas, firstly expressed by aṭ-Ṭawīl, are elaborated by later Alawite authors as aš-Šarif 1960: 86–106 and Ibrāhīm 1999: 13–30, 167–169.

<sup>15</sup> About Hatay Alawites: Procházka-Eisl 2010. Their Turkish orchestrated secession from the Syrian Alawites in the 1930s: Philipp & Schumann 2004: 307–327; also: Jörum 2014: 144–178.

<sup>16</sup> Some of the earliest and main Šī'ah sources from the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries deploring Ibn Nuṣayr's and his followers' extremism and sometimes hinting to their sexual misbehaviour are as follows:

- 1) al-Qummī 1963: 100–101, this source is one of the most used arguments against extreme Šī'ah sects then and now;
- 2) an-Nawbaḥtī: 1992: 95–96;
- 3) Ibn 'Umar Kaššī 2009: 369–370;
- 4) aṭ-Ṭūsī 1991: 397–399.

Such negative attitude to the Alawites is repeated in the later Šī'ah works as:

- 5) aṭ-Ṭabarsī 2001: 246 and notes 247–249;
- 6) al-Ḥillī 2009: 401, 405.

<sup>17</sup> al-Baḡdādī: 252, sect nr 130.

is found in Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī's (994–1064) *al-Fiṣal fī al-mīlal wa al-ahwā wa an-niḥal*.<sup>18</sup>

The only essential comprehensive and neutral description of the Alawites written by the Sunnis up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century is found in the work of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm aš-Šahrastānī (1086–1152, who himself probably had Št'ah leanings) *Kitāb al-Mīlal wa an-niḥal*, that gives in a few pages the description of the main Alawite tenets<sup>19</sup>. But, apart from that, other medieval sources paint a far more sinister picture of the Alawites, stressing their wicked nature and essential difference from the Sunni tenets<sup>20</sup>. We may assume that in most cases when the Sunnis came into contact with the Alawites the latter were either considered *bāṭinīya*, a general term for Druzes, Ismā'īlis, Alawites and smaller *ḡulāt* sects without making any differences between them, or were even described by still vaguer terms such as *ahl* al-Ġabal.<sup>21</sup>

One long *fatwā* (and two short *fatwās*) of Ibn Taimiyah from ca 1305–1315 is the most influential and, up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the most voluminous text on the Alawites produced by the Sunnis<sup>22</sup>. This Ibn Taimiyya

<sup>18</sup> Ibn Ḥazm 1992, 5: 50.

<sup>19</sup> Aš-Šahrastānī 1992: 192–193.

<sup>20</sup> 1) Ibn Baṭūta 1904: 56.

2) Ibn Kaṭīr 2010, 16: 127.

3) al-Qalqašandī 1913–1919, 13: 249–251.

4) al-Maqrīzī 1971, 2: 174–175.

<sup>21</sup> Good example is found in Ibn Munqid's *Kitāb al-I'tibār* where in some places *baṭinī* and *ismā'īlī* are used synonymously in the same sentence: Ibn Munqid 2003: 200, 201. But the same work when it describes the inhabitants of Wādī ibn al-Aḥmar (the traditional location of the Alawites) in their bird-catching business, names them *ahl* al-Ġabal, (Ibn Munqid 2003: 304–305).

<sup>22</sup> These three *fatwās* are found in the compendium of Ibn Taimiyah's *fatwās* of which the most correctly edited and commented edition is printed and approved by Saudi authorities: Ibn Taymiyya 1381–1386 [1961–1967]. *Maḡmu'āt fatāwa šaiḡ al-islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya*. ed. 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad Ibn Qāsim, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Qāsim; ar-Riyād, 37 vols. I have hereby used its last re-print: Ibn Taymiyya 2004, where the vol. 35 named *Kitāb qitāl ahl al-baḡī* (Fighting the people of dissent) includes these three *fatwās* on the Alawites. The first and the longest of them is called *Mā yaqūla al-sādat fī an-nuṣaīrīa al-qā'ilīn bi-istihlāl al-ḥamr wa tanāsīḡ al-arwāḡ wa qadīma al-'ālam wa inkār al-b'aṭ' wa al-ḡinna wa an-nār, ilaḡ* pp. 145–160, the short one pp 161–162; and the shortest – although it is against the Duruze its legal principles have been used against all *baṭinī*'s – is p. 162.

Usually the Arabic text of longest *fatwā* usually used by the Western scholars is St. Guyard 1871: 158–198, but it has some minor lacunae and is around half a page shorter compared to the modern Saudi edition.



*fatwā* castigates all *bāṭinī* sects then the Alawites as being a central element of vice. Ibn Taimiyah is not more accurate than aṣ-Ṣahrastānī in his description of the Alawites, but his *fatwās* are the most detailed descriptions of the Alawites by the Sunnis up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Clearly stated accusations in his *fatwās* became an intrinsic part of later Sunni attacks on the Alawites, especially since the rise of world-wide Wahhabism. His wording especially at the beginning and end of the long *fatwā* is considered a clear *ḥukm* on the Alawites that is often repeated in contemporary Sunni texts (but it should be stressed here that the influence of this *fatwā* on the Alawites' situation in the 14<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries remains open):<sup>23</sup>

These people who are called *an-nuṣayrīya*, and the other kind of *bāṭinī* Qarmatians, they are more unbelievers than the Jews or the Christians and they are bigger unbelievers than many of the polytheists. Their damage to the Muḥammad's (SAWS) community is greater than the damage from the infidels who fight [against the Muslims], such as the heretical Mongols, the Crusaders and others, since they [*an-nuṣayrīya*] claim before the uneducated Muslims to be Šī'is and loyal to the *ahl al-bayt*, but in reality they do not believe in Allāh, in his Messenger, in his Holy Book, in obligation or prohibition. /.../ because their aim is to denounce the Islamic faith and its law in any possible way while outwardly pretending as if such things are truth and come from the prophets. They have well-known struggles as well as books against Islam and the Muslims. When they had the opportunity they shed the blood of the Muslims. /.../ And we know well that Christians got hold over the coastal regions through their [*an-nuṣayrī*] lands because they are always with all the enemies of Islam...<sup>24</sup>

... and at the end the *fatwā* concludes:

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<sup>23</sup> Some scholars lately, especially Stefan Winter in his *A History of the Alawis*, argue that this *fatwā* was virtually unknown until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Mamluk and Ottoman texts and documents do not have any reference to it, and the negative references to the Alawites found in the Mamluk and Ottoman sources stem from socio-political and not from religious grounds. But here it should be stressed that any Mamluk or Ottoman source that delves into the Alawite topic is clearly negative about them. And it is a fact that, since the spread of Wahhabism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ibn Taimiyah *fatwā* on the Alawites has become a central ideological text bearing direct influence on the Alawites, as is clearly shown in the last section here.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Tamiyya 2004, 35: 149–150; the translation provided here follows the wording given by Friedman 2010: 303, with some minor changes.

There is no doubt that fighting these people and attacking them from the borders is one of the greatest obligations of the rightful [caliph], and the rest of the Companions began *ḡihād* against the apostates before the war against the heretics from the People of the Book, because fighting them is defending Muslim land and no-one is authorized to keep secret what he knows about them. On the contrary, he should expose it and unveil them until the Muslims know the truth concerning them. No-one is authorized to help them to remain in the army, or in other kinds of work. No-one has the right to prohibit the execution as an order of Allāh and his Messenger concerning them, since this is one of the most important issues connected with commanding what is good and what is evil and the holy war for Allāh's sake.<sup>25</sup>

The central command of this elaborate *fatwā* – that *ḡihād* against the Alawites is a must – is now considered at least a clearly stated *ḥukm* and part of *ṣarī'a* by Sunni scholars.

After that *fatwā*, that was probably given just before big Alawite revolt in 1317–1318, there were several severe but unsuccessful attempts by the Maluks to destroy and/or convert the Alawites at the beginning of 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>26</sup>, followed by the Ottomans trying the same when they conquered Syria in 1516. In order to eradicate all *rāfiḍī*'s, the Ottomans procured a *fatwā* from Ottoman grand mufti Nūḥ al-Ḥanāfī ad-Dimašqī. This *fatwā* clearly states at the end:

And these vicious unbelievers must be killed regardless of whether they repented or not. And if they repented and submitted to Islam – then kill them according to generally accepted *ḥadd* notions. And after killing them apply to them [who survived] the legal principles of Islamic *ṣarī'a* and if they still keep their unbelief and obstinacy – kill those unbelievers, and after killing apply to them [who survived] the legal principles of polytheists: it is not permissible to keep them [alive as polytheists] on condition that they would bring *al-ḡizya*, neither [it is permissible keep them alive] on *amān* or by the decree of *qādī* – such decrees do not hold. And their wives must be enslaved as it is legally permissible to enslave apostatized women if they

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Tamiyya 2004, 35: 158–159.

<sup>26</sup> It is even hard to say if these were attempts to convert them or just to retaliate for their rebelliousness and looting: The main sources of Mamuks describing the suppression of the Alawites in the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century after their unsuccessful revolt are: al-Birzālī 2006, 4: 298–299 and Ibn Kaṭīr 2010, 16: 127; mainly based on Ibn Kaṭīr is the account of aḍ-Ḍahabī (aḍ-Ḍahabī 1985, 4: 46) and of al-Maqrīzī (al-Maqrīzī 1971, 2: 174–175). In none of these sources Ibn Tamiyya's *fatwā* is mentioned. Alawite modern historians on these events: Ḥayyūn 2012: 72–73; Ismā'īl ibn 'Alī 1997, 2: 392, 428–429. See also Winter 2016: chapter 3.

become part of the *dār al-ḥarb* – anything taken out of the command of the righteous imām is considered part of *dār al-ḥarb*; also their children must be enslaved ...<sup>27</sup>

We may assume that this *fatwā* was also used ideologically against the Alawites in 1516–17 for killing them *en masse*.<sup>28</sup> Still, the Ottomans were unable to annihilate them as they migrated from Syrian rural areas and cities, hiding in al-Ġabal and using the principle *taqiyya* to any foreigner, be it Sunni or anyone else who might deal with them. Neither were the Ottomans able to include them officially into a *millet*. The Alawites were considered outside of Islam and the only cure against such *rāfiḍī*'s was to impose additional taxes on them.<sup>29</sup> By that time the tribal and clan system of the Alawites had been formed, but we know too little about when the process of clan-forming began and how it proceeded.<sup>30</sup> Their contacts with the outside world mainly consisted of armed Ottoman tax-collector incursions or Alawite marauding raids against their neighbours. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century some Alawite leaders became *de facto* independent due to the ineffectiveness of the Ottoman administration; they were however later subdued by the

<sup>27</sup> It is found in the compendium of Ottoman *fatwās* that has been printed several times since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mostly under the name *'Uqūd ad-durriyya fī tanqīh al-Fatāwā al-Ḥāmidīya*; I have consulted *al-'Uqūd...* 1863, the text is available [http://www.alukah.net/manu/files/manuscript\\_3097/makhtot11.pdf](http://www.alukah.net/manu/files/manuscript_3097/makhtot11.pdf); the arabic text of the *fatwā* is also available at <http://shamela.ws/browse.php/book-21687#page-102>

<sup>28</sup> The best analysis so far of the events 1516–17 and the establishment of Ottoman rule over the Alawites is Winter 2016, chapter 4, and the author has doubts over the notion of “massacre of the Alawites” in Aleppo and other parts of Syria after the establishment of Ottoman rule. But modern Alawite historiography claims that in Aleppo alone 100 000 of the Alawites were killed in 1516 by the Ottomans: aṭ-Ṭawīl 1979: 393–398. See also Talhamy 2010: 181–183; and concerning the Alawite nowadays perceptions of these events Worren 2007: 58–61.

<sup>29</sup> Concerning these Ottoman *fatwās* on the Alawites see: Mantran & Sauvaget 1951: 76–77; also Winter 2016: chapter 4.

<sup>30</sup> Only some works in Arabic have been published that give clearer picture of their tribal system, starting with their imaginary history, constructed by aṭ-Ṭawīl 1979: 405–468; esp. 408–411; in a more systematic way: Āl Ma'rūf 2013: 5–27. Unfortunately I have not been able to consult Ḥawanda, Muḥammad 2004. *Ta'rīḥ al-'Alawīyīn wa-ansābuhum*. al-Lāḍīqīya. A bit different structure of the tribal system is given by the French administration at the beginning of the 1920-s: *Choix de documents* 1922: 1–51. Winter argues that only during the Ottoman time the clear cut tribal system developed: Winter 2016: chapter 4.

provincial authorities.<sup>31</sup> Only once, during the Egyptian occupation of Syria 1831–1841, were the Alawites included in “international politics” when the Ottomans considered the Alawites *de facto* half-independent allies against the Egyptians.<sup>32</sup> Although few of the Alawites attained high rank in the Ottoman administration<sup>33</sup>, only in the 1890s did the Ottomans begin their incorporation into local life.<sup>34</sup> Also, since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Christian powers had been trying, unsuccessfully, to convert them.<sup>35</sup>

In Western/Christian sources the Alawites are mentioned in the crusader annals<sup>36</sup> and by Bar Hebraeus<sup>37</sup>. Then, after half a thousand years, the West rediscovered the Alawites in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>38</sup>. They became better known to the Western reader in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mostly in the two dozen travel books where, due to Sunni influence, they are sometimes depicted as sexual perverts who prostitute their wives and daughters to strangers<sup>39</sup>. But the first Western scientific works on the Alawites, although mentioning the great freedom of Alawi women, do not corroborate such “immoral” behaviour.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Some typical accounts from the the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Stanhope 1845, 3: 254–257, 333–341. See also Āl Ma'rūf 2013: 192–201; and Winter 2016: 102–103; Lyde 1860: 195–196. Description of a typical situation in the 1850-s with a local war lord Ḥayr Bey: Talhamy 2008; also: Āl Ma'rūf 2013: 329–338; and Jessup 1910, 1: 152.

<sup>32</sup> Concerning Egyptian occupation of the Alawite territories: Āl Ma'rūf 2013: 217–230. Also: Talhamy 2012. Conscription policies: Talhamy 2011. The Alawites as the allies of the Ottomans in the 1830s: Winter 1999. A case study of Alawite – Ottoman cooperation in 1834 attacking Latakia and Egyptian counter-measures: Barakāt 2012: 121–123.

<sup>33</sup> Necati 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Arab authors on these processes: Harīrī 1980: 217; ad-Dīn 1983: 63–65; 'Awaḍ 1969: 366, 369. See also Douwes 1993: 167–168; Necati 2012: 45–46.

<sup>35</sup> Necati 2012; Winter 2016: chapter 5; Talhamy 2011; Kennedy 2008: 10–26; Tibawi 1966: 150–159; Salibi; Khoury 1995: 17–19.

<sup>36</sup> Overview of them: Dussaud 1900: 21–27. Some speculate even on possible Alawite-Crusader cooperation: Ḥarīrī 1984: 210; also: Lyde 1860: 64.

<sup>37</sup> His description concentrates on the founder of Alawite religion Ibn Nuṣayr, especially his miraculous escape from prison in Baghdad: Bar Hebraeus 2003: 150–151.

<sup>38</sup> The first of them are: Maundrell 1703: 12–13; Assemani 1721: 318–320; Pococke 1745, 2, part I.

<sup>39</sup> Depicting the Alawites as sexual perverts started with the work of Volney 1788–89, 2: 1–8. Following with: Rousseau 1810: 22–33. See also: de Sacy 1838, 2: 559–586, esp. 573–574. And such sex-tales were “corroborated” by famous renegade al-Aḍanī's testimonies: al-Aḍanī 1862: 58–59. Even nowadays some Sunni works cite such accusations as characteristic to the Alawites: Gal'ūd 1407/1987: 554.

<sup>40</sup> Jessup 1883: 35–44 describes the women of the Alawites. Also in Lyde 1860 *et passim*.

Until recently little was known about the Alawite religion and society by Western Islamologists, although the first remarkable studies appeared as early as the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>41</sup>. Only by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century does the essence of the Alawite religion as presented in half a dozen scientific works start to become clear<sup>42</sup>. A few remarkable studies have also appeared in Arabic over the last decades, mostly published in Lebanon<sup>43</sup>, but it was only in 2006, when the compendium of the religious Alawite texts *Silsilat at-turāṭ al-‘alawī* started to appear in Lebanon, that we could really get to grips with the core of religious Alawite tenets.

### How does the Alawite religion differ from Sunnism?

Following the *Silsilat at-turāṭ al-‘alawī* compendium and the few but essential studies based on Alawite sources (esp. Friedman 2010), we can assume that the Alawite religion is in essence not only a very distant offshoot from mainstream Islam, as well from Šī‘ah, but even confronts several central Sunni tenets so starkly that it might be hard to consider the Alawites as part of Islam at all.

The Alawite creed *lā ‘ilāha ‘illā ‘Alī* is a typical *ḡulāt* formula; several sources claim that their *šahāda* is *Amīr an-naḥl lā ‘ilāha ‘illā huwa* – “Prince/Emir of the bees – there is no God except to him”<sup>44</sup>. And among the inner circle of the Alawite šayḥs their *šahāda* reads: “I testify that you are my aim and meaning (*ma‘nā*), that you are me and I am you”<sup>45</sup>. But there are versions even different from that as Sunni medieval

<sup>41</sup> A list of some remarkable researches on the Alawites until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

- 1) The first coherent research on them is Lyde 1860.
- 2) al-Aḡanī 1862. Based on this text the first truly scientific exposition of the Alawite religion in the West is: Salisbury 1864.
- 3) The first systematic exposition of the Alawite religion is Dussaud 1900.

<sup>42</sup> Most important modern works are:

- 1) Moosa 1987;
- 2) Bar-Asher & Kofsky 2002.
- 3) Friedman 2010.
- 4) socio-political aspects: Winter 2016.

<sup>43</sup> 1) Concentrating on the socio-political history is: ad-Dīn 1983

- 2) The first comprehensive history of the Alawites, but lacking source criticism and written in a popular-science style is a copious, more than of 600-pages work of Āl Ma‘rūf 2013.
- 3) on social history up to 1914: Ġurayḡ 2004.

<sup>44</sup> *Silsilat* 2: 274; see also: al-Ḥašībī 1991: 93 and Friedman 2010: 114.

<sup>45</sup> Bar-Asher & Kofsky 2002; 27. Friedman 2010: 133.

scholars say that the Alawite *šahāda* consists of the argument that ‘Alī is the Lord, Muḥammad is the *hiğāb* and Salmān is the *Bāb* and that their *šahāda* reads: “I testify that there is no god except for ‘Alī – the furthestmost and the inner –, that there is no *hiğāb* besides Muḥammad, who is Righteous and True, and that there is no other way except for Salmān – strong and substantial – leading to Him.”<sup>46</sup> However, this form of *šahāda*, attributed to the Alawites, might also read differently in different medieval Sunni texts.<sup>47</sup>

These forms of *šahāda* contrast with the Sunni *šahāda*: *lā ’ilāha ’illā-llāh, Muḥammadun rasūlu-llāh* – *There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the messenger of God* – or even with the Šī’ah *šahāda*, adding to the Sunni creed central tenet about ‘Alī: *lā ’ilāha ’illā-llāh, Muḥammadun rasūlu-llāh wa-’Alī walī Allāh* – *There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the messenger of God and is ‘Alī representative of Allāh*.

The central tenet of Islam *at-tawḥīd* is seen by the Alawites in allegorical, Neoplatonic way, consisting of three emanations (*ma’nā, ism* (sometimes *hiğāb* is used instead of *ism*) and *bāb*) which have their earthly personifications in the shape of ‘Alī, Muḥammad and Salmān<sup>48</sup>. Such a construction is unacceptable to both the Sunnis and Šī’ahs. But the Alawites support such a conception by free interpretation of certain *āyahs*: seeing in Q 24:35 transcendent light as the essence of God<sup>49</sup>; considering Q 4.157–158 as a doctrine of Docetism by which God manifests himself to humanity in the form of ‘Alī and his descendants<sup>50</sup>; thinking Q 16.68–69 is a hint to the conception of the “Prince of the bees”<sup>51</sup>. Such

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Taymiyya 2004, 35: 145, 163. The same *šahāda* in: Ibn Kaṭīr 2010, 16: 127.

<sup>47</sup> Al-Maqrīzī 1971, 2: 174–175.

<sup>48</sup> Names of *ma’nā*: *Silsilat* 9: 177–178; the essence of *ism* – *Silsilat* 9: 76, 175–177; essence of *bāb* and its earthly counter-names: *Silsilat* 9: 170–172. About their correlation: *Silsilat* 9: 173; Strothmann 1946: 23 and Ḥarīrī 1984: 38–40. Introduction to the Alawite conception of God: Friedman 2010: 72–73.

<sup>49</sup> *Silsilat* 3:181–194; 6: 16–17; also: *Silsilat* 2: 157–217; 4: 11–179, esp. 179. Some possible interpretation of this *āyah* by the Alawites: Friedman 2010: 80–81; al-Aḡanī 1862: 20–23, 28–31; Lyde 1860: 50–55; Dussaud 1900: 82–92.

<sup>50</sup> *Silsilat* 4: 157–158; 279. Introduction to this conception: Friedman 2010, pp. 81–85. In more detail: Ḥarīrī 1984, pp. 38–49; and al-Ḥasibi 1991: 91–93; also Bar Asher & Kofsky 2002:169–220; Lyde 1860: 237–42.

<sup>51</sup> About “Prince of the bees”: Lyde 1860, p. 275. Lammens 1926: 201; Friedman 2010: 124–126.

ideas are heretical to mainstream Islam and these named *āyahs* have no central meaning either in Sunni or Šī‘ah *tafsīrs*.

The central element in Sunni religious practice, the prayer (*ṣalāt*), is viewed allegorically by the Alawites and they dedicate each of the five daily prayer sessions to the central figures of the Alawite religion such as ‘Alī, Muḥammad, Salmān, and the ‘Alīds. The whole prayer ritual is totally different from Sunni practice: there is no *mu’addin* calling to prayer, and the prayer is personal, not communal, and there is no *qibla*; each Alawite prays in the direction of his imaginary representative of God who is perceived in the shape of an earthly triad ‘Alī-Muḥammad-Salmān; also there are different prayers following lunar phases and local holidays.<sup>52</sup>

Concerning other pillars of Islam, the Alawites perform them differently from the Sunnis and Šī‘ahs and they have also put into them meanings that are considered heretical by mainstream Islam. For example, the Alawites consider *zakāt* and *sadaqa* not to be a real tax, as in Sunni practice, but to be a ritual by which knowledge is symbolically passed from teachers to their initiates<sup>53</sup>. They consider the *haḡḡ* to al-Ka‘aba as a violation of *tawhīd*: their central text about *haḡḡ* describes it as an allegorical process of accruing knowledge about their *imams*, culminating with clear knowledge of *tawhīd*.<sup>54</sup> The Alawite performance of the fast (*ṣawm*) is quite different in its meaning and performance from the Sunni practice.<sup>55</sup>

The Alawite conception of time, creation, cosmology and history revolves around the central tenet of a triad ‘Alī-Muḥammad-Salmān that appears to humankind in different times and emanations<sup>56</sup>, an idea that is deeply heretical by Sunni religious standards; weird by Sunni standards is also the creation of a mankind<sup>57</sup>. Even more bizarre to the Sunnis is the conception of the multi-level migration of souls from people to animals and even to inanimate bodies (*at-tanāsuh*)<sup>58</sup>. The Sunni conception

<sup>52</sup> *Silsilat* 2: 219–279; 9: 184–213. Friedman 2010: 134–138; Bar-Asher; Kofsky 2005: 58–62.

<sup>53</sup> *Silsilat* 4: 172–173.

<sup>54</sup> *Silsilat* 2: 114; *Silsilat* 4: 173; Friedman 2010: 140–143.

<sup>55</sup> *Silsilat* 1: 262–263; *Silsilat* 4: 177.

<sup>56</sup> *Silsilat* 4: 275–276; 9: 74, 166–165. Ḥarīrī 1984: 79–80; Friedman 2010: 95–126.

<sup>57</sup> *Silsilat* 9: 79–80, 324.

<sup>58</sup> *Silsilat* 4: 11–179 ; 268–269. Some main other sources on that topic: Kofsky 1997: 71–76; al-Aḡanī 1862: 10–11, 81–86; Ḥarīrī 1984: 54–55; Ġu‘fī: 1978: 65–66, 143–144.

of *ġihād* as a striving against unbelievers to create, defend and extend Islamic statehood stands in stark contrast to the Alawite conception of an inner struggle (*ġihād al-bāṭin*, *ġihād an-naḥs*) which they consider to be the process of protecting Alawite sacred knowledge and religious practice by *taqīyya* – and “this inner struggle is the hardest kind of *ġihād*”<sup>59</sup>. What is more, the Alawite texts contain no concept of statehood. And the Sunni *ḥums* taken from the booty means “extracted sacred knowledge” in Alawi texts<sup>60</sup>; and martyrdom is merely an outwardly seeming phenomenon.<sup>61</sup>

The sacred law *šarī‘ah* which is the main structure of Islam is not an everyday guide for the Alawites and its tenets are interpreted esoterically by the Alawites. Their legal practice does not follow any Sunni or Šī‘ah *maḏhab* but is a concoction of broader Šī‘ah principles of jurisprudence applied by local Alawite customary law.<sup>62</sup>

Numerous Alawite religious holidays exhibit their anti-Sunni essence. For example, the death of caliph ‘Umar bin al-Ḥaṭṭāb, considered by the Sunnis as one of the most revered companions of the prophet Muḥammad, is celebrated by the Alawites as the demise of the incarnation of Iblīs and the biggest earthly enemy of ‘Alī. Several other central events from the life of the prophet Muḥammad are totally differently interpreted in the Alawite tradition compared to that of the Sunnis.<sup>63</sup> Many of these Alawite holiday performances are also considered heretical by Šī‘ah standards. For example, the Alawites celebrate the *‘Āšūrā’* not as the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn but as a joyful event signifying a hidden meaning: Ḥusayn’s death was an outward appearance that in its inner meaning is God’s manifestation of His omnipotence; there are several other Alawite religious holidays that are anti-Sunni in nature which also violate central Šī‘ah concepts<sup>64</sup>. Wine is honoured and its drinking has inner meaning.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>59</sup> *Silsilat* 1: 267; 4: 176; 6: 264. Al-Aḏanī 1862: 24–25. See also attitude to non-believers *Silsilat* 3: 85–93.

<sup>60</sup> *Silsilat* 4: 172.

<sup>61</sup> *Silsilat* 2: 287–302.

<sup>62</sup> Friedman 2010: 149–152.

<sup>63</sup> Strothmann 1946: 85–87; al-Aḏanī 1862: 34–35; Lyde 1860: 177–178, 189–194; Friedman 2010: 152–173.

<sup>64</sup> *Silsilat* 3: 289–392. Strothmann 1946: 107–108, 124–125; Friedman 2010: 159; Ğū‘ī 1978: 96–102.

<sup>65</sup> *Silsilat* 4: 137–141; 8: 51; 9: 152



One of the main Sunni accusations against the Alawites is their practice of *taqiyya*. In its classical Sunni conception *taqiyya* means hiding one's religion in the event of grave danger and it has a very limited area of use among the Sunnis<sup>66</sup>. Although it has been amply used by the Šī'ahs in previous times<sup>67</sup>, its importance has waned during the last centuries due to the existence of strong and central Šī'ah statehood from the Saffavids on. But *taqiyya* has a central place in Alawite religious practices, as has often been used similarly by smaller *ḡulāt* sects, the Druzes and the Ismā'īlis.<sup>68</sup>

The Alawites practice an extreme, multi-level form of *taqiyya*. In its overall and outer level it is used against the Sunnis and Šī'ahs, from whom the Alawites hid themselves from the beginning, pretending to be Šī'ahs. But the Alawite *taqiyya* also has an intercommunal level by which initiated Alawites (*al-ḥāṣṣa*) hide religious truths from non-initiated (*al-ʿamma*) members of the Alawite community.<sup>69</sup>

A good example of such use is al-Ḥasībī who is the central Alawite religious scholar<sup>70</sup> but whose main work *Kitāb al-hidāya al-kubrā* is written under the *taqiyya*, postulating central Šī'ah tenets.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>66</sup> For the use of *taqiyya* by Sunnis see *tafsīr* genre on the *āyah*'s 3.28 and 6.106 that allow use of limited *taqiyya*: for example Ibn al-ʿAbbās 1992: 293; *Tafsīr al-Ġalālayn* 1984: 279; *Tafsīr at-Ṭabarī* 2003, 14: 371–76. Or modern *tafsīrs*: Quṭb 1972–1974, 4: 2196–2197. But in medieval legal practice mostly the negative attitude prevailed for the use of *taqiyya* by the Sunnis. See: al-Wanšarī 1981, 2: 47–266, where the explicit order is given to Muslims to leave from under the jurisdiction of *kuffār* with the prohibition of any kind of *taqiyya* whatsoever. Still, there are traditions that allow use of *taqiyya* as a decoy in war situations in medieval times: al-Kūfī 1986, 1: 187; and also in modern times: Ḥawwā 1987: 51.

<sup>67</sup> Use of *taqiyya* by Šī'ahs: Kohlberg 1995: 345–380. Its use by nowadays Šī'ahs: Clarke 2005.

<sup>68</sup> *Taqiyya* among the Druzes: Firro 1992: 20–23. See also: *at-Taqiyya fī al-islām* 2004. On Druze prohibition to publish their text: Skovgaard-Petersen 1998.

<sup>69</sup> *Silsilat* 4: 168–169. Some introductions on the Alawite use of *taqiyya*: Friedman 2010: 26–28, 143–152. *Taqiyya* on everyday level: Walpole 1851, 3: 354. Situation today according to ethnographic field-work: Erdem 2010.

<sup>70</sup> On al-Ḥasībī: Friedman 2001: 91–112. Also: Friedman 2010: 17–34. Nowadays views of the Alawites on him: al-Ḥasībī 1991: 5–22; also: Ḥarīrī 1984: 25–27.

<sup>71</sup> For example see its chapters on prophet Muḥammad which depict all clear Šī'ah concepts: al-Ḥasībī 1991: 35–172.

Central Alawite religious texts consider *taqiyya* a pivotal tenet of their religion.<sup>72</sup> The infamous Alawite renegade al-Aḍanī explains it in the form of Alawite saying:

Truly, we [The Alawites] are the beings and the rest are the ranks of mere clothes – and no kind of human clothes could cause any harm to him; and he who does not appear this way, he is a kind of unwise man who walks around naked in the market place.<sup>73</sup>

Some modern Alawite authors clearly say that *taqiyya* is mostly used as protection from the Sunnis and is not as widely used against other, less ill-disposed religious communities.<sup>74</sup>

This kind of religious simulation is one of the main reasons not only for their excommunication from the core of believers by Sunni leading thinkers, but it has also been a strong argument for killing them even if they accept Islam because they would keep their unbelief and, in this way, are even more sinister enemies than *kuffār*. As Ibn Taimiyya says:

They are pretending before the uneducated Muslims that they are Šī'ahs and loyal to the *ahl al-bayt*, but in reality they do not believe in Allah, in his Messenger, in his Holy Book, in obligation or prohibition.<sup>75</sup>

Such argument has been amply repeated in *fatwās* and works on religion by Sunni scholars over the last decades.<sup>76</sup>

Among the Alawites the use of *taqiyya* is not only a method of hiding but is a way of life; it is the first thing strangers observe about them. The first description of the Alawites by a Westerner says:

[They are] Chameleon-like, they put on the colour of that religion, whatever it be, which is reflected upon them from the persons with whom they happen to converse. With Christians they profess themselves to be Christians. With Turks they are good Muslims. With Jews they pass for Jews, being

<sup>72</sup> Ġu'fī 1978: 54, 78, 198, 201. Also: *Kitāb al-ḥikam...* 1957: 68–69.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Aḍanī 1862: 82.

<sup>74</sup> Aš-Šarīf 1994: 93.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn Taimiyya 2004, 35: 156.

<sup>76</sup> Most of nowadays Sunni works taking stance against Šī'ah sects quote Ibn Taimiyah either overtly or use his argumentation. It is not even possible to give here the names of such works as there are hundreds of them.

such Proteuses in religion that nobody was ever able to discover what shape or standard their consciences are really made of.<sup>77</sup>

In general Western science does not differ in its “*ḥukm*” on the Alawites from the Sunni one and we may conclude with the words of one the best contemporary authorities on the Alawites: “The Nuṣayrīya have never been considered Muslims. The Šī‘ah consider them *ḡulāt*, while the Sunnis regard them as complete infidels.”<sup>78</sup>

### Manipulating the Alawites into Islam via *Šī‘ah*

Due to historical-theological Sunni hostility to the Alawites, the latter changed their derogatory appellation *Nuṣayrīya* to *al-‘Alawīya* (Alawism, the Alawīte religion – العلوية) and *al-‘alawīyūn* (the Alawites – العلويون) in the 1920s during the French Mandate when, in 1920–1936, the entity of “Alawite State/Territory” existed under different names.<sup>79</sup>

It is believed that name change is first manifested in aṭ-Ṭawīl’s pseudo-history *Ta’rīḥ al-‘Alawīyīn*<sup>80</sup>. Allegedly it was first published in 1919,

<sup>77</sup> Maundrell 1703: 12–13.

<sup>78</sup> Friedmann 2001: 92 and note nr 13.

<sup>79</sup> Its official names changed according to French polity either to suppress Syrian independence or to appease the nationalists: 1920–1922 it was “Alawite autonomous territory”, 1922–30 *État des Alaouites* (State of the Alawites), 1930–36 *Territoire de Lattaquié* or *Gouvernement de Lattaquié*. But in the Arabic works it has been usually named as *Dawla Ġabal al-‘Alawīyīn* (The Mountain State of the Alawites) or more often just as in English and other languages: *Dawlat al-‘Alawīyīn* (State of the Alawites). See: Balanche 2006: 33–38.

This period of its semi-independent Alawite state is either ignored or disfigured by nowadays Syrian historians, only in Lebanon some noteworthy works have appeared, main of it is a thorough analysis with copious extracts from administrative documents and local newspapers: ‘Uṭmān 1997. Neither has it been thoroughly covered by Western historiography. Only partly have been preserved and digitized the French Mandate bulletins *Bulletin mensuel [“puis” officiel] des actes administratifs du Haut Commissariat* <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb32730505k/date&rk=236052;4> and *Journal officiel de l’Etat des Alaouites* <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb32802034t/date&rk=107296;4>, most of the decrees concerning the entity “Alawite State” are found here – analysis and translation of them in my forthcoming PhD Dissertation “Süüria alaviidid: religioon, ajalugu, kultuur (9. sajand – 1946)” (Syrian Alawites: religion, history, culture (9th century – 1946) , in Estonian).

<sup>80</sup> Allegedly the first print appeared in Turkey in 1919 (Friedman 2010: 273), but there is no hint anywhere to this work. The first known edition: aṭ-Ṭawīl, Muḥammad Amīn Ġālib. 1924. *Ta’rīḥ al-‘Alawīyīn*. al-Lāḏiqīya: Maṭb‘at at-Taraqqī. It has been reprinted with a useful foreword by Alawi historian ‘Abd ar-Raḥman al-Ḥayr in the 1960-s, hereby is used its reprint: aṭ-Ṭawīl, 1979.

but still there is no hint of it printed before 1924. That work is still very popular among the Alawites and has unfortunately been widely used as a source on the Alawites until recent times, even by reputable Western scientists. The book is a bizarre concoction of Alawite “holy history” and *Šīʿite* history and theology: the Alawites are seen through *Šīʿite* prism and so we can consider this work to be the first step in incorporating the Alawites into *Šīʿah*.<sup>81</sup> The book argues that the name *ʿAlawīya* was the original name of the sect, but it was later supplanted by the Ottomans with the derogatory name *Nuṣayrīya*.<sup>82</sup> This work also tries to diminish the eponymic founder Ibn Nuṣayr’s importance, giving wider meaning to *ʿAlawīya*; it is full of uncorroborated or overtly fictitious information on the Alawites. But we may assume that in fact the new name “Alawites” was generated by French Mandate powers to replace it with derogatory *Nuṣayrīya*: by decree of French Mandate High Commissioner the entity of *Etat des Alaouites* was born June 28, 1922<sup>83</sup>. And this date might be considered the birthday of the Alawites as we do not have the slightest evidence of the name “Alawites” used before that anywhere, at least until the 1919 edition aṭ-Ṭawīl’s *Taʿrīḥ al-ʿAlawīyīn* will be found with the Alawites inside it and even then we are not sure that the French, who occupied Syria 1918 had nothing to do with such a name change.

With the absorption of the “Alawite State” into Greater Syria in 1936 it was in the interests of both the Alawites and Syrian Sunnis to claim that the Alawites belong in the fold of Islam. The first but quite unsuccessful step in this regard was taken when Muḥammad ʿAmīn al-Hussaynī (1897–1974), Mufti of Jerusalem 1921–1937, gave by request of the Syrian government in 1936 a *fatwā* proclaiming the Alawites to be Muslims<sup>84</sup>. This *fatwā* did not have any palpable influence on Sunni

<sup>81</sup> Such ideological bias starts clearly with the work of aṭ-Ṭawīl 1979: 261.

<sup>82</sup> Aṭ-Ṭawīl 1979: 446–449. And nowadays the Alawite historians elaborate such claim: esp. Ibrāhīm in his works: Ibrāhīm 1999: 32–33. But it is not true that the name *an-Nuṣayrīya* came with the Ottomans: the earliest Sunni sources describing Ibn Nuṣayr and his followers use that name already in the 10<sup>th</sup> century: Ibn Ḥazm 1992, 5: 50. Widely known became this term *an-Nuṣayrīya* with the work of 12<sup>th</sup> century scholar Šahrastānī: Šahrastānī 1992: 192–193 and since then the *an-Nuṣayrīya* it is widely used in medieval sources.

<sup>83</sup> *Bulletin mensuel ...*, Arrete 1470, Juillet 1922: 206.

<sup>84</sup> I have not been able to get the text of the *fatwā*: *Une fatwā du Grand Mufti de Jérusalem Muḥammad ʿAmīn al-Husaynī sur les ʿAlawītes*. 1940. *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 122, no. 1 (July–August), pp. 42–54; nos. 2–3 (September–December 1940), pp. 134–52; I am hereby evaluating it by Talhamy 2010: 185–186.

attitudes to the Alawites, but since then it has been an argument for the Islamic nature of the Alawites for the Syrian regime, for seculars in the Islamic world, and for some Western researchers.

The next round of incorporation into Islam for the Alawites was performed through an intricate three-step scheme. Firstly, albeit in vague wording, in the 1930s and several times later the Alawites pronounced themselves to be “Šī‘ah Muslims” and deeper contact with the Šī‘ahs of Iraq and Iran was established.<sup>85</sup> Secondly, following this, in 1952 the Syrian government recognized the Šī‘ah *madhhab* as an official legal school in Syria<sup>86</sup>. Thirdly, in 1958 the Sunni spiritual center al-Azhar recognized the Šī‘ahs as a fifth *madhhab* of Islam, in this way recognizing them as fully belonging to Islam<sup>87</sup>. As a result of these three steps the Alawites were seemingly incorporated into Islam via Šī‘ism: the Syrian state incorporated Šī‘ahs, and among them the Alawites; by the declaration al-Azhar the Sunnis incorporated Šī‘ahs, including the Alawites, and from that time on the Alawites often use the term “Alawite-Šī‘ahs”<sup>88</sup>. The only but essential problem here is that, except for the Jerusalem Mufti’s *fatwā*, no other Sunni authority has ever directly accepted the Alawites, without Šī‘ah as a medium, into the fold of Islam!

After the secular Ba‘atist coup of 1963 and the Alawite-Ba‘atist coup of 1966, and especially after 1970 when the power in predominantly Sunnite Syria went to al-Assad’s secular-Alawite circle, it became essential for the Syrian regime, for ideological reasons, to deny the existence of the Alawites in Syria because it was not possible to acknowledge that the Alawites, historical enemies of Islam by Sunni measures, rule at the heart of the Islamic World<sup>89</sup>. From here on, if mentioning the existence of the Alawites was unavoidable then they were presented as integrally belonging to Islam.

<sup>85</sup> On such instances in the 1930-s: aš-Šarīf 1960: 106–108. In more detail about it: al-Ḥayr 1996: 19–35 and Ibrāhīm 1999: 83–94.

<sup>86</sup> Detailed account of such documents: Nabhā 2013: 278–279. See also: al-Ḥayr 1996: 90–92.

<sup>87</sup> Text of this *fatwā* al-Ḥayr 1996: 94.

<sup>88</sup> E.g.: *al-‘Alawīyūn Šī‘at* ...1392/1972.

<sup>89</sup> Balanche 2006 b: 76. Also: Seale 1989: 9. See also Pipes’ witty remark that an Alawite ruling over predominantly Sunnite Syria is the same bizarre as Jewish Tzar reign in orthodox Russia: Pipes 1992: 175.

In everyday polity it meant that al-Assad's secular-Alawite ruling clique (where many secular Sunnis and religious minorities also have an important place) orchestrated a purge of any mention of the Alawites and other smaller sects from official media and books, and a notion of "monolithic Islam without sectarian differences" was developed.

References to the Alawites have been purged from the official language: the historical name of the central Alawite area *Ġabal al-'Alawī*, or *Ġibāl al-'Alawīyīn*<sup>90</sup> (Alawite Mountain/s) has borne the name *al-Ġibāl as-Sāhilīya* or *al-Ġibāl as-Sāhil*<sup>91</sup> (Coastal Mountains) since 1976. It is also sometimes called *Ġibāl al-Lāḍiqīya*<sup>92</sup> (Mountains of Latakia). In order to erase all memory of the semi-independent Alawite state of 1922–1936, which from 1930–1936 was called *Territoire de Lattaquié* or *Gouvernement de Lattaquié*, since 1970 Latakia has officially been called *Lāḍiqīya al-'arab* (The Arab Latakia)<sup>93</sup> in the press. So the Alawites were subdued to the official ideology of *'urūba* – "Arabness", an ideology that in Syria suppresses religious and national individuality, replacing it with the idea of a friendly and monolithic nation of Arab-Syrians.<sup>94</sup>

Following the ideology of "Arabness", it has been forbidden to use the name "Alawites/Alawite" in the press since the 1970s<sup>95</sup>. In textbooks the Alawites are not mentioned.<sup>96</sup> Even in schools where Alawites constitute 100% of the students, teachers cannot admit their existence<sup>97</sup>. To Syrian science, Alawites do not exist, and it is hard to find any scientific

<sup>90</sup> Hannā 2015:15.

<sup>91</sup> van Dam 1996: 7.

<sup>92</sup> Hannā 2015, 15.

<sup>93</sup> Kedar 1999: 141–146.

<sup>94</sup> About ideologized conception of *'urūba* in Syria: Farrukh 1964. Also: Al-Faruqi 1962; Van Dam 1996: 146–151. Examples of distorting history by such application of ideologized *'urūba* are clearly seen in books published in Syria that are dedicated on Syrian ancient history. For example see the official works of the Syrian regime: 'Alī 1994, esp. pp 4–16. Even better example is a work on general history *Ta'riḥ Sūriya al-qadīm*, where pseudo-scientific ravings on "arab-sumerians", "arab-phoinicians" are found (Dāwūd 2003, 1: 149–286), or arabness as the base of Ancient Greek and Western culture is argued (Dāwūd 2003, 2: 336–361, 393). Critique of such pseudo-scientific approach: Ḥulw 1999: 21–29, 327.

<sup>95</sup> Mordechai 1999: 141–146; Schaebler 1999: 17–44, esp. 30.

<sup>96</sup> There are only few studies on the ideologized Syrian school program: Landis 2003. Also: Cardinal 2009 and; Szanto Ali-Dib 2008, esp. 99–100.

<sup>97</sup> Worren 2007.

articles about them in Syrian journals. Indeed, until the 1990s no Alawite religious texts were published in Syria and research on them was virtually impossible<sup>98</sup>. To silence the few Western researchers who tried to raise their voices on the Alawite topic in Syria, it was announced by the Syrian establishment that publishing Alawite texts might offend the Alawites' religious feelings!<sup>99</sup>

Where mentioning the Alawites in Syria has been unavoidable the term "Alawite-Šī'ahs" is used, or it has been just blankly stated that the Alawites are an integral part of the Twelver Šī'ahs<sup>100</sup>; such a notion is used especially in popular science works<sup>101</sup>. It also seems that mainstream Šī'ah children's books are used for schooling Alawite children in Syria.<sup>102</sup>

Famous ethnic Alawites have been referred to by the Syrian regime as "national Arab heroes" without mentioning their Alawite background. One good example of such policy is the case of Badawī al-Ġabal

<sup>98</sup> Kazimi 2010: 50–51.

<sup>99</sup> Van Dam 1996: 109–111.

<sup>100</sup> As mentioned before it started with the work of aṭ-Ṭawīl's *Ta'rīḥ al-'Alawīyīn* (aṭ-Ṭawīl 1979). After that at least dozen works appeared, mostly in Syria or Lebanon trying to incorporate by manipulations the Alawites into Šī'ah:

- 1) *al-'Alawīyūn...* 1972;
- 2) *al-'Alawīyūn šī'ah...* 1972;
- 3) *al-'Alawīyūn wa-at-tašayyu* 1992;
- 4) Šāliḥ 1993;
- 5) Ibrāhīm 1995;
- 6) Ibrāhīm 1999;
- 7) Nabhā 2013, esp. 15–21 where it is stressed that the Alawites belong to mainstream Šī'ah.

This is not a complete list, I have not been able to consult al-Ḥusayn, 'Abdallāh. 1980. *al-Ġudūr at-tārīḥīya lil-Nuṣayrīya al-'alawīya*. Al-Qāhira, which should include some modern reseaches form Alawite authors and also touching upon the topic the Alawites being Šī'ah.

<sup>101</sup> Central place in this genre have the popular-science works of an ethnical Qardāḥa Alawite: Ḥayyir, 'Abd ar-Raḥman (1904–1986), whose bibliography includes works that put the Alawites into the Šī'ah fold:

- 1) Ḥayyir 1992;
- 2) Ḥayyir 1996;
- 3) Ḥayyir 1996b;
- 4) Ḥayyir 1997;
- 5) Ḥayyir 2015.

<sup>102</sup> Several Alawite Internet resources list as "books for children" Lebanese Šī'ah publisher's Mu'assasat al-A'lamī lil-Maṭbū'āt children's books series *Al-silisat as-sīrat al-'alawīyat aš-šarīfa*.

(b. 1898–1907, d. 1981) whose Alawite background and wholehearted support for the “Alawite state” and the French in the 1930s have been erased from historiography, stressing instead his later message of “Syrian unity” and making him a “national poet”.<sup>103</sup> And of course nowhere in the Syrian official press is there to be found the vaguest hint of al-Assads being Alawites, or anything at all that might publicly foster Alawite self-reliance.

In spite of such total denial, however, the decades since 1970 might not be considered all bad for the Alawites, at least from a socio-economic point of view. Opinions differ but it could be said that their living standards have risen sharply in al-Ġabal over the last decades and even Alawite traditions seem to be gaining in strength, despite the state’s hypocritical denial of any Alawites being there or anywhere else in Syria<sup>104</sup>. One good example is al-Assad’s birthplace Qardāḥa which went from a muddy village in the 1950s to now being a symbol of Alawite prosperity. Although it is still prohibited to show any sign of Alawite tradition there and even death ceremonies are conducted by Sunni ritual, under such external cover strong Alawite traditions still live.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> There are several works published in Syria starting from 1960-s that in the process of making him a national hero are silent of his pro-French and pro-independence feelings. Central works of such myth-making are:

- 1) Ḥaṭīb 1962;
- 2) Qintār 2000;
- 3) central and most popular and ideologically most twisted is: Nassār 2013.

Similar are other works or articles written in Syria or by Syrian ideological allies in Lebanon, for example: Malzūm 2006: 3; or *Dīwān Badāwī* al-Ġabal 1978: 2–5.

In the 1990-s some Western scholars started to point out that al-Badawī was in the 1930-s a stout supporter of the French (Yaffē-Schatzmann: 1995: 37; also Seale 1989: 19) and the scathing exposition came with the work of ʿUdayma 1995. And by now tens of articles in the Arab countries are presenting Badawī differently from the official Syrian narrative.

<sup>104</sup> There are conflicting opinions among leading Syrian experts: general and overall quick economic development among the Alawites is seen by Bar 2006: 393; also Faksh 1984: 147–148.

Others say that the growth is mainly seen in Latakia and in other places in the coast, but not so much in al-Ġabal: Nisan 2002: 124–125. Also: van Dam 1996: 9; Pipes 1992: 177. It seems true that al-Ġabal does not show so quick economic progress, but if compared with the pre-Assad era then the positive changes are clear: Balanche 2000: esp pp. 185–216. Also: Drysdale 1981: 93–111. Also: Drysdale 1981 b.

<sup>105</sup> Pinto 2011 esp 190–191. See also: Seale 1989: 9.



## Contemporary Sunni attitude on Alawites

The artificial nature of the Alawite merger with Islam via Šī'ah has never been accepted by radical Sunnis. Contemporary Sunni hatred against the Alawites is fomented by modern works on religion, written since the 1970s, that are based on classical Sunni texts. This is especially true for Ibn Taimiyah's *fatwā* which has a central place in almost any modern Sunni book concerning religious Muslim minorities. The Islamist uprising in Syria 1978–1982 at least partly revolved ideologically around the notion of a “*kuffār* Alawite” regime.<sup>106</sup>

Since the 1970s Alawites have exhibited their subconscious fear for the future because of their “hereticness”, as a few field studies that were allowed to conduct among them over the last decades clearly show<sup>107</sup>. Such fears for the future among the Alawites are understandable as Ibn Taimiyah's ruling has had a central place since the 1970s not only among the Wahhabis but also in wider Sunni circles, with dozens of studies denouncing the Alawites as un-Islamic *kuffār*, citing Ibn Taimiyya's *ḥukm* on them, and usually using the derogative term *Nuṣayrīya*.<sup>108</sup>

Only a few general studies on Islam from the semi-secular, semi-socialist period in the Arab world in the 1960–80s evince a neutral attitude to the Alawites, e.g., the section on the Alawites in such old-school

<sup>106</sup> Muslim Brotherhood Syrian branch issued 1980–1982 its magazine *an-Nadīr*, where several statements against the Alawites, that are based on Ibn Taimiyya views, may be found; the Alawites are considered an obstacle on the way of creating Islamic State in Syria that was the main aim of the uprising, as it was declared in the *Bayān at-Tawra al-Islamiyya fī Sūriyā wa minhāḡuhā* (The Islamic Revolution of Syria and its Chart), see: 'Abd-Allah 1983: 264.

<sup>107</sup> Their feeling in the 1980-s: Drysdale 1982: 4; the situation 2005–2006 in a detailed analysis of Worren 2007: 59–90; also Kazimi 2010: 51–60.

<sup>108</sup> Here are some of them (with pages indicated of the Ibn Taimiyya *ḥukm* on the Alawites):

- 1) 'Awāḡī 2001, 2: 530–587;
- 2) Ḥalabī 1979;
- 3) Ṭu'ayma 1981: 37–71.
- 4) 'Abd al-Ḥakīm 2000/1421;
- 5) *an-Nuṣayrīya – taḡāt Sūrīya ...*;
- 6) *Mādā ta'rīf 'an al-tā'ifa an-Nuṣayrīya* 2012/1433;
- 7) al-'Unqurī 2012;
- 8) 'Alī; Maḡmūd 2013.

But not allways name *Nuṣayrīya* on the cover of a book means an outright attack against the Alawites as there are some works with such a title that are not openly hostile to them (but still critical): Ḥayyūn 2012; or Ḥarīrī 1980. Even in some neutral Šī'ah works appellation *Nuṣayrīya* might be used: Dandašī 2000.

central works as *Islām bi-lā maḍāhib*<sup>109</sup> or *Maḍāhib al-islāmīyīn*<sup>110</sup> which might mention the Ibn Taimiyah *fatwā* or even cite them at length, but consider the Alawites as Muslims without any palpable negative feeling about them.

The prevailing attitude in modern Sunni works is, however, based on Ibn Taimiyah's *fatwā* and the theo-political grudge generated by it that has been growing over the last decades. Such anti-Alawite literature is so copious that it might even be divided into subcategories.

Firstly, there are scientific studies with such dispassionate statements as the Alawites do not belong to Islam.<sup>111</sup> Secondly, there exist outright attacks, often by leading Saudi scholars, against the Alawites in research where Ibn Taimiyah is either clearly cited or his *ḥukm* on the Alawites is clearly discernible<sup>112</sup>. Thirdly, we have Ibn Taymiyya *fatwā*'s modern amplifications, explanations and commentaries with an Alawite context<sup>113</sup>. Fourthly, there are modern *fatwās* based on Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwā*<sup>114</sup>. Some pieces of this anti-Alawite avalanche have also been pub-

<sup>109</sup> aš-Šak'a, Muṣṭafā Muḥammad. 1961. *Islām bilā maḍāhib*. ed. Mahmūd Šaltūt. al-Qāhira: Dār al-qalam, this work has at least 15 editions; I have used its 11. edition: aš-Šak'a 1996/1416, pp 321–373 about the Alawites.

<sup>110</sup> Badawī 1997: 1167–1250.

<sup>111</sup> For example: Abū Zahra: 53–55. Ḥatīb 1984/1404: 319–434.

<sup>112</sup> 1) al-Ḥamd;  
2) Gālib ibn 'Alī. 2001, 2: 530–587;  
3) al-Ḥarbī 2011: 210–239;  
4) Halabī 1979;  
5) 'Abd al-Ḥakīm 2000/1421;  
6) at-Tawīḡrī 2012/1434.

Even during short presidency of Muḥammad Mursi such lampoons started to appear in Egypt:

7) 'Alī; Mahmūd 2013.

And several have been published under the islamic rebels in Syria since 2011:

8) *Risāla fī ḥukm ad-durūz*....

9) al-'Unqurī 2012.

<sup>113</sup> 1) Ġalī 1986/1406: 243–60; this book has at least three reprints;  
2) *Māḍā ta'rif* ... 2012/1433, where half of the text is Ibn Taimiyah *fatwā* (pp. 28–44), another half is its explanation;  
3) Atā Sūfī 2005/1426: 129–158  
4) Ṭu'aymah 1981: 37–71, it has at least three reprints.

<sup>114</sup> 1) Saudi Arabia's official *fatwā* institution Dār al-iftā's release named *an-Nuṣayrīya – taḡāh Sūrīya*..;

lished in English<sup>115</sup> and even some modern Alawite criticisms by Eastern Christians have found resonance in Sunni circles.<sup>116</sup>

In total we might name hundreds of such works that generate anti-Alawite theo-political momentum and thus have a direct influence on the future of around 1.8–2.9 million<sup>117</sup> Alawites in Syria today.

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2) there several *fatwās* on the Alawites by well know jihadi-ideologists as as-Sūrī and aṭ-Ṭartūsī: see Kazimi 2010: 35–38, 38–40.

<sup>115</sup> For example ‘Abd-Allah 1983, that is clearly inspired by Ibn Taimyah’s *ḥukm*, but not citing him.

<sup>116</sup> Harīrī 1980: 167–172.

<sup>117</sup> Nobody can say the exact number of the Alawites in Syria as the last census counting religious minorities was conducted there in 1947, according to which of the total population of 3 030 946 there were 339 466 Alawites, which is 11.2% of the total population (2 121 602 sunnis–70%, Christians–303 094–10%, Ismā‘īlis and Druzes together 151 547 – 5%, and 1% Jews) – Balanche 2000: 82. After 1947 we can make only rough estimations concerning the number of the Alawites. Usually their percentage is put between 10–15% (Balanche 2000: 74–75, 625). The biggest number for the Alawites for the present time I have seen is 3 600 000 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian\\_Civil\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War)), that estimates the Syrian population at 22.5 million and the percentage of the Alawites 16%! But these numbers are clearly too big. Some estimations put the Alawites now at 10% (Dumont 2012: 15–38, 31–32) and it is common to find their percentage between 10–13% of the total Syrian population: Engin; Erhard 2000: 157–160.

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# Syrian Alawite Youth Values and Identity During the Civil War in 2011–2015

TANJA DIBOU

**Abstract** The main objective of this article is to study the main values of the young Alawites which distinguish them from other young Muslims in current Syrian society. Field work was conducted among the Alawites from 2011–2015 that consisted of ethnographic observations of Alawite weddings, interviews and questionnaires. According to the results of the field work it might be concluded that the identity of the Alawites is multi-layered and is composed of Alawite, Syrian, and Arab values but priority is given to the Alawite religion and Syrian nationalism.

**Keywords** Alawites, Syrian youth identity, young Alawi

## Introduction

Adolescence is important as it is a crucial period for the construction of values and identities. Considering the turbulence, the Syrian civil war is witnessing, the challenge for the Syrian youth is the construction of a national identity that supports acceptance and warmth toward various sectarian identities and their values. For centuries Syria was known for its ethnic and religious pluralism. That was broken down in the current Syrian crisis. Thus, it becomes necessary to investigate various youth identities and values in order to have a better understanding of their future in Syria. One of the most controversial themes is the identity of the Alawites whose image is very often associated with strong protection of the Assad regime and a fight against Sunni hegemony. The crisis has made a certain impact on the formation of the young Alawites' identity, but there is more. Alawite theology has its origins in the ancient times, but they as a religious minority keep secret their true religious beliefs which have many contradictions with respect to true Islamic teaching.

This article goals to shed light on Alawite youth identity as responses to political events in Syria in the period 2011–2015 and to explore the main values of Alawite identity that distinguish them from other Muslims in Syrian society. In other words, it is an analysis of what it means for young people to be Alawi in Syria today, and what values young Alawi share. Religious diversity in Syria now faces new challenges, the biggest of which is ensuring the peaceful coexistence of people of different faiths. Thus, the young generation's shared identities, values and openness to other groups could be one predisposing factor to peace in Syria. This study explores the identity of late adolescent Syrian Alawites (aged 16–30). It should be stressed here that only a few empirical studies on Alawite identity have been done so far, and especially that Syrian Alawite youth identity has not been studied before.

This paper answers the following questions: What are Syrian Alawite youth values and identity, and what are the main factors for the construction of their identity? What are the main dimensions of Alawite identity? Which codes, traditions, rituals and symbols are used to indicate membership of the Alawite community? The study examines whether and to what extent Alawite youngsters share Arab, Islamic, Syrian and Alawite values, what it means to be Alawite in modern Syrian society, and how the Alawites differ from other Muslims in Syria. The paper analyzes the openness of the Syrian Alawite youth to other religions and to examine whether and to what extent sharing certain values (Arab, Islamic, Syrian, Alawite) favours such openness.

The study of Alawi identity is controversial because of the current crisis in Syria that began in March 2011. Many researchers such as Worren<sup>1</sup>, Goldsmith<sup>2</sup>, Tokmajyan<sup>3</sup>, Nakkash<sup>4</sup> and Rousseau 2014<sup>5</sup>, etc., confirm that during the crisis various identities encounter different values, attitudes, lifestyles, etc., that are particularly emergent issues on the similarities and differences between people. In a politically unstable situation these differences begin to exert more influence on the resolution of the conflict. In today's context the issues of sectarian identities

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<sup>1</sup> Worren 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Goldsmith 2011: 33–60.

<sup>3</sup> Tokmajyan 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Nakkash 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Rousseau. 2014.



in Syria and throughout the Middle East play a major role in solving political matters.<sup>6</sup>

Human values and identities are changing very quickly nowadays, and it is not possible to define an identity in any single category. It becomes more layered, and there is a need to examine what kinds of layers the identity is composed of and whether the various layers of the value systems of one's identity conflict. The Syrian civil war provided the basis for changes in the value and attitude systems that increased the fragmentation of society into different groups. The aggregation of groups provided protection of their members' identity during the crisis, but outside of the group criticism was construed very aggressively and people were easily manipulated to fight for their identity. The construction of identity is not a process that just develops itself. Individuals and the external environment play a particularly active role. Many factors contribute to the construction of identity: family, tribe, sect, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, tradition, history, culture, language, political beliefs, nationalism, ideology and ethnicity. Some factors, however, play a more important role than others.<sup>7</sup>

This paper explores the following hypotheses:

H1: Syrian Alawi youth identity is closed because of the impact of the contemporary political situation and fear of Sunni hegemony.

H2: Syrian Alawi youth identity is multi-layered, incorporating four systems of values: Muslim, Alawi, Arab and Syrian.

### **Researching the identity of minorities in the Middle East**

Wider scholarly interest in religious minorities in the Middle East developed in the 1980s, triggered by the Iranian revolution and the rise of Islamism in the Muslim world. The 1990s was the first decade when Middle East minorities really moved to the foreground of academic research. This is partly related to the so-called war on terror, especially to the military intervention of the US and its allies into multi-religious Iraq. This intervention led to repression against local religious minorities. The twentieth century has been described as the century of minorities,

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<sup>6</sup> Goldsmith 2011: 37.

<sup>7</sup> Tokmajyan 2013.

the century when concern over the need to provide a legal framework to protect minorities gained unprecedented attention.<sup>8</sup>

A valuable contribution to the study of minority identities in the Middle East was provided by Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor<sup>9</sup>. It focuses on strategic policy issues and looks at possible scenarios for the future, depending on the development of relations among minorities and majorities. Also worthy of note is the work of Mordechai Nisan<sup>10</sup>, who stresses that particular minorities in the Middle East can be identified if such minority status can be described by the following features:

- Geography. Middle Eastern minorities have generally lived on the geographic periphery of the political entities within which they reside, or proximate to them. Mountainous regions are the territorial heartland for almost all Middle Eastern minorities. Residing in distant geographic locales may result from, or may alternatively be the cause of, a long alienation from the dominant majority in the country. The role of geography provides an important spatial criterion for the Middle Eastern minorities who have kept their distance from the dominant Sunni Arabs in particular.<sup>11</sup>
- History. Middle Eastern minorities have a rich history preserved in oral and written form.<sup>12</sup>
- Ethnicity. Kinship and clan-based separateness provides for endogamous patterns of marriage and family identity. Inbreeding within a closer bloodline provides a fundamental division between those who are part of the same biological tree and those who are external to it. But the absence of any particular ethnic autonomy makes it virtually impossible for any minority to become a separate people. At the opposite pole lies exogamy, leading inevitably towards the stage of assimilation within a larger absorptive community.<sup>13</sup>
- Culture. Each minority has its own cultural attributes. One example is language, by which minorities maintain their own differentiated

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<sup>8</sup> Longva & Roald 2011: 1.

<sup>9</sup> Bengio & Ben-Dor 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Nisan 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Nisan 2002: 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*: 16.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*: 14.

- linguistic universe, confronting the alien majority tongue and preventing a loss of identity.<sup>14</sup> Here we can also mention religion which remains the most significant aspect in the Middle East in social, legal and political terms, not forgetting such elements of culture as employment, marriage and family relations. These relations continue to be fundamental distinguishable values of Middle Eastern identity.
- Beyond these essential elements that define separate peoplehood there are factors that help to arouse a national awakening in a previously seemingly non-existent or dormant community.
  - Social change and Mobilization. The formation of a new social grid composed of people from different classes and occupations and settling in an urban environment, and engaging in new and intensive communication systems, provide the general impetus for ethnic mobilization.<sup>15</sup>
  - Repression and Conflict. An experience of common despair can serve as a catalyst for nationalist consolidation in the face of shared enemies or irresolvable problems.<sup>16</sup>
  - Foreign assistance. External intervention on the side of a weak community may provide the necessary catalytic input for generating a national movement.<sup>17</sup>

### **Previous research on the Alawite identity**

There are around a dozen Western works on the Alawites we might consider which deal with their identity, as well as Alawite works from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Starting with the first comprehensive description of Alawites from the British missionary Samuel Lyde<sup>18</sup>, followed by the French orientalist René Dussaud's description of the history of the Alawites and a comprehensive overview of the contents of the holy book *Kitāb al-Mağmū'*<sup>19</sup>, Meir M. Bar-Asher and Aryeh Kofsky<sup>20</sup> conclude that the Alawites have a syncretic religion combining Islam and the

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*: 14.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*: 17.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*: 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*: 17.

<sup>18</sup> Lyde 1860.

<sup>19</sup> Dussaud 1900. See also: Procházka 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Bar-Asher & Kofsky 2002.

Persian Gnostic teachings and practices with Christianity as the most significant element in this mixture.<sup>21</sup> The most recent and comprehensive overview is that of Yaron Friedman which examines their identity from Ši'ite and Sunni perspectives<sup>22</sup>.

The Alawite identity was previously studied by Torstein Schiøtz Worren's Master's thesis "Fear and Resistance: The Construction of Alawi Identity in Syria"<sup>23</sup>, in which he examines the Alawi identity from a historical and political perspective. He tries to answer the question of how the Syrian Alawites construct their collective identity. He confirms that empirical research of the Syrian Alawi identity is not easy because, for Alawites, speaking publicly about their religion is taboo. Worren thus studied their identity concealed, using techniques such as observation and holding informal interviews with local residents. Worren highlights two discourses that construct Alawi identity: he first mentions Sunni hegemony, and then secondly Islamic discourse. Worren points out the impact of politics on the construction of identity and saw this as a threat. He wrote that sectarian identities are acceptable as long as they are cultural and religious, but when they become politicized, they are only allowed to compete for political identity and constitute a threat to national unity and stability. A few other works also tackle Alawi identity on a smaller scale, especially Kazimi<sup>24</sup>.

Regarding studies of Alawite youth, then, despite the fact that the Syrian youth and children were one of the central themes in the media during the Syrian civil war, no academic research has been done specifically about Syrian Alawite youth identity and values.

### **Methodology of the present empirical research**

The empirical research was based on qualitative research methods. Many researchers admit that qualitative studies allow rich descriptions of the investigated object.<sup>25</sup> The qualitative survey is not intended to verify the validity of the hypotheses of a large sample but rather to try to understand the small number of participants in a sample view of the

<sup>21</sup> Chebab 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Friedman 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Worren 2007

<sup>24</sup> Kazimi: 50–64.

<sup>25</sup> Creswell 2003: 181–183; Geertz 1973: 3–30; Laherand 2008: 24.

world<sup>26</sup> and the structure of its meaning. Moreover, qualitative research is characterized by flexibility in a number of research methods by combining and mixing the various stages of the study.<sup>27</sup>

Data for empirical research of the Alawite identity was collected through the triangulation of ethnographic observation, interviews, and social media profile analysis. The idea behind triangulation is to mutually confirm the findings by approaching them from different angles. This is not to obtain more data, but to combine different forms of data and place them in relation to each other.

The research has a descriptive character and was conducted in the social constructivist and interpretivist philosophical tradition. The constructivist paradigm helps to construct knowledge about Alawite identity during the process of learning and through interaction with the subject. This constructivist paradigm is combined with an interpretivist paradigm as information is gathered and becomes open to new interpretation.

All data was collected from September 2011 to October 2015. The first stage of empirical research was observations conducted in Syria from September 2011 to December 2011 at a time when the so-called Arab Spring protests against the government had just begun in Syria. Ethnographic observation provided prior information on everyday Alawi life and on the differences between the Sunnis and the Alawites, thus demonstrating the specificity of the Alawite community compared to that of other Muslims.

The aim of the ethnographic observation is to uncover the explicit and implicit cultural knowledge that guides behaviour in that group. When studying identity, observation gives access to the self-understandings of the group in a variety of contexts, allowing the researcher to experience the reflexivity of group identity as well as what the identity means in practical terms.<sup>28</sup>

The data on young Alawite people's lives in a natural environment was collected through the following participatory observation:

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<sup>26</sup> J.Smith 2006: 2.

<sup>27</sup> Laherand 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Abdelal *et al.* 2009: 318.

- Participatory observation I: Observation of rural life of Alawites in the village al-Qurayāt. The observation focuses on the Alawite community living in a village between Tartous and Homs. It is not possible to describe Alawites without describing the life of Alawite mountain villages and their area of origin. It is essential to mention that in this area Alawites represent a majority compared to other parts of Syria. The observation monitored the family relationship, the relationship between youth, school life and their leisure activities.
- Participatory observation II: Observation of urban life of Alawites in the suburb of Damascus Aš al-Warwar. This suburb represents an example where Alawites are living in areas where they constitute a minority and therefore construct their identity in a different way from in Mediterranean Sea coast villages where Alawites constitute a majority. The observation focused on an analysis of young people's daily routines and aimed to learn more about young Alawite relations with young people from other religions. In a large city like Damascus, inhabited by people of different faiths, it is easier to build a relationship with individuals from the other strands of Islam, as well as with representatives of Christianity, in the workplace, at school or elsewhere. Additionally, compared to the countryside where the majority of Syrian families are engaged in agriculture, observation of urban life gives a better understanding of the distribution of Alawi social class and the role of women in the family and modern society in Syria.
- Participatory observation III: Observation of the Alawite wedding party. The wedding process differs country by country and weddings represent unique material for analysing traditions and culture. In Syria, weddings are very important events which gather together relatives and friends alike, so the main aim of the wedding observation was to investigate the relationship between generations and cultural and religious traditions.

In all observations the present researcher was a participant and was fully engaged with the people and their activities. As collecting data in Syria is quite problematic because of its controlled society which poses a range of difficulties, the observations were made without the knowledge of the people who were observed. Secret observation is perfect for situations

where the researcher aims at acquiring the kind of information the subjects of the research would not want to talk about.<sup>29</sup>

Ethnographic participant observation is understood as a research strategy for analyzing concrete contexts and human development in a cultural surrounding. Of special interest are clothing, rituals and symbols, which are used for marking social territories.<sup>30</sup> The observations are used to grasp the complexity of the field as comprehensively as possible and to develop more focused research questions and perspectives for the poll questionnaire and interviewing.

The second step of research consisted of interviews and the questionnaire, which was designed to find answers to research questions, test hypotheses, and to provide more detailed information on Syrian youth Alawi identity. The questionnaire's pilot testing took place in August 2015. The interviewees were not chosen at random, but the selection was based on the researcher's personal contacts in Syria: 28 year-old man (Interviewee 1); 20 year-old man (Interviewee 2); 25 year-old woman (Interviewee 3) from different places in Syria: Damascus, Latakia and al-Qurayāt village. These young Alawites agreed to make longer comments to answers on the electronic questionnaire and provided additional information on the Alawites.

The electronic questionnaire consisted of multiple choice and open questions. The questionnaire was in Arabic and was sent out to the sampled young Alawites via the social network Facebook and via e-mail with the help of three interviewees who had sent a questionnaire to young people between the ages of 16 and 30 through their contacts. Answering the questionnaire took place between September and October 2015. The questionnaire was answered by 38 respondents of both sexes, of various ages and social classes. Although the interviewed sample is small and not representative as it does not reflect a broad cross-section of Alawite views, it provides some deeper insight into the Alawite community in Syria.

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<sup>29</sup> Hirsjärvi *et al.* 2005: 199–200.

<sup>30</sup> Angrosino 2007.

## Results of observations on young Alawites

The observations took place in the village al-Qurayāt and in the suburb of Damascus 'Aš al-Warwar. In the village al-Qurayāt, young Alawites live in their parents' houses. The village inhabitants are only Alawites; there are no Sunnis or Christians. Thus, the young Alawites only interact socially with other young Alawites and are not used to having contact with representatives of other religions. After graduating from school, when young people decide to go on to study at university, they are exposed to more contact with other faiths but otherwise there is no particular contact with other faiths for young Alawi people living in the village.

Village Alawites attend small village schools where all the pupils are Alawites. Young urban Alawites usually live in Alawite districts, for instance the suburb of Damascus Aš al-Warwar, and attend city schools where the majority are Alawites. Urban Alawi youth attend universities and professional schools and work at places where every faith in Syria is represented.

As to their faith, it is not the religion that they have chosen for themselves. They are Alawite simply because it is their family tradition and the religion passes from one generation to another. Young people do not talk much about their religious affiliation not only because it is forbidden, but also because they do not know much about their religion. One of the reasons for that is the fact that many young men from 16–20 have still not read the sacred Alawite texts, and Alawite shaykhs have not yet explained the Alawite faith to them. The second reason for their ignorance is the oath to their shaykhs that prohibits discussion of the nuances of their religion.

At school, youngsters have religious education in the curricula, but the textbooks are based on the Sunni position of Islam. These textbooks consist of three parts: the first includes the verses of the Quran that the students must learn by heart; the second part contains *hadīths* about the life of Muhammad, which the students must also learn by heart; the third part introduces the history of Islam which the students must be able to retell. In the religious education programmes Alawite theology is not included. It is prohibited to discuss religious Alawite texts or their theology publicly. Only religious Alawite leaders (shaykhs) are allowed



to discuss matters of the Alawite religion among Alawite youths and in the Alawi community.

In addition to going to school, working in the fields and helping parents with the housework, there are the main activities of the rural youth. In villages the Alawites live in large families (there are usually more than three children), and for most of their free time young people support and assist parents with different kinds of work.

Urban Alawite youth have more opportunities to spend their free time in different ways. If young people work or study, they usually get home late in the evening as it takes a lot of time in Damascus to drive from one place to another, and they spend their free time with their family, watching television, or sitting with their friends on balconies.

The village Alawites mostly work in agriculture, in the army or the national special service. Women in the villages usually marry at 22 to 26 and do not go to work. The young urban Alawites mostly study or work in the army, or in the public and private sectors. Compared with rural women, urban women actively study at university and work in both the public and private sectors. Women often work in education and in the social and medical fields. Men are often entrepreneurs. Many people use their first residential floor as a small shop where they sell a variety of things. Young Alawites are engaged in business for economic reasons because salaries are low.

Relations between young men and women are family-oriented. Most relationships develop within the families and in the villages there are many marriages between relatives. Men and women develop relations at family gatherings, celebrations, and while visiting friends. The urban youth can also find new acquaintances at work and at university. During their observation, the Alawites celebrated national Syrian holidays, New Year, Christmas, and Islamic celebrations. Young Alawi people also celebrate birthdays. The majority of Alawites do not follow the Ramadan fasting tradition. Alawites do not usually pray during the day, nor do they visit mosques. During religious holidays, and sometimes on Fridays, Alawites go to the graves of saints and to shrines called *maqām* or *mazār*.

Young Alawite men and women wear fashionable Western clothes. Young women do not wear the *hiġab*. Alawite youngsters mostly wear jeans and T-shirts. Women do not wear skirts or dresses on weekdays.

Young women dye their hair, paint their nails and use make-up. Compared to young Sunni women, Alawite women's clothing is noticeably different in style. Young Alawite women in the countryside dress rather similarly to the urban style.

To conclude, observations of the everyday life of the Alawite youth demonstrate that Alawite traditions differ from those of Sunni youth. When comparing an Alawite with a Sunni, the behaviour and lifestyle of Alawite youngsters is different from that of the Sunnis largely due to the fact that the former are mostly secular and do not typically adhere to the pillars of Islam. The observations also revealed that the Alawites do not want to talk about their religion. It also becomes clear that the Alawi community is quite closed; the Alawites live in their own communities, keeping a distance from others. Family relations are very important for young people, and they trust their parents and ask for their agreement on many issues, such as marriage, the choice of school, and studies.

### **Results of observation on an Alawite wedding ceremony**

The wedding was celebrated on 15 September 2011 close to the town of Miṣyāf. The wedding celebration was held in a special open area for such celebrations where all necessary materials were provided: tables, chairs, music, the dance floor, etc. The bride (21 years old) and the groom (30 years old) were both young Alawites from different regions of Syria. The young man was from the village al-Qurayāt and the bride from town of Tartous.

The young couple had met each other in Damascus where the young man worked and the woman attended a vocational school. They got acquainted with each other through a common acquaintance. Before marrying, they asked for the consent of their parents and they courted for one year, but did not live together.

All the guests and relatives gathered for the wedding ceremony and they were sitting together, both men and women, both parents and children, both the bride and groom's relatives in one place in order to celebrate this important event together. The number of guests was nearly 120. On the right side, close to the couple, sat the groom's relatives and invited guests, and on the left side sat those of the bride. The couple's table

stood separately from the others in the middle so that all guests could see them.

The guests were festively dressed. Young girls wore short skirts or dresses and married women wore long dresses. All women were wearing prominent makeup. Young men wore jeans, fashionable T-shirts or shirts and jumpers. Elderly men wore suits. The wedding celebration was opened by singers and musicians who initially welcomed Syria, the Syrian authorities and the president. Then the dancing began.

The couple began dancing, and all the guests and relatives gathered around the couple and started clapping their hands. After a while all guests started to dance a traditional Syrian Alawi dance *Dabkah*, all men and women dancing together, holding hands. The first dancers in the circle are usually middle-aged or young men, the leaders of the dance, who performed very complex movements and squatting. *Dabkah* dance music is special, and its stirring pace encourages people to move quickly.

During the wedding a ritual took place in which the relatives of the groom gave presents of gold to the bride. After this ritual each guest moved to hug and congratulate the couple. Throughout the wedding live music was played and a singer sang Syrian songs. The guests ate a lot of traditional food: vegetables, fruits, lamb kebab, salads, and olives. They also drank alcoholic beverages: beer, wine and araq, a strong alcoholic drink made with aniseed. Alcohol was consumed mostly by men. Women drank less, and only mild alcoholic beverages. Young men and women smoked a lot of *Shisha* and sat together and talked to each other. They danced *Dabkah* willingly, both women and men apart as well as together.

Sunni weddings differ from Alawi weddings in the following respects:

- 1) The wedding celebration is without alcohol;
- 2) Men and women celebrate the wedding separately in various rooms or sit in different places;
- 3) Women's clothing in Sunni weddings is festive, but covered: long dresses with long sleeves.

So the Alawite wedding celebration is based on their traditional dances and special wedding rituals that demonstrate how social and cultural values and secular traditions are transferred from one generation to another.

### Results of the poll

The survey was produced through electronic questionnaire. It involved 38 people aged 16–30. 26 of them (68%) were male and 12 (32%) were female. The youngest respondent was 16 years old and the oldest 30 years old. The average age of respondents was 23 years old. The largest number of respondents was young people aged 25 (8 people). Young people who participated in the survey were relatively equally from villages and cities: rural youth were 20 respondents (52%) and residents of the city 18 (48%). Female respondents were mostly rural residents, and the majority of male respondents lived in the cities.

Subjects were asked to define their identity by choosing the three most important categories that characterize their identity from a list of religion, sex, language and dialect, social class, political ideology, level of education, family and clan affiliation.

Most young people rated as important religious affiliation (38 respondents), sex (22 respondents), social class (15 respondents) and political ideology (13 respondents) in their identity construction. The answers showed that religion was considered important by all respondents. The least important was determined to be level of education (6 respondents). Three respondents were asked to comment on their choices for this question:

*Although I am a Muslim, for me it is very important that I am an Alawite. I can recognize Alawites among other Muslims by language, behaviour and appearance. I was born in a family where everyone is Alawite. I grew up in an environment where I was surrounded mostly by the Alawites. I do believe that my religion is right, and this is most important in determining my identity ... (Interviewee 1)*

*I think that sex is very important for self-determination. I'm a woman and I can see that my main role is to be the mother of the future ... (Interviewee 3)*

*In addition to religion, I have chosen the level of education for my self-determination, because at the moment I am studying at university and I know that the value of education is quite important. My friends are students, and we have the same views about various issues in Syrian society ... (Interviewee 2)*

Religion is one of most important values for young Alawites. All respondents gave a positive answer to the question “Do you believe in one God (Allāh)?” But, compared to Sunni Muslims, the frequency of visits to mosques is very rare. The most common answers are: I only visit the mosque during religious holidays; I do not visit the mosque at all or visit a couple of times a month.

Two respondents commented on their answers:

*For Alawites it is customary during religious celebrations and events to pray at home. Usually, when there is a religious holiday, relatives within one family agree to gather together in one relative’s house and invite a shaykh or a couple of shaykhs to speak about the Alawite faith and everyone can ask a variety of questions about religion and after the official speech start to pray ... (Interviewee 1)*

*I know how to pray, but in my family there is no tradition of praying and we do not go to mosques. There is small, sacred Alawi place in our village that we used to visit only on important religious holidays, or when someone dies ... (Interviewee 3)*

As for the main source of faith, men follow the holy Alawite texts and women follow the Koran, family traditions and prevailing traditions in certain geographical areas. None of the female respondents mentioned anything concerning Alawite religious books and texts as the Alawite holy texts do not concern women. The Alawite texts are only presented to men by the Shaykh. One male respondent commented on this in an interview:

*The first time I saw the Alawite holy text was when I was 20 years old. I had to go to the Shaykh who gave the first insight into religion and explained how important it is to practice the Alawi faith traditions. At the first meeting, the Shaykh looked to see whether I am ready or not for religion. In my family religious Alawite principles are written in a special notebook which my father keeps in a secret place in a cupboard, and women are actually*

*forbidden to look at it. I also have brothers and sisters. All the brothers are aware of this book ... (Interviewee 1)*

The Alawites responded that they celebrate Muslim religious celebrations and Christian religious holidays too. Respondents most frequently answered that they celebrate birthdays, Christmas, Easter, the Christian New Year and Syrian national holidays such as Mothers' day (21<sup>st</sup> March) and Syrian Independence Day (17<sup>th</sup> April). Alawites also celebrate Muslim religious holidays like 'Īd al-Fiṭr at the end of Ramadan and 'Īdu l-Aḏḥā.

On the question of Alawi youth participation in sports and hobby groups, 69% replied that they participate in sports and hobby groups and the most popular hobbies are singing, music, violin playing, crafts, cuisine and food preparation, drawing, archaeology, tourism and travel, and literature. The average number of friends of other religions that a young Alawite person has is 10.

On Alawite youth attitude towards the role of women in the family, the majority of male respondents (85%) consider that a woman should decide for herself whether she should work and study while married. The women shared two response variants equally: (1) they themselves will decide, and (2) it depends on the family and the husband's opinions. The female interviewee adds in her reply:

*A year ago I graduated from university with a degree in history and I went to work as a teacher in a small village school. I am happy to continue working even after marriage. I like my job. But I cannot be sure what will be more important for me in the future when I have a family and children. But right now I choose to answer that after marriage I will continue working. I have a sister who has also graduated from university, but after her marriage she did not go to work. She is now a mother of four and prefers to be a housewife, because it simply cannot be otherwise, because the kids need more commitment from her ... (Interviewee 3)*

Respondents were also asked about their attitudes to intersectorian marriage. According to their replies, young Alawite women are more categorically against marriage with men of other faiths, but young Alawite men did not reveal in any of their responses that they would be categorically opposed to marriage with women of different faiths. Young Alawite men's answers were distributed as follows: 19 young men out of

26 were willing to marry women of other faiths, 7 out of 26 were rather against marriage to women from other religions. Two respondents commented on their answer as follows:

*I've heard different stories about love and marriage between an Alawite and a Sunni. But I know that there are not so many stories nowadays. I have an Alawite friend whose sister got married to a Sunni man. The woman's Alawite family was not against it but the Sunni family had some who were not in favor of Sunni and Alawite marriages. Relatives were against this marriage because they think that the Alawites are all warriors who defend their dictatorial regime and kill Sunnis. In spite of this pressure, they are still married and still living together. In my family there are also men who married foreign women who are not Muslims – they are Christians ... (Interviewee 2)*

*I personally do not want to marry a Sunni man. I think my parents do not agree with that either, getting married with a non-Alawi man. Parents' opinions and approval of marriage are very important for me ... (Interviewee 3)*

Respondents were asked to evaluate values such as family, friends, job, religion, politics, hobbies and free time, education and money according to a 4-point scale where 1 is not important at all and 4 is the most important. According to respondents, young Alawites' main values are politics, friends and leisure time, family and religion.

**Table 1.** Alawite youth attitudes towards different values (max = 4 – very important, min = 1 – not important at all)

Values	Average rating
Education	1,67
Job	1,83
Money	2
Religion	2,2
Family	2,25
Free time and hobbies	2,3
Friends	2,83
Politics	2,93

The interviewees commented on their choices:

*My religion and political beliefs actually determine who I am in Syrian society. Alawites are usually associated with the al-Assad regime, and I admit it, but for me it is more important that Syria remain a religiously diverse country where the interests of the Syrian people and also the interests of Alawites are equally valued. The ruling party stands for the fact that Syria would be a good place, where all people of various religions can live together ... (Interviewee 1)*

*I could say that I am not interested in politics in general, not as much as the one who is in power in Syria. I am just afraid that if a very religious person came to power then, for me as a woman, it would be more difficult to live in Syria, and the role of women in society certainly would be worse. Before the war I had no problem going anywhere in Syria without a headscarf. But now the situation has changed and in some places the attitude towards a woman without a headscarf is the same as the attitude to unbelievers. (Interviewee 3)*

In both interviews it is clear that current politics and religious beliefs are important topics for young Alawites. Facebook profiles have political themes. Many Facebook profile photographs have as a background a military theme, or political iconography like Syrian national symbols and images. The most frequently occurring symbols and images are the Syrian national flag, the image of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, and the image of the previous Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad. On Facebook most Alawites prefer to belong to Syrian groups.

*I prefer Syrian groups because there are issues that call to me, for example like Syrian contemporary society and politics. I am not a member of any foreign groups because my foreign language skills are not very good. Besides, I have no friends outside of Syria. I have not become a member of any Alawite FB groups. Alawite FB groups are often very closed and include representatives of Alawi society who live outside Syria. Thus they are groups with different themes all over the world but, for me, what is happening in Syria and ongoing news about Syria offers more interest... (Interviewee 2)*

Today's social networks, media and TV have a great impact on the formation of identity and values. Thus, during the survey what kinds of TV channels Syrian Alawites prefer to watch was also examined.



Concerning Alawite youth preferences of TV channels, they watch different channels equally, but those from rural areas prefer to watch Syrian state TV channels. 37% of respondents stated that they watch all channels equally (Arabic, Syrian, Foreign). 32% of respondents prefer to watch public Syrian state channels. The least number of respondents preferred to watch Arabic channels (10%), private Syrian channels (16%) and foreign channels (5%). Analyzing rural and urban youth TV-watching preferences, it turned out that only urban Alawites chose to watch foreign channels. Young rural Alawites preferred to watch Syrian state-run channels. Most of the respondents use the Internet and visit all sources equally (55% of respondents). Only 24% of respondents use national Syrian Internet sources, while 18% visit only Arab countries' Internet resources. Nobody answered that he/she would only visit Syria's private Internet sources.

The respondents were also asked about their preferences of self-identification (Arab, Muslim, Syrian, Alawite). The results are as follows:

- a) In the first place I am Alawite, in second place Syrian, then Muslim, and Arab last (15 people).
- b) In the first place I am Syrian, in second place Alawite, then Muslim, and Arab last (11 people).
- c) In the first place I am Arab, in second place Syrian, then Muslim, and Alawite last (5 people).
- d) In the first place I am Alawite, in second place Muslim, then Syrian, and Arab last (4 people).
- e) In the first place I am Syrian, in second place Alawite, then Arab, and Muslim last (3 people).

None of the respondents put Muslim in first place; Alawite or Syrian were most often chosen there, with Arab and Muslim coming in as less important. Respondents were also asked to explain why Arab identity might be less important. This is explained by the interviewees in different ways. Some said that Syria has not much in common with other Arab countries except from the Arabic language. Others connected their response with modern Syrian military conflict and mentioned that the Arab countries have not found consensus on the issue of the Syrian conflict. Three people made the choice that to be a Muslim is not at all

important for them. They explain this by the fact that Islam is very conservative, but they are Alawites who are not, and that Islam is linked to terrorism and modern Islamic radicalism.

**Table 2.** Alawite identity

I. place = 4 points	II. place = 3 points	III. place = 2 points	IV. place = 1 point	total: points	average
The number of people who chose this combination					
Syrian (14 people)	Syrian (20 people)	Syrian (4 people)	Syrian (0 people)	124	3,26
Alawi (19 people)	Alawi (14 people)	Alawi (0 people)	Alawi (5 people)	123	3,24
Muslim (0 people)	Muslim (4 people)	Muslim (31 people)	Muslim (3 people)	77	2,03
Arab (5 people)	Arab (0 people)	Arab (3 people)	Arab (30 people)	56	1,47

So we can assume that Alawite identity is multi-layered and is composed of Alawite, Syrian and Arab values. However, the Alawite faith and Syrian nationalism have priority. The history of the Alawites and observations of modern life show that the Alawites in Syria have kept their distance from the majority of Syrian Sunnis, especially in times of crisis when fears drive them together as a group to live in isolation and they strengthen their collective religious identity, in flux since 2011, into more of a political identity. Sharing the elements and values of Arab, Syrian, Muslim, Sunni and Christian identity is a very good basis for constructing the open identity of young Alawites. On the other hand, modern young Alawites' openness has been inhibited by territory, religious secretiveness and fear of Sunni hegemony.

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# The Nation State VS. the Failed State and the Arab Upheaval in the Middle East

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**Abstract** The regional upheaval, which began eight years ago, has left its mark on the Middle East and has entirely changed the logic underlying its structure. Alongside the spillover of intrastate conflicts from failed states, we are witnessing the growing phenomenon of non-state actors, mostly Jihadi terror organizations, alongside intervention of external entities that escalates the intrastate confrontation and, as a result, the failed state becomes even weaker. These two interwoven processes eventually lead to the rapid undermining of regional stability and international order and has the potential to drag the entire system into a chaotic and bloody future. On the other hand, it might also be an opportunity to change the political order and system in such a way as to facilitate more stabilization of the region based on an alternative political model, one more suitable to the local political culture.

**Keywords** failed states, Middle East, state-building, non-state actors, Arab-Upheaval, Jihad, Islam

## Introduction

The tensions and rifts in each state fed into feelings of frustration and provided fertile ground for social protest which, in 2011, became a regional phenomenon. This upheaval reinforced existing tensions and, in some cases, led to the toppling of a regime or undermined its legitimacy. Under these conditions, several of the states in the Arab world became caught up in bloody civil wars that in some cases led to the total disintegration of the state structures. In contrast to the Arab republics, the eight

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monarchies in the region – Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states – managed to maintain their stability, although most of them are also artificial creations that suffer from structural deficiencies and are in danger of collapse.

In order to understand how this Arab upheaval has accelerated the deterioration of functioning, although not efficiently, Arab states into failed states and the impact of these processes on the regional and international systems we will begin with a general presentation of the failed state phenomenon. We will then examine the general failure of the international community's efforts and strategies in addressing this phenomenon along with the nature of the failed state, the rise of non-state entities, and the interconnections between them. We will describe the impact of failed states on international order and security and how failed states endanger both distant and neighboring states. We will conclude with an assessment of the future of the Arab World and discuss some options for tackling the huge challenges it faces.

### **The failed state phenomenon**

The phenomenon of the failed state has received increasing attention in professional literature in recent decades. Alongside specialized journals that focus on issues related to the failed state, numerous books and research studies have been published on the subject and designated research units have been created within intelligence organizations, such as the CIA, and within leading international organizations, such as the World Bank.

What is a Failed State anyway? A state is defined as “failed” when it demonstrates little to no ability to provide its citizens with human security (UN definition).<sup>2</sup> A failed state is characterized by a weak central government that is unable to govern. William Zartman views it as a risk and a challenge to the international community. He states that the phenomenon has two dimensions, an institutional-governmental dimension and a social dimension<sup>3</sup>, and these two dimensions are intertwined. In the social dimension the regime loses its legitimacy, while in the

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<sup>2</sup> “Resolution 60/1 adopted by the General Assembly: 2005 World Summit Outcome”, UN General Assembly, 24 October, 2005. <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/idrl/I520EN.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Zartman 1995: 1–11.

institutional-governmental dimension it loses its ability to function and govern. Law and order consequently collapse, resulting in other entities (usually competitors and rivals) attempting to take over the regime or parts of it.

A weak government is one whose legitimacy is limited or non-existent and which does not enjoy a monopoly on the means of violence. A state in the process of collapse is characterized by a paralysis of decision-making and the disintegration of social cohesion; the state is not able to maintain sovereignty or security within its territory. Under these conditions, the state ceases to be socio-economically relevant in the eyes of the population. Thus, residents no longer expect to receive basic services from the state which has lost the ability to provide them. Every failed state has three prominent characteristics: weak governance and a lack of legitimacy, extreme political and societal fragmentation, and severe economic weakness.

One of the important distinctions made by Zartman relates to the state failure process. He claims that in most cases the process is a gradual and prolonged one, rather than a sudden event such as a *coup d'état* or revolt. He also writes that states which suffer from internal disintegration (primarily because of identity politics – religious, ethnic, etc.), and are characterized at the same time by weak and sometimes non-functioning institutions, are liable to become failed states. In such states this failure intensifies in a kind of vicious cycle. Thus, the weakness of the state's institutions reinforces the fragmentation, which in turn further weakens the institutions and their legitimacy.

Michael Hudson has examined the stability and strength of states on a spectrum from fragile states to stable and dynamic ones on the basis of two variables: the degree of political fragmentation (which is reflected in identity politics) and the degree of governmental effectiveness. Like Zartman, he also comes to the conclusion that when there is a low level of effectiveness and a high level of fragmentation there is a substantial danger to the stability of the state.<sup>4</sup>

The lack of correlation between nation and state is a major cause of regional instability and domestic and regional conflict.<sup>5</sup> This is

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<sup>4</sup> Hudson 1977: 391.

<sup>5</sup> Miller 2014.

particularly true if the various national or ethnic groups aspire to independence or view themselves as belonging to a neighboring state. In contrast, a country characterized by the existence of a correlation between nation and territory is immediately more stable. The reality of the last two decades shows that most of the active conflicts going on today, including international terror, are the result of intrastate conflict.<sup>6</sup> These typically develop in failed states and typically lead to a deterioration in their situation, undermining regional stability and security. In many cases failed states “export” their internal crises by directing violence at their neighbors, aiming to reduce the threat at home (theory of diversion), and react aggressively to international pressure put on them because of this pattern of behavior.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the crises that develop in failed states have a kind of viral effect on their surroundings. The Arab upheaval is a clear example of this; it spread from country to country and from West to East until it encompassed large parts of the Arab world.

The escalation of intrastate conflict into regional confrontation exposes the neighbors of weak and failed states to numerous dangers that can undermine their stability and security. Thus, for example, we have seen how Saudi Arabia has been affected by the spread of internal conflict from Yemen; how Mali suffered from the spillover of the civil war in Libya onto its territory; how Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon have had to absorb millions of refugees from Syria; and how Israel is having to deal with terror based in the Sinai Peninsula because of Egypt’s severe difficulties in controlling most of that territory.

Alongside the spillover of intrastate conflict from failed states, we witness the intervention of external players within the failed states to protect their interests. This includes, for example, Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen against the Houthis-Shiites who are supported by Iran, and the dispatch of Iranian forces to Syria to assist Assad. This external intervention creates a vicious circle: the intervention escalates intrastate confrontation and the failed state becomes even weaker, thus “inviting” additional foreign intervention, and so on. Expansion in the activity of external entities is made possible by the weakness of the central government and the rapid expansion of the ungoverned periphery in those

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<sup>6</sup> Coggins 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Groff *et al.* 1983: 359–380.



countries. At the same time, expansion in the activity of external entities accelerates the processes of state failure. These two interwoven processes eventually lead to a rapid undermining of regional stability, a growing number of refugees, the collapse of the economic system, and stronger ties between terror and crime.

According to The Fund for Peace Fragile States Index, 33 states are defined as “fragile” or “in an advanced process of collapse”. Most the states in the most advanced stage of failure are those with a Muslim majority and those located in sub-Saharan Africa. The same index for 2015 includes even more Arab states at higher levels of state failure, and in the index for 2016 Syria, Yemen and Iraq are at their higher levels ever where Yemen is ranked at the 4<sup>th</sup> place of the entire index and Syria at the 6<sup>th</sup>. The situation gets worst in the index for 2017 where Yemen remains at the 4<sup>th</sup> place but Syria deteriorates to the 5<sup>th</sup> and in the index for 2018, Yemen is at the 3<sup>rd</sup> place and Syria at the 4<sup>th</sup>.<sup>8</sup>

### **The weakness of the international community’s response – irrelevant paradigm**

Since failed states endanger stability and security well beyond their borders and since almost all past efforts to rehabilitate failed states have failed (the relative success in the Balkans is an exception), the time has come to develop new and efficient strategies through the adoption of more relevant solutions. Thus, for example, instead of clinging to the paradigm of united nation-states a new paradigm of federated states should perhaps be adopted that would facilitate the expression of religious, tribal, and ethnic identities. In Bosnia this strategy has been implemented relatively successfully through the creation of a federation of two autonomous regions.

The international community only has limited ability to intervene in failed states, to suppress the violent rebel forces that operate in them, and to support the stabilization of the nation-states and the regional system. These limits are the result of a lack of the political will needed to intervene in areas of conflict, the conceptual and operational weakness of peacekeeping and state-building missions, and the understanding that there is a limited lifespan for intervention in these areas. To these should

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<sup>8</sup> *Fragile States Index*, The Fund for Peace <http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/>

be added problems resulting from competition between aid organizations and the difficulties in coordinating between the various missions operating in regions of conflict, which reduce the chances of success even further and in many cases may even exacerbate or escalate the situation.<sup>9</sup>

The international community's lack of interest in rehabilitating failed countries is also the result of experience – most of it negative – that has accumulated over the years from such rehabilitation missions. These missions are always very expensive and usually also involve combat and casualties that are not acceptable to public opinion in the West. Thus, public opinion in the West will not tolerate terrorist acts against military forces that have been sent to save lives and provide aid, as was the case in Somalia in 1993. Thus, the chaos in the Middle East is expected to continue for many years to come and the stable countries in the region, such as Israel, can expect to face additional tests in the future.

### **Early warning signals that were not received**

The latest UN Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) published on November 29, 2016 is the latest in a series of independent reports written by leading scholars, most of whom hail from the Arab world. The report, like its predecessors, is highly critical of the Arab regimes and emphasized the fundamental problems of the Arab world. Lessons from the past 8 years of regional turmoil have not been learned as the Arab regimes are ruthlessly tough on dissent, and much less on its causes. Previous AHDR reports (2002–2009) raised alarm bells but no-one listened.<sup>10</sup>

The Arab region has experienced the most rapid increase in war and violent conflict among all global regions over the past decade. The report continues and determines that the Middle East now encompasses “the largest number of countries that have become failed states and is home to the largest refugee and internally displaced population worldwide.”

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<sup>9</sup> Cooke & Downie 2015.

<sup>10</sup> *Arab Human Development Report 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*. United Nations Development Programme, 2016. <http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/report/AHDR%20Reports/AHDR%202016/AHDR%20Final%202016/AHDR2016En.pdf>

Despite this important message and the plethora of information included in the reports, they received little attention in the West or in the Arab world. They did not induce any action or discussion at the state level to solve these problems either. The Arab media provided some exposure but focused mainly on the criticism of the reports, while researchers did not expend any significant intellectual, organizational or operational effort to study the reports or monitor the trends and phenomena presented and analyzed in them.<sup>11</sup>

### **The global implications of failed states**

Previous U.S. administrations have identified the threat to America's national security in failed states,<sup>12</sup> recognizing that the U.S. is increasingly threatened by fragile and failed states.<sup>13</sup> Failed states export security threats and instability to their close and distant vicinities. In the Middle East context, they become greenhouses for extremist Jihadi terrorism. In 2014 alone the region, home to only 5% of the world's population, accounted for almost half of all terrorist attacks worldwide.<sup>14</sup> They are the biggest generator of humanitarian crises, displaced people and refugees; they endanger regime stability in their neighboring countries; they enable access to sophisticated weapons stolen from the collapsing state militaries' facilities; and they encourage subversive activities among Muslim communities in some Western countries in a way that may destabilize their internal social order.

These changes are having a global impact, undermining global security and deepening the rifts between the superpowers (such as between the US and Russia) and between the superpowers and their allies in the region (the crises in US-Egyptian and US-Saudi Arabian relations during the Obama administration). Failed states therefore become an international challenge to be tackled and the response to them cannot

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<sup>11</sup> Fattah 2009.

<sup>12</sup> "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America", Washington, DC: The White House, September 2002. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> "Remarks of President Barack Obama – State of the Union Address As Delivered", The White House: Office of the Press Secretary, January 13, 2016. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/01/12/remarks-president-barack-obama---prepared-delivery-state-union-address>

<sup>14</sup> *Arab Human Development Report 2016*.

remain limited to a military one. To tackle such a complex political, societal, economic and security challenge the international community should formulate a comprehensive approach based on broad and deep cooperation between international actors as well as with local actors, integrating between political Top-Down and socio-economic Bottom-Up processes. Intellectual, operational, and economic efforts and resources should be devoted to this effort over a long period, with the understanding that it is going to be a continuing process; there are no magic wands or quick fixes.

### **The failed state phenomenon and the Arab world**

The organization of the region into states at the beginning of the previous century was a new experience for the Arab world which until then had been organized along the lines of clans, tribes and ethnic and religious groups (Egypt being an exception). Each of these groups generally sought to live within its own defined territory, particularly in the case of minority groups (such as the Druze in the Druze mountains, the Christians in the mountains of Lebanon, and the Yazidis in the Sinjar Mountains).

The nation-states, and particularly the Arab republics, remained relatively stable because their dictators ruled them with an iron fist. In addition, they tried to achieve legitimacy by establishing social ideologies (such as Nasserite socialism whose central component was the redistribution of wealth in Egypt) and national ideologies (such as pan-Arabism) alongside the reinforcement of national sentiment. One of the methods used to strengthen national sentiment was the attempt to give it historical roots. Thus, for example, Saddam Hussein, ruler of Iraq, tried to create a myth according to which the Iraqi people were the descendants of the Babylonians. However, the sources of legitimacy and mechanisms of control that developed over the years were not able to withstand the mass protests and regional upheaval, and many “national creations” have now fragmented into their constituent parts.

The trends of rapid globalization, the collapse of the USSR (which had been a stabilizing global force), the widening of the Sunni-Shiite rift in the Arab world, and the rise of Salafi-Jihadi organizations, including

Al Qaeda and ISIS, have all accelerated the disintegration of the Arab nation-state.

The phenomenon of the failed state in the Arab world is not a new one; it existed even before the current upheaval in the region. However, because of the upheaval, the situation of states that were already in various stages of failure has deteriorated. The Arab upheaval has undermined the geopolitical logic that structures the Arab world. This logic rests on the organization of states based on the territorial nation-state model, which includes an authoritative central government and clear borders. Several of these states, such as Yemen, Libya, and Syria, no longer exist in the form of a coherent state with a central government capable of imposing its authority in most parts of its territory (Syria has improved its ruling capacity with the help of Russia and Iran that still present on the Syrian soil and support the Syrian regime and without their support the Syrian regime is not capable to control the entire country). These states have become arenas of violent and bloody conflicts. The weakness of their central governments and their loss of control over organized violence have led to the expansion of ungoverned peripheries, enabling Jihadi organizations and foreign elements to penetrate into these states' territories and to challenge central governments, systematically undermining state structures.

Non-state actors are undermining the logic of the Arab territorial nation-state and are seeking to reshape the Arab world. They are erasing existing borders and establishing new entities, such as the Sunni Islamic Caliphate (the Islamic State) and the independent Shiite enclaves (Hizbollah in Syria and Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen) which are loyal to Iran, operating as its proxies and benefiting from Iranian support. The expected improvement in Iran's economy as a result of the nuclear agreement signed in July 2015 exploited by Iran in order to undermine the stability of Sunni regimes in the region, particularly in Saudi Arabia; this is in turn expected to undermine the stability of the region even further and facilitate its hegemonic aspirations.

As the nation-states in the Middle East continue to disintegrate, the power of non-state actors, e.g., Hezbollah, Hamas, ISIS and other radical Sunni movements has increased. These non-state actors are exploiting the vacuum created by the weakness of the central governments in many countries to establish their influence. Some of them like ISIS, Hamas

and Hezbollah have even become semi-states that rule territory and provide inhabitants with at least some of the services that a state provides. Although ISIS lost almost its entire territories, it continues fighting and challenging the Iraqi and Syrian regimes and inspiring other organizations affiliated with and many individuals committing terror in the Middle East and beyond.

The deterioration of many Arab states towards the status of a failed state due to regional upheaval proves that the most serious threats were never external but rather internal. It was mainly domestic opponents which opposed the regimes trying to establish their legitimacy, as was the case in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Yemen, the Palestinian Authority and, to some extent, Egypt.

The chances of the new regimes (including the existing regime in Syria) establishing themselves despite their many opponents were and still are influenced by several factors including national unity (lower level of fragmentation and a sense of a shared ethos), political and functional stability, the efficiency of the state's institutions, the state's economic resources, and its military power. A combination of all these factors determines how the new regimes respond to consolidate their rule. In all the cases we are familiar with in the Middle East this combination of factors has led to greater violence and the intensification of intrastate conflict. These have become an even greater threat to the stability of the new regimes and have served as catalysts for regional instability.

It is reasonable to assume that there will not be any major or rapid improvement in the situation of the weak and failed states in the Middle East and North Africa. Furthermore, one can predict that in the short and medium terms instability will spread to additional states and will deepen in states that are already unstable today.<sup>15</sup> This trend does not bode well for security in the region and could negatively influence international order.

The Arab world after almost nine years of upheaval is not in any way like how it was previously. Many Arab republican nation-states, which survived and functioned for years only because they were ruled by autocratic regimes that relied on a brutal security apparatus, oppression and intimidation, are now in an accelerated process of state failure. Several

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<sup>15</sup> Guzansky & Berti 2013.

of them are in the process of disintegration and it is reasonable to assume that this trend will lead in the end to their disappearance as the territorial nation states we used to know. They will be replaced by states or other entities functioning at various levels of stability and responsibility, which will necessarily influence the stability of the region.

Despite the geostrategic changes due to this regional upheaval, it would be premature to write off the nation-state. Nation-states which today are relatively stable, such as Egypt, will probably continue to exist in some familiar form and perhaps new and stable nation-states will arise, such as a Kurdish state. In contrast, the chances are slim that Syria, Libya, Yemen and possibly even Iraq will manage to return to their former situations primarily because neither the Iraqi, Syrian, Yemeni, nor Libyan people ever existed; all of them suffer from deep political and societal fragmentation. Their only chance of survival is most likely in the form of a loose federation in which ethnic and religious minorities and tribes enjoy broad autonomy. To impose such a model on the Middle East two conditions need to be fulfilled which now seem unlikely: massive intervention and the destruction of the Islamic State.

There is one additional option which is to build many states upon the ruins of today's failed states along ethnic and religious lines. These would be relatively small states but more coherent and stable. Thus, for example, Iraq could be split into three states – Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish – and similarly Syria could be split into Alawite, Sunni and Kurdish states.

### **The rise of non-state actors and their destabilizing impact**

The process of state failure in the region and the total collapse of some countries into chaos have led to an expansion of ungoverned peripheries. These regions have become incubators for terrorist organizations and non-state actors of various types, serving as their “launch sites” to the rest of the region. This expansion is accomplished by establishing a territorial continuum or by creating a network structure without any geographic continuum. ISIS, for example, has created for itself a combination of a territorial continuum (such as in Syria and Iraq) and a network expansion without territorial continuum in Sinai, Libya, Yemen, the Gaza Strip and even Nigeria (by means of organizations such as

Ansar Bait el Maqdis in Sinai, a.k.a. Willayat Sina, which has sworn allegiance to the Islamic State and its leader).

New semi-state entities have arisen, built on the ruins of failed states in the Middle East. On the one hand they are no longer simply organizations but on the other hand they are not states either and can be referred to as hybrid non-state actors.<sup>16</sup> These hybrid actors develop supra-national identity characteristics and operate in the name of a universal ideology. All of these organizations reject the Arab nation-state model and do not recognize borders. They undermine regional and global stability and their political goal is to fundamentally change the existing situation, creating an Islamic caliphate in the entire region and, at a later stage, even beyond it. They use violence extensively in order to intimidate their opponents and make efficient use of social networks.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that, despite their universal ideology, these are organizations that are territorially based, at least at this stage. ISIS in Syria and Iraq, Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and Hizbollah in South Lebanon and the Beqa Valley control extensive territories and large populations whose day-to-day needs must be provided for.

## Summary and conclusions

The regional upheaval, which began eight years ago, has left its mark on the Middle East and has entirely changed the logic underlying its structure. The escalation of intrastate conflict into regional confrontation exposes neighbors of weak and failed states to numerous dangers that can undermine their stability and security. Thus, for example, we have seen how Saudi Arabia has been affected by the spread of internal conflict from Yemen; how Mali suffered from the spillover of the civil war in Libya onto its territory; how Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon have had to absorb millions of refugees from Syria; and how Israel is having to deal with terror based in the Sinai Peninsula because Egypt no longer controls most of that territory.

Alongside the spillover of intrastate conflicts from failed states, we are witnessing the intervention of external entities within the failed states in order to protect their interests. This includes, for example, Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen against the Houthis-Shiites supported by Iran,

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<sup>16</sup> Valensi 2015.



and the dispatch of Russian and Iranian forces to Syria in addition to Hezbollah and other Shiite militias in order to assist Assad. This external intervention creates a vicious circle: the intervention escalates the intrastate confrontation and, as a result, the failed state becomes even weaker, thus “inviting” additional foreign intervention, and so on. As a result of this process, the intrastate conflict becomes a regional one, perhaps even an international one, and should therefore be defined as an “interlocked conflict”.<sup>17</sup>

These two interwoven processes eventually lead to the rapid undermining of regional stability, a growing number of refugees, the collapse of the economic system, and stronger ties between terror and crime. The reconstruction missions usually ignore the link between terror and crime and, as a result, reduce the chances of their own success.<sup>18</sup> The tragic outcome of this reality is reduced security for millions of people in the region.

The international community only has limited ability to intervene in failed states, to suppress the violent rebel forces that operate in them, and to support the stabilization of the nation-states and the regional system. These limits are the result of a lack of the political will needed to intervene in areas of conflict, the conceptual and operational weakness of peacekeeping and state-building missions, and the understanding that there is a limited lifespan for intervention in these areas. To these should be added the problems resulting from competition between aid organizations and the difficulties in coordinating between the various missions operating in regions of conflict, reducing the chances of success even further and in many cases perhaps even exacerbating or escalating the situation.<sup>19</sup>

The international community’s lack of interest in reconstructing failed states is also the result of experience – most of it negative – that has accumulated over the years from such reconstruction missions. These missions are always very expensive and usually also involve combat and casualties that are not acceptable to public opinion in the West. Thus, public opinion in the West will not tolerate terrorist acts against military forces that have been sent to save lives and provide assistance,

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<sup>17</sup> Kriesberg 1980: 99–119.

<sup>18</sup> Kemp 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Pullman 2010; see also Cooke & Downie 2015.

as was the case in Somalia in 1993. As a result, chaos in the Middle East is expected to continue for many years to come and the stable countries in the region, such as Israel, can expect to face additional tests in the future.

By 2020 almost three out of four Arabs, predicts the 2016 AHDR, will live in a failed state. The findings of the report led researchers to the conclusion that wide-ranging reforms are needed in the Arab world – reforms whose main purpose is to realize the regime's responsibility to its citizens and strengthen the rule of law. These reforms therefore need to include, among others, a formal separation of powers; lessened use of emergency decrees that provide the regime with almost unlimited power to prevent opposition activity; and judicial oversight of security mechanisms. In addition, 2016 AHDR researchers recommended reforms that would strengthen civil society and provide equal rights to all citizens, women and various minority groups that are generally discriminated against and excluded from the political process. According to the researchers, these reforms – alongside essential economic reforms – would help stabilize the Arab countries' economies and would also improve pan-Arabic cooperation, something which is needed to improve the functioning of regional organizations. The researchers viewed these outcomes as essential to achieving regional development.

At the end of the day and after eight turbulent years the Arab world is facing, almost on its own, one of its most difficult periods. Up until this point almost all the countries that have experienced regime change have been suffering from one level or other of instability. It is a danger and a challenge to regional and international order and has the potential to drag the entire system into a chaotic and bloody future. On the other hand, it might also be an opportunity to change the political order and system in such a way as to facilitate more stabilization of the region based on an alternative political model, one more suitable to the local political culture. Only courageous, determined domestic and international leadership will stand a chance of converting this threat into an opportunity. Unfortunately, we are left to wonder whether such a thing exists.

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# Saudi Arabia and the New Era on the World Oil Market

YOSSI MANN

**Abstract** The 2014 oil crisis which brought about a sharp fall in oil prices has caused a severe economic crisis in Saudi Arabia. More than anything, however, the oil crisis has engendered the need for the Saudi government to reconsider its approach toward the oil market and its ability to rely on “black gold” as a long-term major source of income. This article aims to present the 2014 oil crisis as a turning point in Saudi Arabia’s position on the global oil market and as an event that has limited OPEC’s power to determine oil prices. The article seeks to analyze the factors that led to the change in the oil market, the effects of the crisis on Saudi oil policy, and finally to examine the implications of the decline in oil prices on Saudi social, political and economic domestic policy.

**Keywords** 2014 oil crisis, Saudi Arabia, OPEC, global oil market.

2016 was a crucial year for Saudi Arabia. The kingdom faced significant challenges from almost every point of view, although it is still too early to determine the effects on the country’s character. The war in the Yemen, the economic crisis brought about by the collapse of the oil market, the changes in the royal household after the death of King Abdallah, the measures to curb the Sunni religious establishment via the limitation of power within the morality police, the execution of a Shi’ite leader, as well as the increasingly aggressive foreign policy against Iran, have all created a new reality in the conservative country.<sup>1</sup>

Saudi Arabia wears two hats in its role as an international player: that of its status as guardian of the holy Islamic cities and that of its power on the global oil market. From the very beginning, local groups such

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<sup>1</sup> Blanchard 2016: 1–16.

as the people of Hejaz tried to undermine the legitimacy of the House of Saud, and, more recently, Salafi political groups such as the Muslim Brothers and Jihadist groups such as El Qaida have openly declared that the House of Saud no longer represents the values of Islam and that the title held by the King of Saudi Arabia is therefore null and void. However, despite this disagreement over the role and significance of the man who holds the title of “Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques”, insofar as oil is concerned, Saudi Arabia has proudly boasted the position of most important player on the global oil market. Nonetheless, the oil crisis that erupted in 2014 shook the kingdom both domestically and internationally. Domestically, the crisis caused a change in economic priorities and brought about an enterprising plan called “2030”, the aim of which is to reduce dependence on oil, whereas on the international sphere Saudi Arabia’s image as the power that can shape the oil market and continue to hold the unofficial position of most important player was severely damaged. In that respect, the recent oil crisis has changed Saudi Arabia’s perception of the oil market, and, worse, has affected how Saudi Arabia is perceived in terms of its role in the industry.<sup>2</sup>

Oil prices decreased sharply from 115 dollars a barrel in 2014 to 27 dollars a barrel in August 2015. It is not the first time that oil prices have fallen by almost 80 percent in a very short period of time. It happened in 2008 as a result of the subprime crisis when prices dropped from almost 150 dollars to 33 dollars a barrel. There are many reasons for the decrease in oil price in 2014 such as the end of the embargo on Iran, the shale oil revolution, including new technologies that improved production rates in U.S oil wells, lower demand for oil from Eastern markets – mainly from China, and the Iraqi oil industry which, despite local threats from terror organizations, increased production from 1.2 million barrels a day in 2005 to almost 3.5 million barrels a day. Furthermore, in April 2014 global banks such as Morgan Stanley, JP Morgan, Credit Suisse and others decided to reduce their investments in commodities, particularly oil, and invest in US dollars or equities instead.<sup>3</sup>

This crisis has had much more impact on Middle Eastern oil-producing countries than other oil crises. For decades, traders and researchers

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; Vision 2030, 2016: 1–6.

<sup>3</sup> Spot Prices 2016: 1.

believed that the big oil producers, and mainly Saudi Arabia, had a significant influence on the price of oil. They claimed that the price of crude oil was based mainly on the needs and interests of the oil-producing states, in particular OPEC member states, and not on production cost.<sup>4</sup> The fact that the oil market makes up 99% of the total Iraqi export market, 83% of that of Saudi Arabia and 63% of that of Iran,<sup>5</sup> shaped the assumption that countries that rely on oil would try to influence prices in order to meet their budget requirements. As a result, those involved in the oil market assumed that minimum oil prices would change according to the budgetary objectives of the leading oil-producing countries.<sup>6</sup>

According to this assumption, a decline in oil prices below the target according to which those countries established their budgets could damage their ability to implement the economic policies they had decided upon when setting those annual budgets. Many therefore believed that the common interest of the countries that relied on oil, and in particular those who were members of OPEC, was to strive for agreement and effective cooperation in order to reduce production and raise prices in such a way that they could satisfy the needs of all of the oil-producing countries. Indeed, a lack of correlation between oil prices and budgetary needs could, in extreme cases, undermine a country's stability due to the fact that substantial amounts of money that come from oil profits are allocated to welfare in order to buy political stability. That assumption was put to the test in several cases where oil prices collapsed, such as during the sub-prime crisis in 2008 when WTI oil prices slumped from 147 dollars per barrel in August 2008 to 33 dollars per barrel in November 2008<sup>7</sup>. As a result, the OPEC states decided to coordinate their extraction rates in order to minimize damage to their economies. That same policy was enforced in 1998 when the OPEC countries underwent a deep financial crisis following the economic crash in East Asia; oil prices then decreased from 20.5 dollars per barrel in November 1997 to 10.5 dollars in December 1998. As a result, the OPEC states worked together

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<sup>4</sup> Adelman 2004: 16.

<sup>5</sup> Saudi Arabia Country Analysis Brief 2014: 1; Iraq Country Analysis Brief 2016: 1; Iran country Analysis Brief 2015: 1.

<sup>6</sup> Bassam Fattouh 2007: 6.

<sup>7</sup> Adelman 2004: 16.

to adjust production rates in order to ensure that prices not dip below the 10 dollar line for very long.<sup>8</sup>

The 2015 oil crisis brought about a re-examination of old assumptions as to how the oil industry is run. Based on expectations that those assumptions were valid, many researchers, traders and oil-producing countries sustained heavy financial losses together with an understanding that market conditions have changed and that the old assumptions were no longer valid.<sup>9</sup> More than anything, people now realized that OPEC but more precisely Saudi Arabia is no longer able to run the production rate effectively and thereby influence the price of oil. Even before the crisis, many realized that the declarations of intention of OPEC leaders after summit conferences were ineffective and impossible to implement and this caused the financial markets to lose interest in the oil ministers' decisions.<sup>10</sup> For example, there were a number of OPEC conferences in different world capitals in 2015 and 2016 during which they sought a formula that would be acceptable to all the members of the organization and which would ensure effective coordination and production cutbacks to bring about a target price that might reflect the needs of all OPEC member countries. Despite high expectations that a common policy could be established, each conference has ended with a decision not to decide, except for the one that took place in Algeria in September 2016 when it was decided that, by the end of November 2016,<sup>11</sup> members would cut production, even though it was not stipulated who would cut and by how much. In addition, on November 17<sup>th</sup> 2016, Saudi oil minister Al-Falih urged OPEC members to accept any agreement that would enforce production cuts even though he does not have the ability to impose the proposal on them.<sup>12</sup>

The energy crisis in 2015 exposed all of OPEC's problems and those of the Saudi leadership in particular. By now, the organization had earned itself the problematic nickname "the clumsy cartel".<sup>13</sup> Indeed, a number of problems that had arisen throughout the years turned the

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<sup>8</sup> Mabro 1998: 1–3.

<sup>9</sup> Foxman 2015: 1.

<sup>10</sup> Attasi 2016: 1.

<sup>11</sup> Sheppard, 2016: 1.

<sup>12</sup> Shamseddine 2016: 2.

<sup>13</sup> Adelman 2004: 16.



tables and changed assumptions about the organization's ability to survive the current crisis. For example, the sanctions imposed on Iran by the West in order to make it suspend its uranium enrichment program caused, in the short term, great damage to Iranian oil production but also had a severe impact on OPEC.<sup>14</sup> According to estimates, the economic sanctions caused Iran to reduce oil production from three million barrels a day to one million barrels between 2011 and 2013. The market share that Iran lost in China, Japan and South Korea due to these sanctions was taken up by others such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Iraq, and now that the sanctions have been lifted the Islamic Republic is demanding back its share of the Asian market.<sup>15</sup> Iran also lost significant business in Southern Europe when a number of OPEC members – mainly Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq, together with Russia which has oil of a similar quality to that of the Islamic Republic – took over its business in Greece, Spain and Italy. Here, too, Iran is battling to regain the market it has lost.<sup>16</sup>

OPEC's inability to reach an agreement on who should make cuts in order to give Iran its share back is a mere reflection of the fact that, as far back as the 1980s, the organization was unable to impose organizational discipline and divide up the quotas in a way that satisfied all members; nor was it able to ensure that all members stick to the production rates to which they had committed. Unstable political relations and the ethnic tensions between the Shi'ite rulers in Iran and the Saudi Wahhabis, which increased with the execution of a major Shi'ite preacher in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia in 2016, have made it even more difficult to reach an agreement. Moreover, every country that was asked to cut production when Iran came back onto the market has its own problems, which has made it hard to reach an agreement on the distribution of quotas.<sup>17</sup>

The Iraqi government, for example, claimed that reducing production for the sake of Iran is not possible after years of security problems, the severe economic damage caused by the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime, and the domestic conflict taking place in Iraq between different

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<sup>14</sup> Iran country Analysis Brief 2015: 1.

<sup>15</sup> Saudi Arabia maintained crude oil market share in Asia in the first half of 2015: 1.

<sup>16</sup> Iran country Analysis Brief 2015: 1.

<sup>17</sup> Zhdannikov 2016: 1.

sects.<sup>18</sup> Libya, which has also undergone years of political crisis, gradually re-entered the oil market in 2016 after years of unprecedented decline in production, thereby causing an additional flooding of the market without having coordinated production quantities with the other OPEC members. Like Iraq, Libyan leaders claimed that the country's bleak economic situation has forced them to look after their own national interest before any commitment to the OPEC states. As a result, OPEC oil production rose to 32.73 million barrels a day in August 2016 and 33.54 million barrels a day in October 2016, well above the target of 30 million barrels that the organization had set in order to reduce production so as to ensure a target price that might reflect the aspirations of all member countries of the cartel.<sup>19</sup>

Internal conflict in OPEC has made the Saudi situation even worse due to the strengthening of the American oil industry. According to the Baker Hughes energy agency, there were about 1600 active oil rigs in the United States at the beginning of 2015, while there were only 150 in January 2009.<sup>20</sup> As a result of technological changes, production across the United States rose sharply and in July 2015 the Americans were producing 9.6 million barrels a day, while they had been producing 5.844 million in January 2012.<sup>21</sup> This sharp increase in American production caused a decrease of imports from OPEC states and increased competition for the world's largest oil market. Moreover, increased production brought about yet another flooding of the market at a time when countries such as Iran, Iraq and, to a certain extent, Libya were making a comeback. But, more than anything else, the oil price drop was a warning signal for OPEC. Although it severely affected the oil industry in the United States and brought about the closure of about one thousand oil rigs, the price drop also exposed the relatively low production costs and America's ability to recover quickly and return to full operation once prices rise. This means that, even if Saudi Arabia managed to get OPEC members to agree upon production rates in order to adapt prices to a target budget acceptable to all, a price increase would mainly assist the United States in reopening their oil rig activity, at the expense of the

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<sup>18</sup> OPEC production estimates 2015: 1.

<sup>19</sup> OPEC Crude oil output 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Rig Count Overview and Summary Count 2016: 1.

<sup>21</sup> Weekly U.S Field Production of Crude Oil 2016: 1.

OPEC states. Indeed, innovative American technology has resulted in the ability to have oil wells that are flexible to being opened and closed according to prices, and returning to full operation is now much more rapid than it was in the past.<sup>22</sup> The great revolution, therefore, is in the fact that it is now much harder for OPEC to set target prices than in the past, and the cartel now understands that this is not only due to internal problems within the organization but also to the new structure of the American market.<sup>23</sup>

The new situation on the oil market has compelled OPEC states to change their policies. Rather than striving to seek a target price, they have begun to compete against one another over market share, and in particular over the Asian market. The quest for a price that would suit their needs has given way to trying to conquer the market by offering discounts.<sup>24</sup> The main struggle is between the three most important players in the Middle Eastern oil market, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq, who have been competing over markets in China, South Korea, Japan and another rising power, India. Indeed, in October 2016 the Reuters News Agency announced that Iran had taken back the title of leading oil supplier to India after years of Saudi dominance in the Indian market. Moreover, since August 2016 Iran has intensified its efforts to take the Polish market away from Russia and Saudi Arabia in order to enter new markets in East-Central Europe. The struggle intensified due to the fact that Iran, which had been out of the game during the embargo, sought to procure the market at any cost by offering discounts once the sanctions were lifted and the prices crashed. The oil-producing countries are therefore no longer thinking in terms of cooperation but seeking their share of the market, which will impact the way Middle Eastern countries use oil as a main source of their economy.<sup>25</sup>

As a result of this new situation, it seems that people are beginning to think differently about the most tradable commodity in the world 100 years after oil became an important international asset. For the first time the leaders of the Middle East feel that their power to determine oil prices is very limited and, as a result, that they now have to make significant

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<sup>22</sup> Drilling Productivity Report 2016: 1.

<sup>23</sup> Carrole, 2016: 2–7.

<sup>24</sup> Russell 2016: 1; Wilkin 2016: 1.

<sup>25</sup> Zhdannikov 2016: 1.

changes to their economic policies. Indeed, the new assumptions are that the oil-producing countries in the Middle East will have to rethink their domestic policies and, in view of the difficulty in determining oil price, they will need to create a diversified economy that is not dependent on oil.<sup>26</sup>

The implication of the new situation in the oil market is that the leaders of the oil-producing countries in the Middle East, and mainly Saudi Arabia, will need to reassess their domestic policies. The Saudis will have to create a diversified economy that is not dependent only on oil. Indeed, the Saudi leadership claimed that they are about to raise taxes, cut subsidies on fuel, water and food, and even decrease their expenses on education and welfare. They have also made declarations regarding ARAMCO, Saudi Arabia's national oil company, whereby they will consider raising money on the stock exchange in return for equities. In April 2016, Muhammad bin Salman, son of the current king and the most popular prince with the young population in Saudi Arabia, gave an interview to the Bloomberg News Agency in which he spent six hours presenting his vision and plans for the steps the Saudi royal family will take in order to diversify the economy. He said, for example, that the government would invest 2 trillion dollars in leading Western companies such as Google, Facebook and Twitter. Moreover, the Saudi leadership has even called for a new era whereby, instead of investing in oil and gas reserves, they would focus on the local automobile manufacturing industry and invest in renewable energy such as wind farms and solar energy.<sup>27</sup>

The desire to diversify the economy at a time when oil prices are low, however, requires structural changes and ideological flexibility if they wish to compete with the emerging Asian and Western markets. While there was once mere talk of the need for economic diversification, it has now become a necessity, and economic and social change will have to be imposed in the very near future. At this stage it is too early to assess the Saudi economic revolution but the fact that a new generation is now leading the kingdom towards a new future cannot be ignored. That generation, unlike the past one, believes that it can change things and indeed

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<sup>26</sup> Saudi Arabia beyond Oil 2015: 1–15.

<sup>27</sup> Waldman 2016: 1–2.

they will have to lead their people towards a new future and give them hope for a better economy.<sup>28</sup>

### Summary and conclusion

A few years after the “Arab Spring” crisis that erupted in the Middle East in the winter of 2010, the oil market underwent a crisis no less severe. A sequence of events, which has included technological changes and unsurmountable rifts between OPEC states, has shifted Saudi Arabia into a new position on the global oil market. The Saudi reaction indicates that, unlike previous ones, this is not just another passing crisis but an occurrence that has changed the market as we have previously known it. It seems that Saudi Arabia realizes the extent of this change and is trying to minimize damage via a new oil policy aiming to conquer markets particularly in East Asia but also in Central Europe. It has also made the strategic decision to diversify its economy at all costs because it realizes that time is running out. In that respect, the Saudi royal family will be under scrutiny in the coming years, especially with regard to its ability to diversify its country’s economy and, at all costs, reduce its dependence on oil prices. This will have to happen before the impact of the revolution can be fully felt.

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<sup>28</sup> Stensile 2016: 134.

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# The Roots of Israeli Strategic Culture<sup>1</sup>

ITAMAR RICKOVER

**Abstract** This article offers to discuss the culturalist approach in security studies and to focus on strategic culture. The aim is to examine the roots of Israeli strategic culture and characterize it. “Strategic culture” can be defined as an integrated system of values, symbols and practices (norms, procedures and traditions) that shape political-security behavior over a prolonged period of time. The examination of the characterization of a country’s strategic culture is carried out by comparing changes between current strategic culture and early strategic culture. In order to define strategic culture several factors are thoroughly tested: the role of war in the eyes of society; how that society sees its relationship with the enemy; the perception of the effectiveness of using force; and practices (norms, procedures and traditions) which accumulate over the years and regulate the relationship between the various elites. Three indicators are considered as reflecting a strategic culture: (1) Symbols and images (2) Militarism (3) A system of norms, traditions and procedures that regulate the rules of conduct between the military and political echelons. A synergy of all factors taken together creates the “strategic culture of a state” which is greater than the sum of its parts. In this article I will describe how Israel’s strategic culture has developed and how Israeli strategic culture gradually developed into an activist-offensive strategic culture.

**Keywords** strategic culture, culturalist approach in security studies, symbols and images, militarism, norms, traditions, procedures, military and political echelons, Israel

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## Introduction

There is a consensus that security has been a fundamental element of society from the independence of the State of Israel until today. However, according to the values of the Yishuv (the Jewish community or settlement in Palestine during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and until the formation of the state of Israel in 1948), guard duty was regarded not just as an insignificant assignment but was also perceived as an evasion from manual labor. In security studies there are two main approaches that explain the creation of operational strategy: the “Materialistic Approach” and the “Cultural Approach”. Friedrich Hegel, a German philosopher who supported the Materialistic Approach, believed that thoughts originate from the tangible world, are understood according to a determinate logic, and provide the world with structure and form.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to the Materialistic Approach, the Cultural Approach is inter-subjective, non-materialistic and non-rational. The latter focuses on ideas, identities and values as the pillars of the material world.<sup>3</sup> In strategy and security studies the Cultural Approach can be examined through four main approaches: organizational culture, political culture, global culture, and strategic culture.

This article proposes to explore the Cultural Approach while focusing on the strategic culture technique as the method of examination. According to Iain Johnston the currently acceptable definition of the term “strategic culture” is an integrative system of values, symbols, images, and practices that to a large extent determine the long-lasting grand strategic preferences of political-security behavior.<sup>4</sup> The influence of the elements of the strategic culture is not measured in days but rather over a long period of time and is usually the result of several events. Strategic culture is of great significance as society embraces its values and, after internalization, as these values become an integral part of the state’s procedures in security events. A society that has internalized the values of strategic culture may respond to various events in a manner that can be assessed and predicted.

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<sup>2</sup> Hegel 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Copeland 2000: 187–212; Wendt 1992: 391–425.

<sup>4</sup> Johnston 1995: 33–64.



In cases where the values of the strategic culture are internalized within the state, it is quite easy to assess the state's response to different events.<sup>5</sup> The cultural aspect is of great importance, especially in a modern state, wherein there is a need for the existence of an army that emerges from the people. Strategic culture affects social structure and paves the way for the formation of operational strategy, especially when related to a new country.

This article aims to emphasize the importance and contribution of the term "strategic culture" in security studies. This field has become increasingly more important in academic research around the world in recent years. The strategic culture of several countries such as the European countries, the European Union and NATO, and Asian countries like Russia, India, China and Japan in particular, is a topic that has been extensively explored.<sup>6</sup> Studies dealing in depth with Israeli strategic culture, in general, and its impact on a step-by-step decision-making process, in particular, are lacking. This article attempts, if only in some small way, to shed light on this topic.

The purpose of this article is twofold: firstly it is intended to examine the formation of Israeli strategic culture. The second purpose is to examine the impact of Strategic Culture on the formulation of a defensive or offensive strategy. To accomplish these two purposes I will describe and illustrate several related events. In particular, I will refer only to key elements and not to the whole scenario as my purpose here is to describe how these key elements have helped to characterize and establish Israeli strategic culture.

This article includes several chapters. In the Theoretical Chapter I will conduct a short literature review, define the term "strategic culture", and then describe how to analyze the Strategic Culture of a country. The Analysis Chapter will begin with an historical summary of a Pre-state. In that discussion I will combine "theory" and "practice" and illustrate how all the elements of the Strategic Culture have formed into one Israeli Strategic Culture. The last chapter will be reserved for a summary and conclusions. The theoretical and empirical literature used herein

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<sup>5</sup> Galin 1996: 209–211.

<sup>6</sup> Paul and Geoffrey 2001: 587–603; Paul and Geoffrey 2005: 801–820; Dellios 1997; Rynning 2003: 479–496; Glenn et al. 2004.

includes diverse sources such as books, articles, research papers and reports of commissioned inquiries.

### **Literature dealing with a definition of the term “Strategic Culture”**

Research in the field of the Strategic Culture of countries is relatively new. Literature discussing this topic can be divided into three main categories: (1) literature dealing with the theoretical definition of the term “Strategic Culture”; (2) literature dealing with the question of whether a Cultural approach, in general, and Strategic Culture, in particular, can replace a Materialistic approach in political science; and (3) literature that analyzes the strategic culture of countries and its influence on the decision-making process. This article will focus mainly on the third category.

The first generation of researchers appeared in the late 1970s. Jack Snyder was the first researcher to use the term “Strategic Culture” and he defined it as “a set of visions, emotional responses and behavioral patterns of decision-makers that have developed over the years, and are shared with each other in the context of forming the nuclear strategy of a country.”<sup>7</sup> In spite of innovation in the development of the concept, this definition has several disadvantages such as being cumbersome and having many variables that can each be independent. Moreover, Snyder has not addressed some essential issues in the definition such as what the starting point of a Strategic Culture is and whether and how Strategic Culture changes over time.<sup>8</sup>

In the mid-1980s Strategic Culture was perceived as an element of superiority in strategic decision-making; this perception established the idea that a state can legitimately use violence against its enemies. Klein<sup>9</sup> argues that Strategic Culture is a product of historical experience. Since there is a great difference between a Strategic Culture and behavior in practice, actual behavior is a reflection of how much interest a state has in making a strategic decision. The second generation of researchers

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<sup>7</sup> Snyder 1977: 8–9.

<sup>8</sup> Johnston 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Klein 1991: 3–23.

faces the major problem of defining the relationship between Strategic Culture and the actual action in practice.<sup>10</sup>

The third generation of researchers appeared in the 1990s. This generation of scholars maintained diversity in the definition of culture as an independent variable and paid less attention to strategic decisions as a dependent variable such as we see in military culture, political culture and organizational culture. However, these researchers' definitions are not significantly different from those of other cultural models such as organizational culture, political, etc., and according to their unclear definition it seems that the term "Strategic Culture" is not unique.

### **Controversy among theoretical approaches**

Many researchers believe that the dominant paradigm is materialistic.<sup>11</sup> In the foundation of the materialistic approach there is an assumption that the independent material world directly influences reality. The materialistic approach emphasizes materialistic abilities and underestimates the influence and importance of cultural factors. The cultural approach emphasizes and considers ideas, identities and values as shapers of the material world.

This extensive literature discusses the question of whether the cultural approach, in general, and strategic culture, in particular, can replace materialistic explanations and provide methodological tools for formulating an operational strategy. Similarly, there is a debate between neo-realism and strategic culture (supported by John Glenn, Darryl Howlett and Stuart Poore) and between the realistic approach and cultural approach (supported by John S. Duffield, Theo Farrell, Richard Price and Michael C. Desch).

### **Literature that analyzes the strategic culture of countries**

Literature in this field can be divided into subcategories: literature discussing research methodologies for understanding the impact of Strategic Culture on the decision-making process and the formulation of a

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<sup>10</sup> Johnston, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> King *et al.* 1994; Desch 1998: 141–171; Huntington and Weiner 1987; Hintze 1984: 178–22.

country's operational strategy<sup>12</sup>; and literature analyzing the strategic culture of various countries and the influence of Strategic Culture on the use of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>13</sup> The Strategic Culture of countries such as the European countries, the European Union and NATO, and Asian countries like Russia, India, China and Japan<sup>14</sup> in particular is a field that is investigated extensively.

In recent years several studies have been carried out on Israeli strategic culture, for example, studies related to state security and the process and changes in Israeli strategic culture.<sup>15</sup> Adamsky's<sup>16</sup> excellent book examines the impact of Israeli Strategic Culture on the RMA<sup>17</sup> in Israel, the US and Russia, and discusses the impact of Strategic Culture on changes in the formation of an operational strategy. However, like the rest of the researchers, Adamsky does not discuss the formation of Israeli Strategic Culture. This article seeks to shed light on this topic.

### What Is Strategic Culture?

Iain Johnston<sup>18</sup> defined "Strategic Culture" as an integrated system of values, symbols, images and practices that largely shape political-security behavior over a prolonged period of time. These factors can be expressed in different and diverse forms such as songs, images, cults, rituals, etc. The purpose of these factors is to include a wide variety of participants in an event, thereby changing an entire society's awareness of that event. This is achieved by adding layers of excitement, charm, transcendence and inspiration to the event in question. Moreover, Johnston adds that in order to examine a country's strategic culture it is necessary to examine whether there have been changes over the years; this is done by examining the starting point at which the strategic culture began and comparing the point in time examined to that starting point.

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<sup>12</sup> Johnson 2006; Farrell 2002: 49–72; Johnston 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Kartchner 2006: 149–166; Payne 2005: 235–151.

<sup>14</sup> such as: Glenn *et al.* 2004; Rynning 2003; Cornish & Edwards 2001, 2005; Dellios 1997; Johnston 1995.

<sup>15</sup> Giles 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Adamsky 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) is a military-theoretical hypothesis connected to technological and organizational recommendations for changing Militaries.

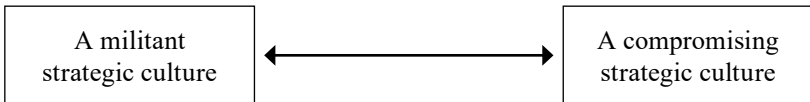
<sup>18</sup> Johnston 1995.

In order to characterize a country's strategic culture Johnston proposes taking several factors into account:

1. The role of war in the eyes of society (whether war is conceived as an acceptable thing or as deviation from the norm).
2. How society sees its relationship with the enemy (zero-sum game vs. willingness to compromise).
3. The perception of the effectiveness of using force (whether it is possible to use force in order to gain control over the results of a crisis and to eliminate threats, or whether military force should be used to overcome the crisis).
4. Practices (norms, procedures and traditions) which accumulate over the years and regulate the relationship between the various elites.

### Indicators for characterizing the strategic culture of a country

The nature of a country's strategic culture can be described according to the following illustration:



Three indicators can be considered as reflecting a strategic culture: (1) Symbols and images (2) Militarism (3) A system of norms, traditions and procedures that regulate the rules of conduct between the echelons.<sup>19</sup> By examining these three indicators in the period under review we can define the position of the state within each of the four factors and characterize the strategic culture of the examined country. A synergy of all of the factors together creates the “strategic culture of a state” which is greater than the sum of its parts.

#### *Symbols and images*

Symbols and images according to which the society views the security field, in general, and the army, in particular, are an important component

<sup>19</sup> Johnston 1995; Johnson 2006.

in the formulation of a country's strategic culture. A myth consists of a true story to which legends, messages and symbols have been added, making the story meaningful. The messages and symbols that a myth conveys to society are more important than the facts of the true story for there is greater interest in emotional and public needs than in the usual flow of events as they occurred in reality. The forms of expression of a myth are many and varied and can appear in songs, images, legends, gestures and rituals. Visual representation features in monuments, posters, caricatures, sculptures and paintings.

In order to evoke the spirit of a certain period we must take the myths that accompanied the main events seriously and not recount them as tales or fabrications.<sup>20</sup> Decision-makers use myths as a means of perpetuating their interests by conveying them to society, thereby legitimizing themselves in the eyes of the public. Myths can shape individual and group choices and direct their behaviour.<sup>21</sup>

## **Militarism**

This article is one of a large group of studies<sup>22</sup> dealing with militarism. However, this article refers to militarism merely as one of the components of strategic culture. Michael Mann<sup>23</sup> defines militarism as a set of viewpoints and patterns of social activity in which wars and preparations for them are perceived as desirable and normal social activity. Harkabi Yehoshafat<sup>24</sup> describes militarism as a framework of values and customs that emphasize the values of discipline and patriotism in which the state is above the citizen and public welfare is more important than the freedom of any individual in that state. Baruch Kimmerling<sup>25</sup> believes that civil militarism exists when there is an institutional and cultural infiltration into the collective mindset. The development and consolidation of military-security doctrine is a means of institutionalizing civilian militarism, especially considering the overt and covert social significance

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<sup>20</sup> Shapira 2002: 143–148.

<sup>21</sup> Loerch 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Levy 2007; Ben-Eliezer 1998; Maoz 2003; Mann 1987.

<sup>23</sup> Mann 1987.

<sup>24</sup> Harkabi 1990.

<sup>25</sup> Kimmerling 2001: 208–229.

that is given to military service or the way in which an entire society can be directed towards constant preparation for war.

Uri Ben-Eliezer<sup>26</sup> added that when the assumption that national problems must be solved in military ways is established and disseminated we can then discuss cultural militarism. When this assumption is translated into political decision-making it can be referred to as “militaristic politics” in which the military echelon sees itself as a partner in the process of formulating a political strategy, and not simply confining itself to handling military matters.

### *Norms, Traditions and Procedures*

The last element in formulating the strategic culture of a state is that of the practical component. This relates to norms, traditions and procedures that have evolved over the years into a pattern that regulates interaction between the different elites.<sup>27</sup> Literature on the subject<sup>28</sup> relates to the reality that security decisions are more difficult to handle for non-military personnel compared to military personnel as the latter has access to a body of military assessment and planning in terms of knowledge, economic and human resources, experience, prestige, status, trust, and more. Avi Kober<sup>29</sup> adds that the practical axis establishes the structure of the relationship and affinity between the political and the military echelons and that, at base, the army takes supremacy over the political echelon even when political directives contradict its opinion. In addition, norms and organizational traditions have a significant impact on the operational behavior of the armed forces, and hence on the formation of the strategic culture and the choice of operational strategy.<sup>30</sup>

## **Historical background**

Several legitimate and illegitimate security organizations emerged in Israel at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as “Ha-Magen” (the

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<sup>26</sup> Ben-Eliezer 1998.

<sup>27</sup> Lissak & Horowitz 1989: 98–151.

<sup>28</sup> Such as Perry 1984: 142–155; Maoz, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Kober 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Adamsky 2012.

Shield) and “Bar Giora”. “Bar Giora”<sup>31</sup> was established in September 1907 as a secret military organization with the goal of transferring the protection of the Jewish settlements into Jewish hands. Its founders considered it not only as a guard organization but also as a starting point for a conceptual change for Palestine’s Jews.<sup>32</sup> In 1909 the “Ha-Shomer” organization (“Guild of Watchmen”) was founded as a legitimate and visible arm of “Bar Giora”. “Ha-Shomer” members considered themselves to be an origin group of the future Jewish army, however at its peak the organization counted no more than 100 members.

In 1920 the “Ha-shomer” organization merged with “Haganah”. The unification of the majority of the security organizations under one roof served as a catalyst that led to the development of “Haganah” as the main military force of the Jewish settlements in Palestine.<sup>33</sup> “Haganah” was established to restrain the Arab rebellion and protect an oil pipeline that passed between Iraq and Haifa. The organization reported to a national headquarters and served as a basis for the formation of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) upon the establishment of the State of Israel. In May 1941 “Haganah” established “Palmach”<sup>34</sup> as a regular, illegal military force mainly for carrying out strategic missions and functioning as its main operational arm.<sup>35</sup>

After the UN resolution of 29 November 1947 relating to the partition of Palestine into two states, the War of Independence began. This war can be divided into three stages. The first stage was the civil war which started one day after the UN resolution. This stage is characterized mainly by repeated attacks on the Jewish settlements and main roads by Arab gangs. The Jewish community adopted a defensive approach for four months, and then in April 1948 changed its strategy to offense with a counterattack, temporarily opening the road to Jerusalem

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<sup>31</sup> Named after Simeon Bar Giora, Jewish military leader in the war against Rome, (66–70 C.E.).

<sup>32</sup> Palestine was Israel’s name under the British Mandate.

<sup>33</sup> Lev 1985.

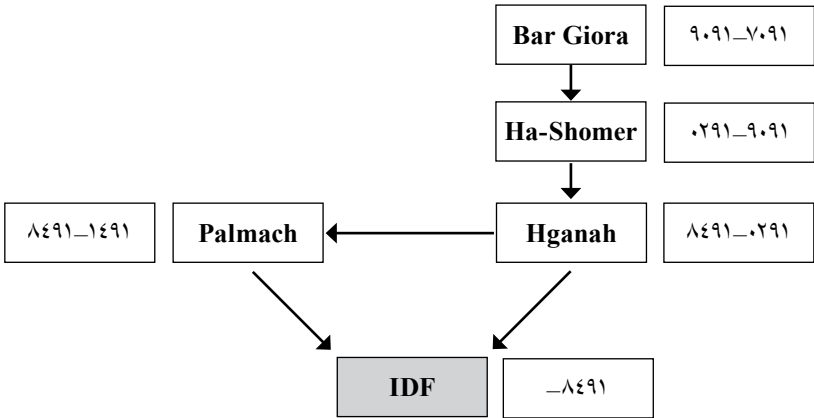
<sup>34</sup> “Palmach” – an acronym for “Pelugot Hamahatz” meaning striking force. Palmach was a broad spectrum left-wing nationalist organization associated with socialist parties. Its members trained and lived in kibbutzim. The political tendencies of its leaders such as Yigal Allon and Yitzhak Sadeh were towards Mapam, a left-wing party in opposition to David Ben-Gurion and the Mapai ruling party.

<sup>35</sup> Ben-Yehuda 2009.



and as a result defeating the Arabs in Tiberius, Jaffa and Haifa. The second stage, and the most risky to the Jewish settlement, began with The Declaration of Independence in May 1948. At this stage, the Arab armies began to invade the newly established state.

**Figure 1.** The formation of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)



The establishment of the IDF several weeks after the Declaration of Independence was a long and complex process. As an inexperienced army, the IDF had to acquire its expertise in combat.<sup>36</sup> After the first truce declared in June 1948 the third stage of the war began. This stage was the longest and included several cycles of warfare and truce. In this third stage the IDF seized the central region from the Arab gangs, defeated the Arab armies in the north, and defeated the Egyptian army in the south. The IDF also invaded the Sinai Peninsula.<sup>37</sup>

**Discussion**

This chapter will examine the three indicators of Israeli strategic culture (symbols and images, militarism, norms procedures and organizational

<sup>36</sup> Ostfeld 1994: 70-74; Oren 2005.

<sup>37</sup> Cohen 2002.

traditions) and the impact of the strategic culture on the transition from a defensive approach to an offensive one. As will be elaborated later in this chapter, the strategic culture was initially defensive and became an offensive strategic culture over a number of years. The influence of the indicators of the strategic culture is not measured in days but rather over a longer period of time and is usually not the result of one event but is based on several events.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, this process will be explained as a gradual process that over the years led to a change in the approach of the Jewish Settlement to the use of force.

### **Symbols and images**

The security ethos is discussed at length in the books of Moshe Lissak and Dan Horowitz, Uri Ben-Eliezer, Anita Shapira<sup>39</sup> and many others. I do not claim in this article to describe all the events that led to the construction of the Jewish warrior ethos and the transition from the defensive to the offensive approach. My goal is to describe how myth formation, which constitutes one of the components of a strategic culture, has helped to form an offensive militant strategic culture. In order to do so I will describe and illustrate numerous events that helped the Jewish community to build and establish the ethos of the new Jewish warrior. I will begin by describing the construction of the character of the new Jewish warrior, then I will present the difference between two generations, i.e., the sons and the parents, and finally I will discuss the contribution of the myth “few vs. many”.

### **The character of the new warrior**

During the Ottoman period the Turks were determined not to allow the Jews’ hold on the lands of Israel to expand, forbidding the display of symbols related to Jewish nationalism. In view of the Balfour Declaration and British occupation of Palestine 1917–1920, Zionism became a movement that was recognized by the great nations and as such also gained recognition in international law. The transition to life under the

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<sup>38</sup> Unless it is a formative event such as the surrender of Japan and Germany in World War II, an event that led to a radical and immediate change in the strategic culture.

<sup>39</sup> Lissak & Horowitz 1989; Ben-Eliezer 1998; Shapira 2002.

British regime transformed the Jewish Yishuv overnight into a population with legal rights and a recognized political status with national rights granted under the British Mandate.<sup>40</sup>

Symbols and images ranging from the settlement to the first years of the state are characterized by a transformation in the conception of the Jewish warrior. Members of the security organizations were widely criticized by farmers and were considered to be evading hard manual labor. Most of the Jewish community emphasized agriculture and the cultivation of the wilderness in the Land of Israel as a primary national mission. “Labor occupations” took precedence over “security occupations” and members of the “Ha-Shomer” organization had to contend with this approach. This change in the perception of the “Ha-Shomer” organization by the Jewish Yishuv from being an esoteric organization into a significant organization in the life of the Jews in the Land of Israel following the “Balfour Declaration” was reflected in the attitude towards warriors who were killed defending the land. In order to renew and encourage these motifs and improve their reputation Jewish warriors used Jewish heroes as a link to the new Jewish warrior. For example, the book “Yizkor” (in commemoration of) was written in 1911 in memory of a number of fighters and workers killed by Arab gangs. This book was the first attempt to glorify those who had fallen in battle<sup>41</sup> with the Arabs (as opposed to the deaths of farmers). In memory of three guards who fell in Galilee there was written: “The sons of the Maccabees, descendants of Bar Giora and Bar Kokhba, come to inherit the place of the fallen heroes who fell in war to gain their freedom.”<sup>42</sup> The need the Zionist movement had for national saints and heroes, symbols of heroism and the development of myths was consistent with their desire to impart to the new Jew the image of a continuation of the rebellious, heroic and powerful ancient Jew, as the antithesis of the image of the Diaspora Jew.<sup>43</sup>

The Great Revolt (66–73 CE) and the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–135 CE) were emphasized as sources of national pride and their heroes were

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<sup>40</sup> Ben-Eliezer 1998.

<sup>41</sup> Although the fallen were not killed in an heroic battle but were hit by fire from the ambush, there was an attempt to attribute their fall to an act of heroism.

<sup>42</sup> A declaration of mourning, published by Poalei Zion, about the deaths of three young men in the spring of 1909. Quoted in: Jonathan, Frenkel. (1988), “The Book of Remembrance”, 1911 – Commentary on National Myths during the Second Aliyah, *Contemporary Jewry*: 4.

<sup>43</sup> Shapira 1997: 155–175.

presented as models for the brave and heroic Jew.<sup>44</sup> For this reason, the Jewish secret military organization “Bar Giora”<sup>45</sup> was named after a Jewish hero from the time of the Great Revolt of the Jews in the Land of Israel in the Roman Empire. Most members of the Jewish community objected to this perspective and even rejected the image of the new Jewish warrior.

One of the tools used to encourage love of the “homeland” and cause a transformation of the warrior’s image was the Bible. Young members of the Jewish community traveled throughout Israel with the Bible as a geographical guide, identifying the historical sites of the Jewish people that were mentioned there. They had a strong sense of the need to return to the days of the heroism of the ancient Jews in which the Jews fought bravely against various invaders. In order to achieve this they were assisted by well-known biblical heroes, and even religious holidays took on a different interpretation from what we know from religious tradition in order to elevate the glory of the Jewish warrior once more and compare him to the familiar heroes of the past. For example, Lag Ba’Omer has become an heroic holiday that symbolized the heroism of Bar Kokhba in the revolt against the Roman Empire<sup>46</sup>, instead of a religious holiday whose importance according to Jewish tradition is the end of the laws of mourning for the death of Rabbi Akiva’s scholar. Similarly, Hanukkah, characterized by religious tradition as the holiday in which the central motif is the miracle wherein one oil tin was used to light eight candles, became a holiday in which the Maccabean wars were highlighted as a symbol of glorious heroism.

The Jewish community gradually changed its perception of the Jewish warrior, and the blood of the guard became equivalent to the sweat of the worker. The Jewish settlements began to feel a real sense of ownership of the land and the Jewish warrior became a cultural and social model and part of reality during the Arab Revolt. The difference between the image of the parents’ generation (the early Zionists) and the

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<sup>44</sup> Shapira 1988: 26–27.

<sup>45</sup> Shimon Bar Giora was one of the leaders of the revolt, winning many victories against the Roman conqueror until his defeat.

<sup>46</sup> New customs were introduced – Archery, bonfires were lit and hymns were written to commemorate the heroism of Bar Kokhba.

image of the sons' generation (descendants of the early Zionists) also made an important contribution to the image of the new Jewish warrior.

### **The generation of the parents and the generation of the sons**

The generation of the sons saw themselves as a strong and significant factor in the region, which allowed them to free themselves from the defensive ethos of their parents and form an offensive alternative.<sup>47</sup> In the 1930s and 1940s the difference between the two generations with respect to the Land of Israel became more pronounced. The generation of the parents was raised on the writings of the Jewish philosophers Tchernichovsky and Berdichevsky who characterized the Land of Israel as a place where one must cling to and seek the strength of the soul. The generation of the parents rarely traveled the country's paths and the heroic sites of Jewish heritage never became sites of pilgrimage (such as Masada, Modi'in, etc.). In comparison, the generation of the sons regarded the Land of Israel as their inheritance as they had been born and raised there, and they had no doubt that this was their country. They saw the Land of Israel as a tangible property and identified themselves with the country's landscapes; their childhood experiences were an inseparable part of the Land. While the generation of the parents expressed the wish and hope that the land would be theirs, in the generation of the sons there was a sense of real ownership of the land of Israel. As a result of this approach, the emerging national ethos did not regard the Jews as a weak but as a significant factor in the struggle for control of the Land of Israel.<sup>48</sup>

It might appear that the situation described above could lead to the conclusion that the generation of the sons would become a leading force in the decision-making process and that their influence on the political echelon would be vast. However, despite the rise in status of the military echelon, their views have not yet been reflected politically (compared to their status and influence during the Sinai War, Six-Day War, and Yom Kippur War) since the political leadership felt that the military echelon could not yet plan its own large-scale military maneuvers.

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<sup>47</sup> Shapira 1988.

<sup>48</sup> Shapira 1988.

## From defensive myth to offensive myth

A national ethos is characterized by how it is gradually formed. In comparison, national myths are built subsequent to an event that serves as a factual basis for an evolving legend that is being developed around it.<sup>49</sup> In order to strengthen the ethos of the Jewish warrior, Ha-Haganah members emphasized security events that occurred between Arabs and Jews in the Land of Israel.

This can be illustrated by the heroic myth attributed to Tel-Hai defenders led by Yosef Trumpeldor. During the Tel-Hai event scant details of the incident, as they occurred in reality, were published.<sup>50</sup> The emphasis in publications on that topic was on the deaths of workers who had fallen in defense of Tel-Hai. In the book *Yizkor* and in an article in memory of the fallen published by Berl Katznelson (one of the senior Zionist leaders) there was written: "... fell on the Homeland Guard ...". The term "homeland" was not commonly used by the people, yet after the Tel-Hai event this term was used frequently. The uniqueness of the Tel-Hai events was that the Jews preferred the terminology "falling in battle" rather than using "retreat" or "surrender". It was in this series of events that the myth of defensive heroism was conceived.<sup>51</sup>

This defensive trend did not last long and was replaced with an offensive one by creating myths from other events. The daily routine of the Arab attacks forced Haganah to switch from a strategy of static defense to one of dynamic defense, and finally to an offensive approach. The most prominent event highlighting this tactical transition was the myth formed around events during the establishment of the settlement Hanita. Hanita, located in Western Galilee, was exceptional compared to other settlements built prior to the establishment of the State of Israel because it was built in the heart of an Arab region. The defense of Hanita demanded a large number of volunteers from among those who helped to establish it. They were joined by infantry troops who came to defend the place from an expected attack by the Arabs which indeed took place. One day after the Arab attack the command for a counterattack was

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<sup>49</sup> Shapira 1988.

<sup>50</sup> Even though the event itself was a failure. No reinforcements arrived in time and Tel Hai and Kfar Giladi were abandoned following the incident.

<sup>51</sup> Shapira 2002: 143–148.

issued for the first time. In the narrative of the establishment of Hanita the role of the infantry was given prominence; in contrast to other places for which the process of settlement was emphasized, this time it was the fighting force that was given significant attention. This was the first time that the role and function of the “Jewish warrior” changed into those of offensive fighter and initiator. His character began to form as a national Zionist mission whose importance was no lesser than the image of the Jewish worker.<sup>52</sup> After the events of Hanita there was a recognition that the establishment of the State of Israel should be planned not only by diplomacy but also by the use of offensive military forces. This event is an important marker in the process of turning the components of Israeli strategic culture from defensive to offensive.

### **Few against many**

The War of Independence is commonly known and conceived by the public as a war of the few against the many. Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary “World history does not contain as many examples of war in which there were few against many as young Israel does.”<sup>53</sup> This emphasis on Israel’s quantitative inferiority vis-à-vis the Arab states during the War of Independence became a national ethos that justified the claim that the Jewish community was in real danger of physical extermination. The leaders of the State of Israel have repeatedly emphasized this motif over many years when referring to the War of Independence. In his speeches Ben-Gurion compared the period of the War of Independence and the IDF’s victory in this war with motifs from biblical heroes such as David’s victory over Goliath, Yehoshua Ben-Nun’s victory over the 31 kings, and the Maccabean wars.<sup>54</sup>

Although the phenomenon of few against many does not always have much basis in the reality of the battles of the War of Independence,<sup>55</sup> *the feeling of the few* was dominant among the people of the Jewish community in Palestine. The feeling of the few was against the rule of the British Mandate, against Arabs in Palestine, and especially against the

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<sup>52</sup> Shapira 2002: 103–104.

<sup>53</sup> Ben-Gurion 195: 351

<sup>54</sup> Kaddish & Kedar 1996: 87–89.

<sup>55</sup> Amitzur 2005.

five invading Arab armies (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon). The source of this sense of minority can be explained by Arab opposition to any compromise between Jews and Arabs over the division of the state, the depressed situation of the European Jewish community after the Holocaust, the numerical difference in army size between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, and the multiple Arab threats to destroy the new Israeli state even before it had been established.

## Militarism

Another component of the characterization of a country's strategic culture is the level and type of militarism in the society. The premise of this study is the existence of civilian militarism in Israel, which varies from one period to another. The present study sees militarism as just another component of strategic culture. Militarism and its characteristics were based on the system of images and symbols described above which enables a connection between culture, worldview on the security field, and the formation of a security doctrine. According to Baruch Kimmerling,<sup>56</sup> the militarism that developed in the Jewish community was "civilian militarism".

Uri Ben-Eliezer, Baruch Kimmerling and many others<sup>57</sup> believe that the new state was interested in connecting society to the army and turning the army into a school for the nation which places power at the center of the new Jewish identity. Accordingly, the leadership advanced a broad concept of security that encompassed almost all areas of society. This approach reached its peak mainly after the establishment of the state (reference to this period is not found in this article), but its origin began with an argument about the way the Zionist movement operated at the beginning of the Yishuv. In this chapter I will divide the influence of militarism on the nature of strategic culture into two different periods which are distinct in nature. The first period runs from the establishment of Bar Giora until World War II; the influence of militarism here led to the development of a defensive approach. The second period runs from the end of World War II until the end of the War of Independence; in this period there was a transition towards an offensive approach.

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<sup>56</sup> Kimmerling 2001: 208–229.

<sup>57</sup> Harkabi 1990; Kimmerling 2001: 208–229; Rapoport 1962: 71–101; Ben-Eliezer 1998.



## **The defensive approach: from the establishment of Bar Giora until World War II**

In order to characterize the level of militarism prior to the establishment of the State of Israel one must first examine the origins of this militarism. The debate over the Zionist movement's course of action began at the beginning of the Yishuv period. Volunteering to settle and work the land was one of the issues that split members of the Zionist movement. Supporters of the volunteers were called "activists" and opponents were called "conservatives". Most of the activists belonged to the workers' movement, and this activity found expression mainly in the willingness to settle and cultivate the land. At the center of the first controversy was the question of whether Jews could protect Jewish settlements. The first Zionist settlers were assisted by Bedouin guards in order to protect their lives and property and they remained at the mercy of the Arab guard who often exploited the situation by extorting them and steadily raising their fees. Bar Giora and Ha-Somer suggested that such guard duty should be transferred to Jewish hands, a suggestion that was frequently rejected by the farmers. The farmers' fear was that the Bedouin guard would exact revenge on them for losing their jobs. Moreover, on a social-religious level, they objected to the nature of Hashomer members who were not religious. Gradually Ha-Somer began to gain momentum and changed the security concept of the Jewish community. As well as passive guarding they also initiated security activities such as small-scale pursuits, using limited means of retaliation, and deterrent activities.<sup>58</sup>

The identification of the younger generation with militarism as a legitimate way of solving problems increased towards the end of the First World War. During this period there was a strong desire and willingness among the younger generation to enlist into the British army to assist in the conquest of Israel. Allenby, commander of the British forces, chose however not to include Jewish volunteers in the battles and his decision caused great disappointment among them. A messianic sense was replaced by the sad reality that there was a new conqueror (this time a British one) and it was better for the Jews to defend themselves by establishing a militia under the control of the Jews.<sup>59</sup> This defensive

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<sup>58</sup> Lev 1985.

<sup>59</sup> Shapira 2002: 135–141.

ethos fit well with the decline in the militarism of the Yishuv in view of their disappointment in not being included in the conquest of the land.

After the Yishuv settlers accepted the reality that they had to defend themselves the collective identity of the youth in the Land of Israel was formulated and shaped throughout the 1930s and 1940s. This was characterized on two different levels: indigenous mentality and militant activism. They were exposed to a generation of struggle: the struggle against the British, the struggle against the Arabs, and the struggle against the Jewish image in the Diaspora period. The establishment of purely Jewish military units led the younger generation to feel that it was possible and even desirable to solve the Arab-Jewish-British conflict through organized violence. The military concept of Haganah has a direct connection with the gradual rise in the image of the warrior and the transition to the understanding that there will also be a need to fight for the Land of Israel. Initially, the military concept was based on the static defense principle that there was a need to defend against Arab gang attacks on Jewish settlements, transport routes, and workers in the fields – a perception that gave a clear advantage to the attackers. This approach began to change with the outbreak of the Great Revolt of 1936–1939 when the Arab riots turned into planned and organized incidents against the Jewish Yishuv; in the light of these riots, the opinion emerged that the method of action needed to be changed.

Uri Ben-Eliezer<sup>60</sup> and Stuart Cohen<sup>61</sup> argue that this idea started to coalesce in 1936 among a group of the Zionist elite who served in Haganah, demanding that the Yishuv leaders adopt an aggressive/offensive approach and cease acting defensively. The Yishuv leadership feared losing its status and proposed a compromise whereby members of the younger generation would be subject to its senior leadership, and in return the leaders would spread the idea that the “Arab problem” could and should be resolved in a military and aggressive way. The military solution gradually became synonymous with the values and ideology of the Jewish community.<sup>62</sup> During these years a new worldview with respect to the attitude towards Arabs and the use of force began to emerge,

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<sup>60</sup> Ben-Eliezer 1998.

<sup>61</sup> Cohen 2001: 4–5.

<sup>62</sup> For further details on the demand and response of the Yishuv leadership, see: Barzilai 1996; Shapira, 2002: 135–141; Kimmerling 2001: 208–229.

an understanding which was a decisive factor in the formation of an offensive ethos, the ethos of the warrior.<sup>63</sup>

### **The offensive approach: The end of World War II until the end of the War of Independence**

At the end of World War II the main question was whether to continue to struggle against the regulations of the White Paper<sup>64</sup> or whether to suspend activity until the end of the war. The moderates believed that the policy of the White Paper was a temporary necessity and that it was necessary to wait until the end of the war. In contrast, the activists saw the White Paper as a result of the British assessment that Jews had no choice but to accept an anti-Zionist policy. The right way to change British policy was, in their opinion, demonstrating strength and a willingness to fight against the British. The days of the resistance movement (a union of several Jewish militias) symbolized a turning point in the nature of action against the British Mandate. In November 1945 the first military operation took place, an operation with a clear political nature: the explosion of railways in 153 different locations throughout Israel. This operation would lead to a series of additional actions against the British that would put an end to the debate between moderates and activists, in which the latter had the upper hand.<sup>65</sup>

One of the practical implications<sup>66</sup> of this need to solve the Arab problem (i.e., to solve the repeated attacks of Arabs against Jews) by military means, and not only by political ones, was “Plan D”. “Plan D” was a military operation with the aim of taking over territories, conquering Arab villages and towns, and creating territorial contiguity between Jewish settlements. This plan was not only designed as an operational plan, but also as a command to forces in the field. “Plan D” turned the offensive strategy of the Jewish Yishuv into a normatively acceptable strategy in the eyes of the same. The political echelon was the main group promoting the idea of expanding borders, as can be seen from

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<sup>63</sup> Shapira 2002: 135–141; Ben-Eliezer 1998.

<sup>64</sup> The White Paper is a term for the British government’s report on decisions relating to Jewish settlement in Palestine and the restriction on Jewish immigration into Palestine during the British Mandate (1920–1948). The report had a white cover, hence its name.

<sup>65</sup> Ben-Eliezer 1998.

<sup>66</sup> The Israeli Information Center 1973.

the meeting held one week before the declaration of the establishment of the state on 7/5/1948. At this meeting, the political echelon decided not to include state borders in the Declaration of Independence since they believed that these borders would not be determined by diplomatic agreements but rather by force.<sup>67</sup>

It should be noted that the heads of state had other alternatives to prevent the Arab invasion, such as the US proposal to postpone the declaration of statehood for several months in order to prevent the Arab armies' planned invasion. At the historic meeting held on May 12 1948 the question was whether to declare the establishment of the Jewish state immediately after the British Mandate terminated or to accept the US proposal for a three-month truce. Ben-Gurion preferred a military solution to a political one and summarized this meeting by saying "it is time we stop believing in witchcraft. Witchcraft is a belief in words; one who does not believe in magic and words understands that it will be a matter of deciding by force ..."<sup>68</sup> The members of the provisional government preferred the military path until a decision on the establishment of the state was not brought to a vote at all.<sup>69</sup>

Ben-Gurion was more moderate than the military echelon when it came to expanding the country's borders. It is useful to note here that Ben-Gurion referred to war as a destructive phenomenon and because of that he feared militarism which, in his opinion, constituted a danger to the public at large and to the emerging Israeli democracy.<sup>70</sup> Because he feared the negative effects of militarism, Ben-Gurion demanded civilian control over the army and the subordination of the army to the authority of the political echelon; he did not allow the military leadership to dictate political and military moves. However, at the same time Ben-Gurion understood that preparations for war had to be made in order to avoid annihilation.

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<sup>67</sup> Pail 1990: 40–49.

<sup>68</sup> State Archives 1948: 70.

<sup>69</sup> Pail and Azriel 1991: 180.

<sup>70</sup> Ostfeld 1994 :70–74.

## Norms, traditions and procedures

There was a practical side that contributed to the formation of a strategic culture which turned from defensive to offensive but, as with the phenomenon of militarism, this was also not the main factor. The main reason for this change was that the political echelons had gained a lot of experience, whereas in comparison the military echelon had no experience either in the political or in the military spheres. In this chapter I will mainly refer to the period of 1946–1949 in which Ben-Gurion was appointed as head of the Defense Ministry and the War of Independence, and refer less to the first years of the Yishuv. At the beginning of the Yishuv there were procedures, norms and traditions in the security organizations that had a certain effect on the formation of a defensive strategic culture, but their influence was not significant. This is because these military organizations were relatively new and traditions and organizational norms were not yet sufficiently coherent to the point of being able to significantly influence defensive strategic culture (i.e., during the period of the Yishuv the other variables/factors that affected strategic culture like symbols, images and militarism were more dominant in this period).

During the period of the Yishuv, the norms, procedures and traditions of Haganah were the ones that dictated the interaction between the military and political echelons. Just before the establishment of the state of Israel Ben-Gurion tried and succeeded in establishing *his* way in the security field. In order to do so he appointed people who were loyal to him personally as the heads of the military echelon, instead of Haganah veterans. He therefore aspired to establish a regular army, like armies in the Western World, and not a militia like Haganah. Ben-Gurion preferred that senior commanders be commanders who had previously served in regular armies so that they could quickly establish a disciplined and trained army themselves. It was no longer to be a defensive army as was the case with Haganah, but an offensive army that would push fighting beyond the borders of the country. In order to realize this vision there was a need to change the existing chain of command, an action which would lead to changes in organizational tradition.<sup>71</sup> Ben-Gurion saw the existence of a single source of inspiration as a national

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<sup>71</sup> Pail & Azriel 1991; Ostfeld 1994.

mission that was required to realize the objective of the new state. This new state was a place where immigrants and settlers from different cultures would be united under one single governmental apparatus. Ben-Gurion was interested in shaping the army in his own image and now there was the golden opportunity to do so since the new army (the IDF) was devoid of tradition, having allegedly been created from nothing.<sup>72</sup>

### **The nature of the future army – a new army or an old-new army?**

Controversy over the nature of the new army began at the time when the IDF was established. The question was whether to allow the norms, procedures and traditions of Haganah to remain in the IDF or alternatively to establish an army with a new organizational tradition and new interactions between ranks. In Haganah loyalty was first to the party and according to Haganah's wishes, so a gradual change was required to transition to a regular army. However Ben-Gurion believed that such a transition should be quick and immediate.<sup>73</sup>

Ben-Gurion opposed the relationship between Haganah and the National Headquarters. He therefore tested the status of the National Headquarters and was interested in dismissing its leader Israel Galili. There were several reasons for Ben-Gurion's desire to dismiss Galili from the position of head of the National Headquarters. First, Ben-Gurion regarded Galili as a representative of a rival party (MAPAM – the United Workers Party) whose political and strategic views did not match his own. Galili was also a competitor with considerable political influence over society and the Zionist movement. The second reason, more closely related to this discussion on norms, procedures and organizational traditions, was differences of opinion regarding the character of the new Israeli army. Galili was the most senior leader to emerge from Haganah who wanted the IDF to rely on Haganah's legacy concerning the nature of the organization, its fighting spirit, combat doctrine, human relations and its popular character, etc. The main reason for this controversy stemmed from the difficulties Haganah had, as an organization wanting to preserve its organizational traditions, in adapting to such changes. It was resistant to the transition to the framework of a state which,

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<sup>72</sup> Shapira 2002: 58–65.

<sup>73</sup> Ostfeld 1994: 78.

according to Ben-Gurion, was committed to the principle of statehood. Galili's view is suitably illustrated in his speech to the Mapam Council on July 2, 1948: "We need not a blind army, but an army that continues the traditions and values of Haganah ... an army whose loyalty does not contradict the party's affiliation and does not make robots of soldiers ..."<sup>74</sup>

After the declaration of the establishment of the state of Israel there began to take shape a recognition of the need to appoint permanent front commanders to serve as an intermediate level of command between the General Staff and the brigades. In June 1948 Deputy Chief of Staff Zvi Ayalon and Head of Operations Branch Yigael Yadin submitted their proposal for the construction of four fronts. Ben-Gurion was interested in conducting a round of appointments both in the new fronts and in the General Staff divisions. In his opinion the front commanders should be professional officers who had graduated from the British army; he therefore opposed the recommended list. Yadin and Ayalon criticized Ben-Gurion's expected series of appointments. This round of appointments led to the resignations of several important military personnel. At a cabinet meeting held on July 2<sup>nd</sup> Prime Minister Ben-Gurion announced the resignations of four members of the General Staff. The government decided to establish a committee including five ministers to investigate the matter. The purpose of this committee, was to be able to make recommendations quickly. The committee's conclusions justified the presence of the military personnel, rejecting Ben-Gurion's positions. The committee members then sought to establish a new forum of security decision-makers, thereby creating new working patterns between the government and the military echelon. Ben-Gurion, who opposed this idea, oversaw the establishment of this new forum but excluded it from any security decision-making processes. The convening of this forum was usually without any substantive content or meaning.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Zerubavel and Megged 1955: 74–76.

<sup>75</sup> Pail & Azriel 1991: 190–194; Ostfeld 1994: 600–624.

## **A regular army or a militia – the dismantling of the Palmach<sup>76</sup> headquarters**

The Palmach<sup>77</sup> (“strike forces”) was the elite fighting force of Haganah which refused to accept the authority of Ben-Gurion and was an organization that claimed to serve as a source of inspiration for the youth and the emerging new army.<sup>78</sup> Ben-Gurion referred to the Palmach with mixed feelings of appreciation and suspicion. His appreciation was for its contribution to the Ha’apala<sup>79</sup> project and to the successful battles of the War of Independence, however Ben-Gurion was suspicious of this heritage which seemed to be an old-fashioned and unsuitable legacy for a regular state army. The Palmach legacy included an informal relationship and equality between soldiers and commanders.

Perhaps Ben-Gurion’s fear was that a special intra-organizational relationship and the organizational culture of the Palmach would affect relations between the two echelons. Ben-Gurion firmly opposed these principles since, in his opinion, any army should be a professional, formalistic, hierarchical establishment through professional development rather than being the product of the organic growth of society and circumstance.<sup>80</sup> Zehava Ostfeld<sup>81</sup> adds that the patterns of transition from the underground, in which the Palmach operated during the period of the Yishuv, did not conform to the requirements of a regular state military organization. One year after the discussion on dismantling the Palmach headquarters its brigades were also dismantled to the point where they had no traces left in the new IDF army.

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<sup>76</sup> The Palmach was a broad spectrum left-wing nationalist organization associated with socialist parties. Its members trained and lived in kibbutzim. The political tendencies of its leaders such as Yigal Allon and Yitzhak Sadeh were towards Mapam, a left-wing party in opposition to David Ben-Gurion and the Mapai ruling party.

<sup>77</sup> Ben-Eliezer 1998: 54–57.

<sup>78</sup> Shapira 2002; Ostfeld 1994: 624.

<sup>79</sup> Ha’apala – illegal immigration by Jews to Mandatory Palestine in violation of the British White Paper.

<sup>80</sup> Another factor to be noted is his view of the Palmach as the tool of a rival party since the Palmach was identified with the kibbutz and its senior commanders were members of the parent parties.

<sup>81</sup> Ostfeld 1994: 720.



## Summary and conclusions

Bar Giora and Hashomer changed the concept of security as perceived by the Jewish community. In addition to passive guarding, security organizations initiated targeted security activities such as small-scale pursuits and also used retaliatory measures against attackers. Through their actions these organizations expressed the new path of the Jewish warrior in the Land of Israel. The military perception of security organizations has a direct connection to the gradual increase in the importance and prestige of the warrior, and to the understanding that not only by working the land and utilizing a political arrangement can a state be established; there is also a need to fight. This transition from a defensive to an offensive approach was accompanied by psychological changes as this was the first time that the Jews had not settled for passive protection of their settlements but rather initiated actions in the Arab territories. The nature of this activity created a feeling of real ownership among the people of the Yishuv on the land, and the Jewish warrior became a cultural and social model.

The theoretical chapter presented four characteristics that allow us to determine what the strategic culture of a certain country is: (1) the role of war in the eyes of society; (2) how society sees its relationship with the enemy; (3) the perception of the effectiveness of employing force; (4) practices (norms, procedures and traditions) that accumulate over the years and regulate the relationship between the various elites.

To characterize the origin of the Strategic Culture in Israel, three indicators were examined: (1) Symbols and images (2) Militarism (3) A system of norms, traditions and procedures that regulate the rules of conduct between the military and political echelons. A synergy of all these factors together creates the “strategic culture of a state” which is greater than the sum of its parts.

In order to examine the first two characteristics a system of symbols and images of the Jews in the Land of Israel was described in this article from the time of the Yishuv until the War of Independence. The cultivation of symbols of heroism and myths began with the establishment of the Bar Giora organization. Most of their security activity was based on a defensive approach, but in some cases for which the latter approach could not achieve its objective the organization resorted to targeted reprisals. These actions laid the foundations for broader operational activities

that would come to characterize Haganah and the IDF in the future. With the establishment of the "Bar Giora" organization the area of security became significant and the Jewish community began to change its perception towards the Jewish warrior.

The generation of the sons saw themselves as a strong and significant factor in the region, a conception which allowed them to be freed from the defensive ethos of their parents and assisted them in finding an offensive alternative in the formation of the army. Emphasis on Israel's inferiority vis-à-vis the Arab states during the War of Independence became a national ethos justifying the claim that the state should nurture its army, also serving as an important factor in creating a militant ethos.

Another component of the characterization of a country's strategic culture is the level and type of militarism of its society. The issue of militarism addresses the second and third characteristics. The premise of this article is that civilian militarism exists in Israel, and that its extent changes over various periods of time. The present article views militarism only as part of a broader strategic culture; since the level and nature of militarism is based on a system of images and symbols, militarism enables a connection between culture and worldview in the security field. The roots of militarism began with the establishment of the Bar Giora organization and its conception was enhanced through the consolidation of the concept of Haganah within the Israeli military. In the beginning strategy was based on the static defense principle, but as the threat intensified strategy was changed to one of active defense and finally to an offensive approach. The generation of the sons, a generation that had grown up in Israel, developed an aggressive ethos in which the life of the warrior constituted a formative and character-shaping experience, also developing an approach whereby the Arab-Jewish-British conflict could be resolved by activating military units. One practical implication was "Plan D" which turned this offensive approach into a normative strategy.

Finally, a practical element (a system of norms, traditions and organizational procedures) also contributed to the formation of an aggressive strategic culture. The influence of this factor mainly saw its expression in the 1940s because the military system was developed then, gaining experience, forming new norms and organizational traditions. Building an organizational tradition was the final stage in formulating an activist-offensive Israeli strategic culture.

In conclusion, the purpose of this article was to examine the process of formulating and characterizing Israeli strategic culture. Israeli strategic culture gradually developed into an activist-offensive strategic culture. This process started at the beginning of the Jewish Yishuv with a conceptual change regarding the image of the new Jewish warrior. After the establishment of a system of images and symbols in the security field and the formulation of the “new Jewish warrior” myth the Jewish community became militaristic, characterized by “civil militarism”. Towards the establishment of the State of Israel there began the establishment of norms and organizational traditions in the field of security, leading to the final formulation of Israeli strategic culture as offensive.

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# Is Terrorism Effective? Examining Terrorism Strategy in Achieving Political Goals

LIMOR NOBEL-KONIG

**Abstract** This study analyses the success and failure of terror organizations, placing special emphasis on the role of five key strategic components: recruiting activists/supporters; creating provocation; eliminating opponents; instilling fear; media activity. Based on case-study analysis of eight terror organizations worldwide, findings indicate that the support of the population the terror organization claims to represent, or the lack of it, is crucial for success. Creating provocation has been effective in maintaining conflict without resolution and in achieving tactical goals. Media activity and instilling fear have been effective in achieving the tactical goals of publicity and intimidation. However, this tactical success failed to be translated into strategic success. In most cases, it hardened public opinion and strengthened support for tough counter-terrorism measures. Finally, eliminating opponents was not effective. This study indicates that some strategic components, such as provocation, recruiting support and media activity, were effective in achieving tactical political goals. However, terror organizations that used these components effectively could have translated their tactical success into a (partial) strategic success only by consciously engaging in some kind of legitimate political activity or by transforming into some form of political entity.

**Keywords** terrorism strategy, terror organizations, counter-terrorism, strategic goals

## Introduction

Academic literature dealing with the political effectiveness of terrorism is diverse. On the one hand, some scholars argue that the practical and objective achievements of terrorism are short-term, limited and

that terrorist campaigns rarely end up achieving of the group's strategic goals.<sup>1</sup> The claim here is that terror organizations rarely achieve their policy objectives and that the poor success rate is inherent to the tactic of terrorism that targets civilians.<sup>2</sup> The use of terrorism against civilian targets was found to be significantly less effective than guerrilla campaigns against military targets at gaining political concessions. Furthermore, liberal countries have been less likely to make concessions to terror organizations. On the other hand, other scholars argue that terrorism can be used as an effective coercive strategy and does achieve political concessions successfully. Some of these scholars also rely on the assumption that the electorate shows a growing sensitivity to terrorism and thus influences political leaders to grant political concessions to terror organizations.<sup>3</sup>

Historically, the clear cases of terrorist organizations that were successful in gaining strategic goals are the expulsion of British and French colonial rule from Cyprus, Israel, Aden and Algeria.<sup>4</sup> Research conducted at the beginning of the 1990s found that 90% of the sample of terror organizations were defeated during the first year of activity.<sup>5</sup> However, liberal democracies are not immune to threats of terrorism. On the contrary, the basic freedoms of a democratic society (freedom of speech, movement, etc.) allow terror organizations to recruit activists and to communicate and publicize their message more easily. Terror organizations can strike any place, any time. The message delivered to the public is that no one is safe and that the authorities are incapable of protecting their citizens or maintaining public order. Terrorism is not a goal in itself; it is used as a means to achieve political goals.

Thus, after four decades of terrorist attacks on many societies all over the world, it is important to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of terrorism strategy. Does terrorism have the power to effect political

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<sup>1</sup> Abrahms & Gottfried 2016: 72–89; Fortna 2015: 519–556; Crenshaw 2001: 405–420; Laqueur 2003: 12–15; Wilkinson 2011: 16; Cordes *et al.* 1984: 35–48; Cronin 2009: 10–15; Jones & Libicki 2008: 65–74; Moghadam 2006: 707–729; Stephan & Chenoweth 2008: 7–44.

<sup>2</sup> Abrahms 2006: 42–78; Abrahms 2007: 223–253 Abrahms 2012: 366–393; Abrahms 2013: 660–671.

<sup>3</sup> Rose & Murphy 2007: 185–192; Kydd & Walter 2006: 49–57; Pape 2005: 124–135; Pape 2003: 343–61; Dershowitz 2002: 10.

<sup>4</sup> Wilkinson 2011: 16.

<sup>5</sup> Rapoport 2013: 3–6.



change? Do terror organizations succeed in achieving political goals? Can the strategy of terror organizations predict their success or failure in achieving political goals? This study attempts to answer these questions through analysis of the success or failure of terror organizations by the strategies used by these organizations.

As for definitional issues of terrorism, this study is based on the definition of Ganor (2011): “Terrorism is a violent struggle, during which there is a deliberate use of violence against civilians, in order to gain political goals”.<sup>6</sup> This definition covers three fundamental elements. First, the nature of the activity: a violent struggle; second the aim of the activity: a political goal; and third, the target: civilians. The next section will review academic literature concerning the strategy of terrorism, placing special emphasis on the role of five key components in terrorism strategy: recruiting activists/supporters; creating provocation; eliminating opponents; instilling fear; and media activity.

### **Terrorism strategy**

Theoretical literature in the field of terrorism identifies several central components in the strategies of terror organizations. They can be divided into five key components: recruitment of activists, supporters and resources; provocation; elimination of political opponents; instilling fear; and media activity.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Recruitment of activists, supporters and resources*

The recruitment of activists, supporters and resources is one of the basic existential foundations of any terror organization. The activities of terror organizations entail the intensive loss of activists due to incarceration by law agencies and to operational activities. Thus, the continuous search for activists, ideological supporters and resources characterizes the activity of terror organizations. The relationship between a terror organization and its activists can be described as a pyramid, with the terror organization as the head of the pyramid and the activists as its foundation. The survival of a terror organization depends on this relationship

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<sup>6</sup> Ganor 2011: 16.

<sup>7</sup> Wilkinson 2011: 8–125; Merari 1999: 52–65; Wardlaw 1989: 42–76; Crenshaw 2001: 410–420; Jenkins 2001: 321–327.

with activists and supporters and on its ability to recruit new members.<sup>8</sup> Most of the terror organizations in the world are small, with several tens to hundreds of activists, while a minority of them (about a quarter) have several thousand activists.<sup>9</sup>

Research identifies three factors that facilitate the recruitment of new terrorists: The first, is a lack of state capacity, particularly in the areas of police, intelligence, and law enforcement; the second, is a “mobilizing belief,” such as Salafist/jihadist extremism; and the third is “appropriate agitators” who can propagate these ideas and create an effective terrorist force.<sup>10</sup>

As the recruitment component is essential for the survival of the organization, the methods of recruitment from nonviolent methods to coercive or violent methods. Nonviolent methods include the use of social and family relations, operating social and welfare aid systems, establishing relations with other extremist groups, offering material incentives and propaganda.<sup>11</sup> The Islamic State (ISIS) has even implemented a distinct online recruitment strategy, which follows potential supporters from an introduction to the organization’s message, through careful pruning of their social networks, and then to the final stage: the call to action.<sup>12</sup> Violent and coercive recruitment methods include the use of beating, kidnapping, threatening, torture and even murder against the same population the organization claims to represent.<sup>13</sup>

In most cases, terror organizations depend on the support of the population they claim to represent. This support can be attitudinal support, which is passive support of the activity of the organization and its goals, or behavioral support, which is active support of the activity of the organization (supplying food and shelter for activists, supplying information, donations, and non-cooperation with governmental agencies/police).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Sinai 2007: 173–180.

<sup>9</sup> Wilkinson 2011: 8

<sup>10</sup> Rosenau 2005: 5–10; Mair 2003: 107–108.

<sup>11</sup> Sageman 2004: 175; Rosenau 2005: 6; Fair 2010: 494–499.

<sup>12</sup> Berger 2015: 1.

<sup>13</sup> Lilja 2009: 306–315.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Terror organizations finance their activity in legitimate as well as illegitimate ways, which often commingle with each other. On the one hand, funds may derive from legitimate charitable organizations but, on the other hand, funds may come from credit card fraud, smuggling, protection payments, extortion, violation of intellectual property rights, and front businesses.<sup>15</sup>

### *Provocation*

The idea of provocation is a central component in the strategies of terror organizations and it was mentioned in the writings of several theorists of modern terrorism, such as Carlos Marighella. Back in 1969 Marighella<sup>16</sup> refers to acts of provocation as a crucial strategic element since these acts force the government to react in coercive ways (e.g., house searches, arrests of innocent civilians, political persecution, street blocking). Consequently, the organization gains the support of the oppressed population. Terror organizations are usually less powerful than the security forces or the military of the state. Therefore, terror organizations deliberately provoke the target state authorities with ostentatious attacks on symbolic targets in order to coerce them into overreaction and misjudgment. The state's counter-reaction might result in domestic and international criticism, political instability, political controversy and might damage the national as well as the international image of the country. These results are expected to lead to growing support for the terrorist cause on the one hand, and to political and economic destabilization on the other hand.

Contrary to terror organizations that violate civil rights during their continuous struggle, a democratic state that fights terrorism is vulnerable in this regard. This is due to the need to develop mechanisms that block the political expression of racist, violent or inciter groups, while ensuring that these mechanisms do not infringe on the basic civil liberties of its citizens. This challenge is most prominent in the legal arena. Nowadays, the willingness of many democratic states to use severe measures against terrorism is on the increase. States' counter-reactions can now include legislation of orders and regulations that significantly

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<sup>15</sup> Raphaeli 2003:60–75.

<sup>16</sup> Marighella 1969: 111.

limit civil liberties. After 9/11 the British parliament approved the “Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001” and four years later it was replaced with the “Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005” after the British court decided that this act was discriminatory against foreign citizens. In the USA, the main legislation after 9/11 was the “USA Patriot Act” of 2001 which provoked legal disputes that eventually led to the “Military Commissions Act of 2006”. In response to such legislation, many civil rights activists took steps to minimize what they considered damage to democracy and civil rights. Additionally, this legislation provoked strong social controversy between those who demand extreme counter-terrorism measures in the fight against terrorism and those who claim that such measures are unnecessary and sacrifice legal rights on the altar of national security.<sup>17</sup>

### *The elimination of political opponents*

The elimination of political opponents is one of the typical *modi operandi* of terror organizations. Assassinations of political leaders and political figures are used as symbolic acts with the purpose of undermining political stability removing rivals in the political arena. The chosen victims are usually prominent political figures in government whose killing will result in strong social and political turmoil.

Political opponents of terror organizations may be internal as well as external. External opponents are political leaders, government officials and public figures belonging to the target state, which the terror organization considers enemies. Internal opponents are prominent political rivals belonging to groups and organizations among the population the terror organization claims to represent. These internal opponents usually have similar national, ethnical or ideological characteristics to those of the terror organization.

In 1881, during the international congress of the Anarchist movement in London, the policy of “propaganda by deed” emerged. Consequently, it led to acts of revolutionary terror against political leaders such as kings, presidents and prime ministers. The twentieth century is considered the deadliest in terms of political assassinations. Among them were terror attacks against the Italian prime minister Aldo Moro

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<sup>17</sup> Chang 2011: 19–21; Sidel 2007: 187.

by the Red Brigades organization in 1978; the former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi by the LTTE organization in 1991; the British ambassador to Ireland Christopher Ewart-Biggs by the IRA organization in 1976; the Egyptian prime minister Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi by the Muslim Brotherhood organization in 1948; the Spanish prime minister Luis Carrero Blanco by the ETA organization in 1973; and the Egyptian president Anwar El Sadat by the Egyptian Jihad organization in 1981. Additionally, there have been numerous cases of failed assassination attempts against many political leaders.

The use of the component of eliminating political opponents may be counterproductive since it may lead to the opposite of untended consequences, as well as jeopardizing the organization's chances of achieving political goals in the long term. Instead of gaining public support, the public may be outraged by the killing of its admired political leaders and express demands of revenge and force against the terror organization. For example, in the case of the murder of the former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades, the Italian public considered this act to be savage and cowardly. Furthermore, it led to the alienation of many members of the revolutionary movement diminishing cooperation with other organizations and resulting in fierce internal disputes that split the organization and led to its eventual demise.<sup>18</sup>

### *Instilling fear*

The psychological element in the strategy of terrorism is a central one. Terrorists can strike at any time, any place. The message delivered to the public is that no-one is safe and that the military and economic power of the government does not guarantee public order or personal safety. Acts of violence are intended to intimidate the public in order to influence their attitudes and insert conflict into the political arena. Terrorists expect this intimidation to result in public pressure on decision makers to make concessions or to change policies in favor of the terrorist cause.

Undermining state authority and breaking public trust may affect the functioning of society as a whole by reducing the political involvement of the people. Personal security is emphasized at the expense of

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<sup>18</sup> Whittaker 2012: 225.

the greater good.<sup>19</sup> Terror organizations invest great efforts in tracking the target state's media in order to locate weak spots in society, to identify social cleavages and internal disputes so they can intensify them. This psychological warfare may become more intense as the struggle goes on. In fact, terror organizations could instill fear using methods of psychological warfare without carrying out actual attacks.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the effective use of this component will result in disproportionate anxiety compared to the actual threat among the target audience. Public opinion plays a key role in translating the terrorist messages into anxiety, as well as channeling it into political pressure on decision-makers.

Research findings suggest that exposure to terrorism and the threat of terrorism does have negative psychological effects like elevated depression and stress levels, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>21</sup> However, the findings of a study conducted in the year following 9/11 suggest that most Americans did not report feelings of fear or terror. One of its conclusions was that the terror attack of 9/11 had very limited success in instilling fear in the American public.<sup>22</sup>

Liberal democracies have proven their resilience in the face of terrorist attempts to coerce them into changing their policies or making concessions to their demands. Democracies have the advantage of broad legitimacy in the public eye, allowing them to rely on continuous support in their attempts to repress terrorism.<sup>23</sup> In some cases, support rate of the elected American president has even increased during and after terror attacks, and during counter terrorism operations.<sup>24</sup>

### *Publicity*

The media activity of terror organizations may contribute to their success in achieving tactical political goals in four central ways. First, terror organizations use their acts of violence as a means of publicizing their message. The idea of "Propaganda by the dead"<sup>25</sup> is a key element in

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<sup>19</sup> Huddy *et al.* 2005: 593–608.

<sup>20</sup> Ganor 2011: 229.

<sup>21</sup> Galea *et al.* 2002: 982–987; Silver *et al.* 2002: 1235–1244.

<sup>22</sup> Huddy *et al.* 2005: 560.

<sup>23</sup> Wilkinson 2011: 49.

<sup>24</sup> Nacos *et al.* 2008: 1–25.

<sup>25</sup> Bakunin 1990: 14–20.

terrorism strategy and it is designed, through acts of terror, to raise the awareness of the public and decision-makers in the target state of their strategic goals and demands. Second, terror organizations use their acts of violence as a means of instilling fear in the public. Third, media activity is designed to assist in the recruitment of new activists, supporters and funding worldwide, and reflects the aspiration to gain legitimacy and support, both externally and internally. These last two ways illustrate how different components in the strategy of terror organizations interact with one another. Fourth, media activity is designed to have an indirect effect on public opinion in the target state since the media is considered one of the elements that influences and shapes public opinion. Thus, terror organizations expect the media to grant them access to the political communication triangle, which is composed of the media, the public and decision-makers in the government.<sup>26</sup>

The relationship between terrorism and the media has even been described by the term “terror theatre”,<sup>27</sup> as the terror attack is considered to be like the production of a play for the audience. The 9/11 attack illustrated how the international news media cut across distances, national boundaries and time differences. Developments in communication technology, such as digital satellite broadcasting, cellular communications and the internet, have turned terrorism into a live show which can be seen unfolding stage by stage, much like a prepared script.<sup>28</sup> Technological development in the past decade has transformed the world of media, allowing terror organizations to use media platforms as a means of shaping policy and influencing public opinion. Thus, the new media allows terror organizations to rely on soft power<sup>29</sup> as well, rather than only on coercive measures, and to use public diplomacy<sup>30</sup> in order to challenge governments. Many terror organizations operate public relations wings, negotiate through the media and use the internet for propaganda and the transfer of information, to raise funds and launder money, for internal communication and recruitment purposes. Furthermore, many of them

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<sup>26</sup> Nacos 2016: 27–49.

<sup>27</sup> Jenkins 2006: 11.

<sup>28</sup> Shpiro 2002: 76–85.

<sup>29</sup> Nye 2008: 95.

<sup>30</sup> Gilboa 2006: 716–720.

have their own websites.<sup>31</sup> Without digital technology the Islamic State (ISIS) may never even have existed, nor would it be able to survive or expand. The Islamic State used the internet and digital communication with inventiveness and employed cyberspace as a new battle arena.<sup>32</sup>

This study analyzes the strategy of eight case studies of terror organizations through the lens of the strategic components that were briefly reviewed above. The next section describes the research methodology.

## Methodology

Research methodology was based on case study analysis. The case studies in this study represent different categories of political goals, following Wilkinson's typology of terror organization political motivation.<sup>33</sup>

- Ethno-National goals (national liberation, self-determination, autonomy, independence)
- Ideological goals (revolution in the name of extreme left/right ideologies)
- Religious-Political goals (eliminate societies and states in order to create a new world order through holy war)
- Single-issue goals (a demand for a specific change in social/political policy)

The case studies in this study were therefore chosen mainly based on an effort to represent Wilkinson's classification of political motives, and on an effort to include organizations that were active (or currently active) for long periods of time worldwide. Organizations with single-issue goals were not included in the sample due to their short periods of activity and there being fewer cases worldwide.

Thus, the research sample includes eight case studies of key terror organizations worldwide: Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA), Al-Fatah, Hizballah, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Red Army Faction (RAF), and the Egyptian Muslim

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<sup>31</sup> Weimann 2008: 69–72.

<sup>32</sup> Atwan 2015: 15–31.

<sup>33</sup> Wilkinson 2011: 78.



Brotherhood. The time frame of the analysis of active organizations is from the establishment of the organization until 2013.

**Effectiveness of terrorism:** The dependent variable of effectiveness was evaluated on a scale composed of several degrees representing the extent of political goals achieved, beginning with lack of achievement (failure), through tactical goals achieved, and ending with the full or partial achievement of strategic goals. This research distinguishes between tactical and strategic political goals of terror organizations. This distinction is based on the time dimension and is necessary since terrorist campaigns tend to be prolonged affairs.

Tactical goals are defined as short-term and middle-term goals used to create a cumulative effect as a means of achieving long-term strategic goals. Terror organizations use the strategy of ‘war of attrition’ against the state and this type of war is a prolonged one. Tactical goals may be releasing prisoners, ransom money, increasing local support, extensive media coverage, partial political concessions, gaining international legitimacy and creating a more comfortable basis for future negotiations.

Strategic goals are defined in this study as the declared goals of the terror organization, as described by its leaders. Strategic political goals derive from the basic motivation that led to the establishment and existence of the terror organization. Generally, the declared political goals of terror organizations are considered stable and reliable indicator of their actual intentions.<sup>34</sup>

Generally, the data sources used to evaluate the independent variable of the strategy of terror organizations included the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism (START), the terror organization’s original materials and publications, media and academic publications, and official reports issued by governments.

*Recruitment of activists and supporters:* Data is based on “The Terrorist Organization Profiles” (START: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism) and academic publications.

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<sup>34</sup> Abrahms 2006: 46.

*Elimination of opponents:* Data includes the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), official reports issued by security forces or investigation committees when available, media and academic publications.

*Instilling fear:* Quantitative data regarding the amount of terror attacks and fatalities per year was retrieved from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). The GTD includes information on terrorist events around the world from 1970, which is currently available until 2015. The analysis only includes attacks targeting civilians, but not security forces (military or police). Additionally, the evaluation of the effects of this component in the target country includes public opinion polls.

The component of instilling fear was a challenging component to measure. Terror organizations use terror attacks as a means to instill fear that would ultimately influence public opinion and political attitudes. The assumption is that there is a positive correlation between the frequency and the lethality of terror attacks (the frequencies of the occurrence of terror attacks and the amount of victims) and the levels of fear and anxiety inflicted on the public. The more frequent and lethal the attacks, the higher levels of fear become. Hence, public opinion polls in the target country may serve as a reliable source of information when these polls include subjects such as the level of fear, anxiety and personal insecurity resulting from exposure to actual terror attacks or to the threat thereof.

*Publicity:* Data includes content analysis of newspaper articles in local and international printed and online newspapers, of 15–20 terrorist attacks perpetrated by each organization during the years of operation: Beirut Times (Online), The Jerusalem Post, Asian Tribune (Online), Colombo Times (Online), Al-Ahram Weekly (Online), Barcelona Reporter (Online), The Guardian (Printed and Online), An Phoblacht (Online), Colombia Reports (Online), and The New York Times. The articles were selected according to the dates of major terror attacks against civil targets.

*Provocations:* Data includes the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), newspaper articles in local and international newspapers (as detailed in the last section on the publicity component) and official reports issued by governments.

## Findings

This study analyzes the strategies of eight case studies on terror organizations over long periods of time and takes into account the government's counter-reactions to the terrorist activity in the target state, as well as public opinion and the media. The findings section presents the results of the analysis regarding the terror organization strategies that failed, strategies that achieved tactical goals, and strategies that achieved partial strategic goals.

### *RAF and LTTE: The terror organization strategies that failed*

Two case studies of organizations that failed and were dismantled: RAF had ideological goals and LTTE had ethno-national goals. The RAF's declared ideological strategic goals included a leftist revolution and the creation of a free society in Germany. In 1998, the RAF released a statement announcing the end of its struggle without having realized any substantial goals: "*The urban guerrillas in the form of the RAF are now history, the end of this project shows that we cannot succeed that way*".<sup>35</sup> The LTTE's declared ethno-national strategic goals included the establishment of an independent Tamil state in northeast Sri Lanka. In 2009, after a prolonged counterterrorism campaign by the Sri Lanka military, the LTTE was defeated and announced its dismantlement.

Analysis of these organizations' strategies shows that, concerning the recruitment component, in 2009 the LTTE counted approximately 8,000–10,000 activists.<sup>36</sup> The LTTE had lost the support of the Tamil people as the struggle continued. The fact that it had to use coercive recruitment methods implies a loss of legitimacy among the Tamil people.<sup>37</sup> The RAF counted between 20–300 activists throughout the years of its activity and it also failed to win the support of the German public.<sup>38</sup>

As for the use of the provocation component, in the RAF's case the German authorities' aggressive treatment of the arrested activists portrayed them as martyrs in the German public's eye. With the LTTE, the

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<sup>35</sup> Aust 2008: 437.

<sup>36</sup> The Terrorist Organization Profiles: <http://www.start.umd.edu/tops/>

<sup>37</sup> Sweig 2002: 122–141

<sup>38</sup> Becker 1978: 1–57.

continuous harassment of the families and relatives of LTTE activists by security forces in the first stages of the struggle contributed to the voluntary recruitment of new activists.

Regarding the elimination of opponents, the RAF targeted prominent German political and public figures and succeeded in assassinating one federal judge, two bank managers, the head of the German industrials association, an army general, a diplomat, the head of a government agency, and several industrials. Additionally, it carried out several failed assassination attempts.<sup>39</sup> The LTTE is the organization that made the most extensive use of this component out of all eight case studies. The LTTE assassinated former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and a former Sri Lankan president. Between 1989 and 1994, the LTTE succeeded in eliminating all of its prominent rivals within the Tamil community. It assassinated dozens of senior politicians and public figures in India and Sri Lanka.<sup>40</sup>

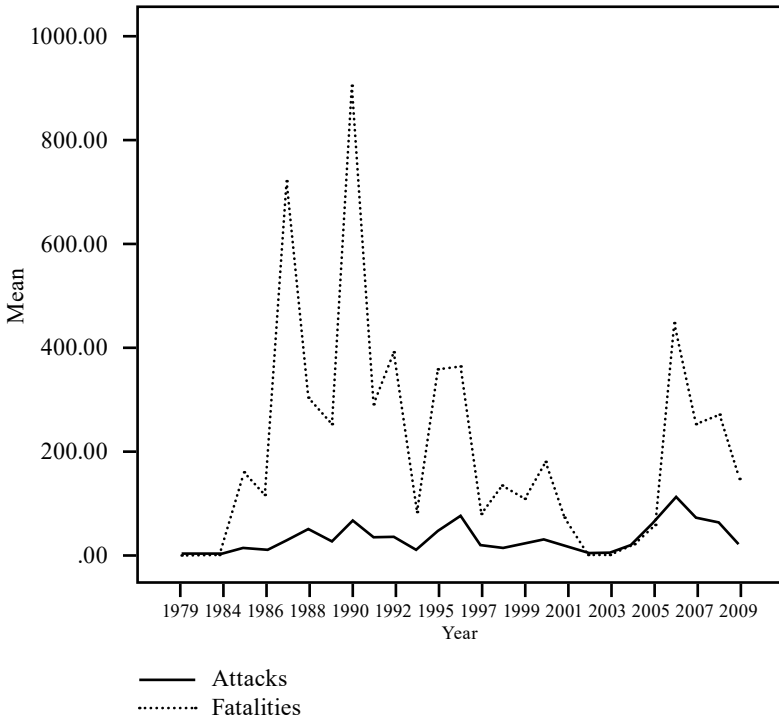
Similarly, the LTTE made extensive use of the component of instilling fear by consistently carrying out frequent and lethal terror attacks against civilians. According to data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) the LTTE was responsible for an average of 211.44 civilian fatalities per year during the period of its activities 1979–2009 (see figure 1). The LTTE has been known for its cruel methods that were used to instill fear: public executions, ethnic cleansing, kidnapping of women and children, captivity, torture, and murder. Furthermore, the LTTE managed to exterminate all of its rival Tamil groups within the Tamil population by the mid 1980s.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Rojahn 1998: 7–63.

<sup>40</sup> Battle 2010: 43; Lilja 2009: 308–309.

<sup>41</sup> Lilja 2009: 312–315; START Global Terrorism Database. Retrieved from <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>

**Figure 1.** Terror attacks and fatalities by the LTTE (1979–2009)

The RAF is exceptional in this regard since this organization only targeted German security forces and governmental symbols in its violent activity, but not the German public. Thus, the motives underlying its terror attacks were, on the one hand, to instill fear in the German government and, on the other hand, to spark the fire of revolution awaken the revolutionary consciousness of the German public. Therefore, the pattern of the RAF's use of the component of instilling fear does not include deliberate lethal and frequent attacks against citizens.<sup>42</sup>

As for the influence of the component of instilling fear on the public in the target state, public opinion polls conducted in Germany showed that in the first years of RAF activity the German public expressed fear,

<sup>42</sup> Becker 1978: 1–57; Rojahn 1998: 7–63.

a sense of helplessness and deep concern about the terror attacks. However, in 1976 the majority of the German public supported the death penalty for terrorists and showed a willingness to sacrifice personal freedoms in the fight against terrorism.<sup>43</sup>

*ETA and FARC: The strategies of terror organizations that achieved tactical goals*

Two terror organizations have achieved only tactical goals: ETA and FARC. ETA's declared ethno-national strategic goals included the establishment of an independent Basque state. In 2011, the ETA organization declared a permanent ceasefire and the cessation of armed activity before it had realized its strategic goal through violent struggle. FARC's declared ideological strategic goals included a Marxist-Leninist revolution in Colombia and the establishment of a new government that would represent the rural population. By 2011, FARC had gained control of approximately 30% of Colombia. However, between 2012 and 2016 the organization suffered an intensive military offensive. In 2016, the FARC signed a ceasefire accord with the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, after four years of negotiations. The peace agreement was approved by the Colombian Congress and is termed "territorial peace", one that decentralizes the political and economic dominance of the Bogota-centred political and economic structures and empowers municipal and departmental leaders and rural communities.<sup>44</sup> In 2017, FARC rebels moved into transition zones and began the process of disarmament.

FARC, which achieved only tactical goals, has suffered a decline in recent years and counts approximately 10,000 activists, while in 2002 the Colombian intelligence services estimated that FARC had between 15,000–18,000 activists. The FARC organization had a coercive element to their recruitment tactics since it had control over the territory and used it to employ dependent people as a source of income. The Colombian people's support of the organization has declined in recent years and the Colombian public takes part in mass protests against FARC.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Pridham 1981: 18–52; De Boer 1979: 410–418.

<sup>44</sup> Fagen 2015: 10.

<sup>45</sup> Sweig 2002: 124–130.

ETA, which achieved only tactical goals, counted between several tens to approximately 300 members throughout the years of its activity.<sup>46</sup> The ETA organization also lost the support of the Basque people as the struggle went on. Under the Franco regime, the organization enjoyed the support of the Basque people. However, once the democratic government was established in Spain in 1979 and granted the Basque people autonomy, Basque support in ETA substantially declined.<sup>47</sup>

Concerning the provocation component, FARC's provocations included kidnapping, terror attacks and gaining control of Colombian territories, which helped the organization to improve its position in negotiations with the Colombian authorities. In ETA's case, the Spanish authorities' aggressive treatment of arrested ETA activists painted them as martyrs in Spanish public opinion during the early years of its activity.

According to data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), ETA was responsible had for an average of 7.85 civilian fatalities per year between 1970 and 2009 (see figure 2). During the rule of Franco in Spain until 1975, Basque public opinion was supportive of ETA activity. In 1978, almost half of the adult Basque population considered ETA activists idealistic and patriotic. However, as the struggle continued, public opinion polls showed a steady decline in support. In 1989, less than 25% of the adult Basque population considered ETA activists to be patriots. In 2004, 69% of the adult Basque population considered ETA activists to be terrorists.<sup>48</sup> In 2007, two million people participated in a mass demonstration held in Madrid against the ETA.

FARC made extensive use of the component of instilling fear by consistently perpetrating frequent and lethal terror attacks against civilians. According to the GTD, FARC had an average of 71.00 civilian fatalities per year between 1975 and 2011 (see figure 3). In 2008, there were several mass demonstrations against the FARC organization, in Colombia and around the world. In 2016, peace deal with FARC was put to a vote in a national referendum. The referendum failed with 50.24% voting against, forcing the Colombian government and FARC to formulate a revised peace deal that was finally approved by the Colombian Congress.

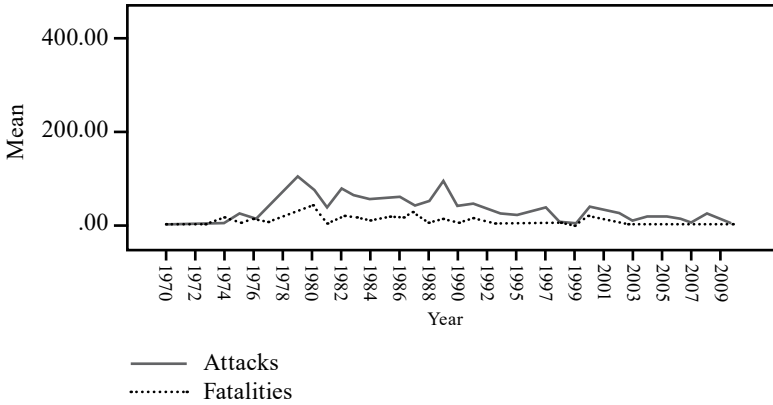
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<sup>46</sup> The Terrorist Organization Profiles.

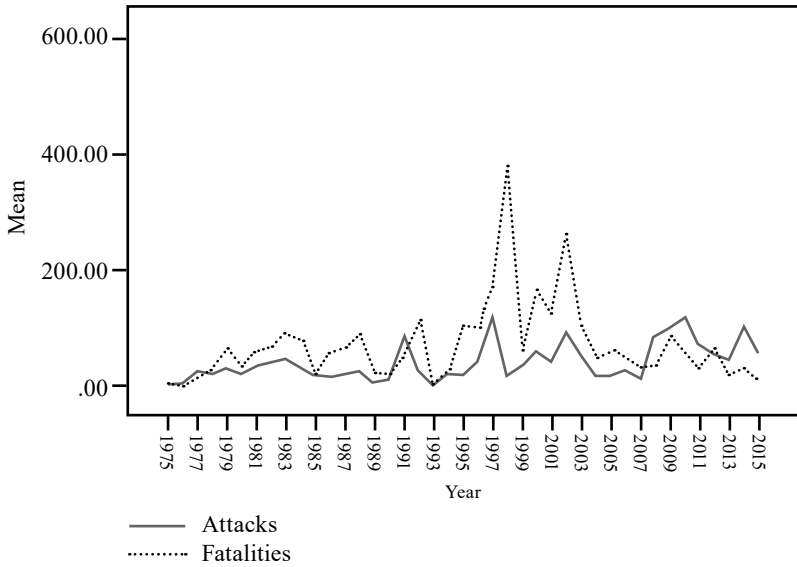
<sup>47</sup> Alexander *et al.* 2001: 32.

<sup>48</sup> Alonso & Reinares 2005: 266–270.

**Figure 2.** Terror attacks and fatalities by the ETA (1970–2010)



**Figure 3.** Terror attacks and fatalities by FARC (1975–2011)





In ETA's case, this organization made extensive use of the component of eliminating opponents. The ETA targeted prominent Spanish political and public figures and succeeded in assassinating several dozens of senior officials including the Spanish Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco, military officials, parliament members, political party members, judges, lawyers, intellectuals, university professors, journalists, businessmen and governmental employees.<sup>49</sup> FARC made extensive use of this component as well. FARC assassinated several tens of Colombian public representatives and political figures (advisors, party leaders, mayors, senators and presidential candidates), a state governor and a former president's sister.<sup>50</sup>

*IRA, Fatah, Hezbollah and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood:  
Terror organization strategies that achieved partial strategic goals*

Research findings indicate that only four terror organizations have achieved partial strategic goals: the PIRA (Provisional IRA), Fatah, Hezbollah and, to some degree, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (MB). Both Fatah and the PIRA had ethno-national political goals. The PIRA's declared strategic goals included the withdrawal of British forces from Northern Ireland, the independence of Northern Ireland, and the reunion of the Irish nation under an Irish government. Eventually, in 1997, the PIRA signed the "Good Friday agreement" with the British government, which granted the Catholic public in North Ireland representation and participation in the government, improving their social and political position.

Al-Fatah's declared strategic goals included Palestinian self-determination, national liberation and the establishment of a Palestinian state. Eventually, in 1993, the Fatah signed "The Oslo I accord" with the Israeli government, which allowed it to establish an independent Palestinian authority alongside the state of Israel.

Hezbollah's declared religious-political strategic goals include the establishment of an Islamic republic in Lebanon, the elimination of Israel, as well as expelling the USA from the Middle East. Currently, the

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<sup>49</sup> Alexander *et al.* 2001: 45–53.

<sup>50</sup> Feldman & Hinojosa: 42–61.

Hezbollah organization has managed to achieve representation in the Lebanon parliament and territorial control over some parts of Lebanon.

The Muslim Brotherhood's declared religious-political strategic goals include the building of an Islamic society and state in Egypt and the establishment of a constitution based on the Islamic Qur'an. In 2011, for the first time in the history of the movement, it achieved a substantial accomplishment: the establishment of a political party "The Freedom and Justice Party". In 2012, the MB won 47% of the votes in the first democratic elections after the fall of President Mubarak, advancing the movement closer than ever before to achieving its strategic political goals. However, once in power the MB faced a new political reality in Egypt and had to adjust its political agenda to the wishes of the Egyptian people. When it failed to do so, the MB movement found itself once again outlawed and excluded. In July 2013 the elected MB President Mohamed Morsi was ousted by a military coup and the MB movement suffered a substantial overthrow.

Findings regarding the recruitment component revealed that the PIRA counted between several hundred to approximately 1,000 members throughout the years of its activity. It had enjoyed extensive support among the Catholic public in Ireland throughout the years of its struggle.<sup>51</sup> The MB's "Freedom and Justice Party" won 47.2% of the seats in Egypt's lower house of parliament in the 2011–2012 elections. These results indicate that the MB has extensive support among the Muslim population in Egypt.<sup>52</sup> Hezbollah has approximately 1,000 members and has extensive support among the Shi'ite population in Lebanon. Fatah counted between several hundred to several thousand members throughout the years of its activity<sup>53</sup> and had extensive support among the Palestinian population throughout the years of the activity analyzed in this study. All four organizations mentioned above achieved partial strategic goals.

Regarding the provocation component, in the PIRA's case, provocations included terror attacks, hunger strikes and highly publicized protests in Maze prison. There was a repeated pattern of counterproductive over-reactions from the British government in response to the

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<sup>51</sup> English 2004: 132, 344.

<sup>52</sup> Aknur 2013: 3

<sup>53</sup> The Terrorist Organization Profiles

PIRA's provocations throughout the years of the struggle, which eventually served the recruitment and propaganda purposes of the PIRA. The British government took actions that were meant to weaken the support of the Catholic public in the IRA but ended up strengthening it instead.<sup>54</sup> The most prominent examples are "Operation Demetrius" and the internment procedure (arrest without a trial),<sup>55</sup> the events of "Bloody Sunday",<sup>56</sup> "Operation Motorman"<sup>57</sup> and the prisoner protests in Maze prison. This prison that was used by the British government as a means of neutralizing violence turned into the center of an international crisis as PIRA prisoners portrayed as victims in the international media. Thus, these provocations assisted the PIRA in gaining the tactical goals of support, recruitment of activists, and media coverage.

With the MB in Egypt, provocations included religious propaganda and massive demonstrations. The counter-reactions of the Egyptian governments included banning the MB movement and prohibiting of the establishment of its political party. However, supporters of the MB considered these acts to be repressive and unjust and the MB gained the tactical goals of public legitimacy and support.

The Fatah organization's provocations included terror attacks and the armed "Intifada"<sup>58</sup>.<sup>58</sup> The counter-reactions of the Israeli government included military operations against the organization's bases in Jordan and Lebanon. These provocations and counter-reactions helped

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<sup>54</sup> English 2004: 187–227.

<sup>55</sup> Operation Demetrius was an operation carried out by the British army in Northern Ireland in 1971. During the operation, 324 people suspected of being activists of the PIRA were arrested without a trial. It turned out that many of those arrested were Catholics or Irish nationalists who had no ties to the PIRA. The procedure of internment, the violent arrests, and the abuse of those arrested, led to mass protests of Catholic public and increased the sympathy and the support in the PIRA.

<sup>56</sup> During the events of Bloody Sunday, the British Army in Northern Ireland shot (30.1.1072) 26 unarmed civil-rights protesters and bystanders. Two investigations by the British government supported the version of the British army and cleared the British soldiers and British authorities of blame. This was one of the most significant events, which affected the course of the struggle, and increased the support of the Catholic public in the PIRA.

<sup>57</sup> The British Army in Northern Ireland carried out operation Motorman in 1972. The purpose of the operation was to regain control of the "no-go areas" (areas controlled by PIRA) that had been established in Belfast, Londonderry and other towns. During the operation, the British Army shot four people in Derry, killing a civilian and an unarmed PIRA member.

<sup>58</sup> "Intifada" refers to the Palestinian uprising against Israel between the years 1987 to 1993.

the Fatah organization shape Palestinian as well as the international public opinion and gain the recognition that Fatah is the leading and central organization that represents the cause of Palestinian national identity. Additionally, it helped Fatah to improve its position in the negotiations that preceded the Oslo I Accord.

In Hezbollah's case, provocations included a military presence near the Israeli border, parades and military exercises in Lebanon, psychological warfare through the media, guerrilla attacks and firing missiles. The counter-reactions of the Israeli government included military operations against the organization in Lebanon. These provocations and counter-reactions helped the Hezbollah organization to gain international recognition and the growing support of the Shi'ite population in Lebanon.

Concerning the elimination of political opponents, in Fatah's case, to the best of our knowledge, this organization did not assassinate any prominent Israeli public or political figures. The MB did not made extensive use of this component either, although it did succeed in assassinating one Egyptian judge and the Egyptian prime minister Mahmud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi. Additionally, the MB was accused of assassinating a police commander as well, and a fraction of the MB assassinated the Egyptian president Anwar El Sadat.<sup>59</sup>

As for Hezbollah, it did not make extensive use of this component either. Hezbollah kidnapped and killed an American CIA representative, a UN colonel, a senior IDF commander and a senior commander of the South Lebanon army (SLA).<sup>60</sup>

The PIRA's targets included prominent British and Irish public and political figures, and they succeeded in assassinating four senior officials in the British and Irish governments. Additionally, it carried out several failed assassination attempts against the British prime minister Margaret Thatcher.<sup>61</sup>

The PIRA, Hezbollah, Fatah, and the MB organizations used the component of instilling fear along a relatively similar trend. As illustrated in figures 4–6, this trend may be described as a more utilitarian application of the component of instilling fear. It shows that, since the

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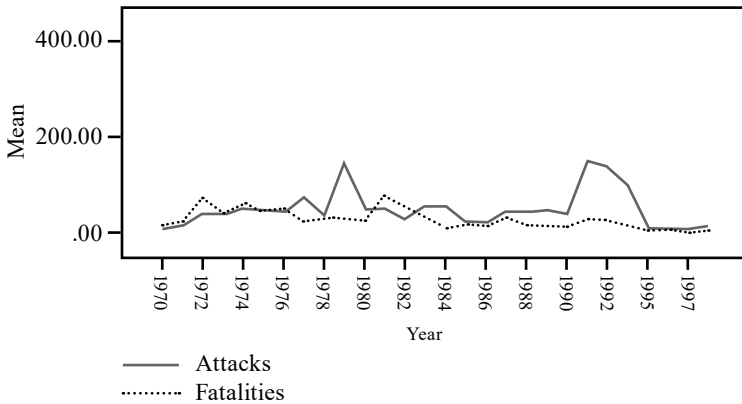
<sup>59</sup> Aboul-Eneim 2013: 36–31; Mitchell 1993: 124–146.

<sup>60</sup> Berkovich 2007: 20–52.

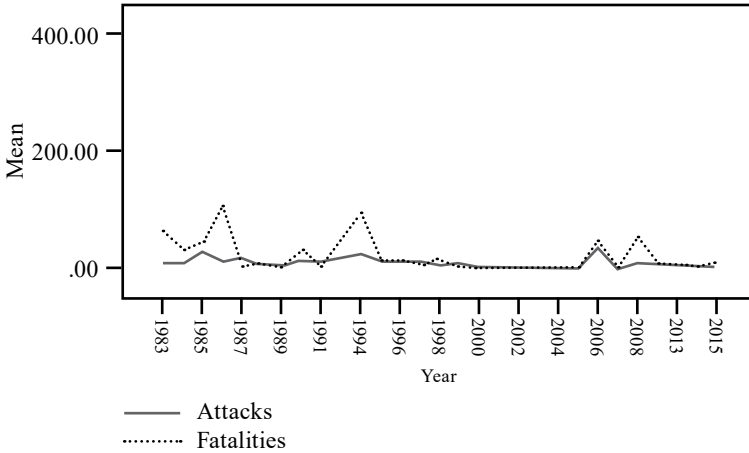
<sup>61</sup> English 2004: 95–148.

establishment of the organization or the beginning of its violent activity, the terror organization in question had perpetrated frequent and lethal terror attacks according to a certain pattern. It can be noticed that this pattern of activity includes some peak points of lethal and frequent attacks (between 1–4 peaks) during the years of activity. However, between these peaks there were periods of decline, especially in the lethality of the attacks. Consequently, in comparison with LTTE and FARC, these organizations had a much lower fatality rate per year of activity. According to the GTD, the PIRA was responsible for an average of 26.89 civilian fatalities per year between 1970 and 1997. Hezbollah had an average of 18.28 civilian fatalities per year between 1983 and 2015, and Fatah had an average of 9.31 civilian fatalities per year between 1976 and 1994.

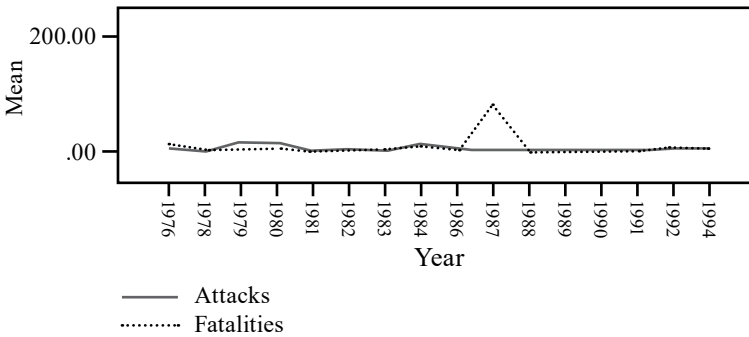
**Figure 4.** Terror attacks and fatalities by the IRA (1970–1997)



**Figure 5.** Terror attacks and fatalities by Hezbollah (1983–2015)



**Figure 6.** Terror attacks and fatalities by Fatah (1976–1994)



As the MB had been creating militant sectors within the movement since 1931, by the mid-1940s it was operating a secret military wing which performed terrorist attacks against the Egyptian government and the civilian population. Its violent activity continued until the 1950s and

included the assassinations of at least five political figures in Egypt.<sup>62</sup> In the decades following the 1950s, the MB was not involved in violent activity at least until the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014, following the ousting of President Mohamed Morsi. However, since 2015 Egypt has been witness to renewed waves of terror attacks, of which at least a proportion were perpetrated by former MB activists who established small terror cells in the Nile valley area. Although data from the GTD is available only from the 1970s onwards and therefore does not cover the 1940s–1950s, it can be assumed that MB activity fits the aforementioned utilitarian trend as well since there are only two peak points of frequent and lethal terror attacks throughout the organization's history.

In relation to the influence of the component of instilling fear in the public in the target state, examination of public opinion polls in the target states suggests that, generally, the public did express fear and concern in response to terror attacks. However, the public simultaneously expressed support of severe measures of counter terrorism and denunciation of the terror organization.

In the case of the Israeli public, this is relevant for the Hezbollah and Fatah case studies. Public opinion polls that examined the influence of terrorist attacks on militant attitudes indicated that as people become more frightened, they express views that become more militant. These people were more willing to use force in the fight against terrorism in comparison with people who did not express fear. From the 1967 war until 1993, with the signing of the Oslo I Accord, the Israeli public demanded tough measures against terrorism and did not express any desire for negotiations. From 1993–2001, the Israeli public expressed militant views against terrorism and simultaneously expressed a willingness for peace negotiations. However, after the 2001 armed Palestinian resistance (known as the Al-Akza Intifada), the Israeli public expressed militant views and rejected any possible compromises.<sup>63</sup> During the period 2001–2003, that characterized by substantial increase in terror attacks in Israel, the Israeli public expressed rational fear, proportional to the threat level and the likelihood of its occurrence, while this fear did not prevent a routine life of work and even leisure activities.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Al-Husaini 1981: 19.

<sup>63</sup> Pedahzur & Canetti-Nisim 2004: 2–6.

<sup>64</sup> Ganor 2011: 238.

As for PIRA, in 1973 after four years of activity on Irish land PIRA's leaders came to the conclusion that the influence on British public opinion through terror attacks against British forces in Northern Ireland was limited. The organization therefore made strategic decision to migrate their terrorist activities to Britain.<sup>65</sup> Before PIRA terror attacks occur in Britain, only 30% of the British public had considered terrorism to be a major problem in their country. However, public opinion polls that were conducted in 1977–1978 indicated that the majority of the British public was very concerned about the increase in terror attacks.<sup>66</sup>

Although public opinion polls were not available for the MB, the results of the 2011 elections in Egypt suggest that the MB has a very wide support base among the Egyptian public, winning 36.6% of the votes. Following the rise of the Abdel Fattah el-Sisi regime, MB leaders worry about losing the allegiance of the youth, but the MB still constitutes a heavyweight opposition in Egypt.<sup>67</sup>

Findings regarding the publicity component in general suggest that in all cases the terror attacks gained media coverage. In the printed press, the terror attacks were covered in the first published edition following the attack and in online journals, while articles were already available on the day of the attack. One of the interesting findings of the media coverage content analysis relates to the mentions of the terror organizations' motives. The analysis found that only 33 out of 130 articles (about one quarter) did mention motives. The LTTE had the largest percentage of articles mentioning its motives, followed by ETA, MB, Hezbollah, PIRA, RAF, Fatah, and the lowest percentage the FARC.

Another interesting finding relates to the words used to describe the organization in the articles. In most cases, the articles used the organization's name and the second most common word was "guerrillas". Only twenty percent of the articles used the word "terrorists". However, findings indicate that, apart from the MB, the organizations did not succeed in garnering sympathy in the media for their struggle. Most articles had neutral content and about forty percent had content that was critical of the terror organization. The RAF had the largest percentage of articles

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<sup>65</sup> English 2004: 205–248.

<sup>66</sup> De Boer 1979: 410–418.

<sup>67</sup> Brown & Dunne 2015: 1–3.



with critical content, followed by ETA, LTTE, FARC, PIRA, Fatah, Hezbollah and, the lowest percentage for the MB.

The analysis also examined whether the articles focused on the victims of the attack or on the terror organization since when the article places the victims at the center of the article rather than the terror organization the focus is on the outcomes of the attacks and not the reasons for their occurrence. Approximately one third of the articles focused on the terror organization, with another third focusing on the victims, and the rest focused on both sides equally. The MB had the largest percentage of articles focusing on the organization, followed by ETA, PIRA, RAF, Fatah, Hezbollah, FARC, and the lowest percentage for the LTTE.

## Discussion

Research findings indicate that four out of the eight case studies of terror organizations examined in this study achieved partial strategic goals: The Fatah, Hezbollah, the PIRA and the Egyptian MB. Two organizations only achieved tactical goals: ETA and FARC; and two organizations failed: LTTE and the RAF. Analysis of these terror organizations' strategies through the lens of their central strategic components has raised several insights.

Regarding the component of recruiting activists and supporters, findings suggest that the amount of activists does not have a distinct pattern of influence on the extent of the political goals achieved. These findings indicate that a large number of activists were no guarantee for success since the largest organizations, FARC and LTTE, failed to achieve their strategic political goals. FARC's critical decision to privilege criminality for the generation of financial means destroyed the execution of a viable people's war strategy. Criminality, although it made FARC perhaps the richest insurgent group in the world during its heyday, laid the foundations for its defeat by ceding legitimacy, and thus mass mobilization, to the democratic state.<sup>68</sup> However, findings indicate that all four organizations that achieved partial strategic goals managed to win broad support for their activities and goals among the populations they claimed to represent. The use of social aid services for the purpose of gaining support

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<sup>68</sup> Marks 2017: 489.

among the population helped the MB and the Hezbollah organizations to strengthen support in their activities.

Thus, the amount of activists was found to be less important than the rate of support the organization gained among the population it claimed to represent. In most cases, terror organizations continue to exist as long as they do not alienate their actual and potential supporters. Moreover, the ability to recruit public support may sometimes even subdue the struggle. There are known cases of terror organizations that ceased to exist due to severe criticism and objections from the public the terror organization claimed to represent, as in the case the Basque public and ETA, the Armenian public, and the Italian public.<sup>69</sup> Respectively, coercive methods of recruitment were found to be ineffective.

Terror organizations use provocation as a means to force the government to react in coercive ways. The findings of this study reveal that all eight case studies used provocation, which consequently helped them gain tactical goals to some degree. The findings suggest that when the terror organization enticed the government into overreacting and using extensive force, it did gain tactical goals such as media coverage, improved position in negotiations, and the sympathy and support of the public. In some cases, the repressive counter-reactions of the government helped the terror organization by increasing the voluntary recruitment of activists. Consequently, the component of provocation proved to be effective as an asymmetric strategy of attrition and in helping the terror organization to maintain conflict without resolution.

It is a fine line that separates the governments' image as weak and helpless and their image as repressive in the way they respond to terrorism. A government that is incapable of taking action in response to terror attacks would probably lose public support and diminish its confidence and ability to win the battle against terrorism in the future. Therefore, governments should achieve wide public support for anti-terrorism policies and should strengthen their citizens in the face of upcoming difficulties and limitations on personal freedoms, if necessary.<sup>70</sup>

The component of eliminating opponents was found to be ineffective. Findings regarding this component suggest that not all of the case

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<sup>69</sup> Weinberg *et al.* 2009: 129; Lilja 2009: 315–318.

<sup>70</sup> Huddy *et al.* 2005: 602–605.

studies used it, and when terror organizations did use this component it was at different levels of intensity. However, findings suggest that, in fact, those organizations that made the most extensive use of this component (LTTE, FARC and ETA) did not achieve their strategic goals or even failed, while those organizations that made less frequent use of this component in fact achieved partial strategic goals (Fatah, MB and Hezbollah). Furthermore, in some cases the assassinations of admired political figures might even backfire and lead to devastating outcomes for the organization, as in ETA's case. The assassination of the popular Spanish Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco in 1973 had dire consequences for ETA. The Spanish security forces used strict measures against the organization and the internal disputes regarding the assassination ultimately resulted in ETA's final and most significant split of in 1974. Two decades later, the kidnapping and killing of another popular politician in 1997, Miguel Angel Blanco, resulted in furious public responses and massive public demonstrations against ETA.

The component of media activity was found to be effective in achieving the tactical goal of publicity. However, findings suggest that when a terror organization exists for many years, unsuccessful in achieving its strategic goals, the media does indeed publicize the occurrence of its terror attacks but in most cases it does not publicize the organization's motives or political goals. In this regard, it appears that the organization misses an important part of the intended influence on news content. Furthermore, most of the news articles did not put the terror organization at the center of the article and terror organizations did not succeed in garnering sympathy for their struggle in the media.

Findings regarding component of instilling fear suggest that the case studies of terror organizations examined in this research used it at different levels of intensity. Two of the case studies, the LTTE and the FARC, made extensive use of this component by consistently orchestrating frequent and lethal terror attacks against civilians. The utilitarian application of the component of instilling fear was proved effective as well. A utilitarian application of instilling fear relates to the way that the terrorist organization moderates the levels of frequent and lethal terror attacks, adjusting the extent of their use as the terrorist campaign goes on. The four terror organizations that used this component in this manner achieved partial strategic goals (the PIRA, Hezbollah, Fatah and the

MB). However, instilling fear internally on the population the organization claims to represent, proved to be ineffective, as in the cases of LTTE and ETA.

Influence public opinion through media activity and intimidation of the public was shown to be desirable. In this manner, the tactical success failed to be translated into a strategic success. The basic terrorist assumption is that creating an anarchic atmosphere, anxiety, and uncertainty, serves as a means of putting pressure on policy-makers. However, the present analysis suggests that, in most cases, terror organizations do not succeed in influencing public opinion in the desired direction of putting public pressure on governments to make concessions, or to give in to the organization's demands. On the contrary, in most cases it hardens public opinion and strengthens support for tough and militant counter terrorism measures, even at the price of limiting personal freedoms. Similar findings were reported in studies conducted regarding Israel. One of the conclusions was that fearful individuals wish to use more force in the struggle against terrorism; they show greater a willingness to take risks and are more likely to present aggressive and militant reactions.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, terror fatalities had a significant influence on the Israeli electorate by causing an increase in support for the right-wing bloc of political parties. These parties hold a more intransigent position towards terrorism and territorial concessions, and thus undermine the terror organization's strategic goals.<sup>72</sup>

In this regard, the phenomenon of "rallying around the flag"<sup>73</sup> is well-known in the literature of public opinion. It proposes that in times of major international events or crises the public set aside its disagreements with the incumbent president's policies or performance in order to present a united front to the international community. The public will most likely support its president because they fear hurting the nation's chances of success by opposing him and at such times there is an opportunity to evoke patriotic reactions among the public.

Finally, analysis of these eight case studies indicates that terror organizations that did gain partial strategic goals were the ones which transformed themselves into some kind of political entity (political party,

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<sup>71</sup> Pedahzur & Canetti-Nisim 2004: 4–7.

<sup>72</sup> Berrebi & Klor 2008: 279–301.

<sup>73</sup> Muller 1970: 18–33.

political wing) like the PIRA, Fatah, MB and Hezbollah. The history of party politics and modern terrorism suggests that there have been frequent points of convergence between the activities of political parties around the world and the use of violence to achieve political goals. Political parties may turn to terror, but terrorist groups may themselves turn to the electoral arena to pursue their goals. An investigation into the relationships between 203 terror organizations and political parties in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century showed that in most cases (66%) terror organizations emerged out of a political party. In 12.8% of the cases, terror organizations became a political party and in 11.3% of the cases, they established a political wing.<sup>74</sup> These findings indicate that the transformation of a terror organization into a political party is not a rare phenomenon.

## Conclusion

Support from the population the organizations claim to represent, or the lack of it, is a crucial element in the success of the terror organization in achieving its long-term strategic goals. This component was found to be one of the most influential on the success of the organization in achieving partial strategic goals and on its survival. Creating provocation was found to be effective in maintaining conflict without resolution and in achieving tactical goals. When the organization managed to entice the government into overreacting and using extensive force it did gain tactical goals such as media coverage and public support. By their media activity, terror organizations might succeed in gaining publicity but in most cases, they do not succeed in influencing public opinion in the desired direction. Similarly, the kind of influence on public opinion instilling fear had not been in the desired direction either. The elimination of political opponents is not an effective method since it did not contribute to the extent of political goals achieved by the organization.

This study shows that some components in the strategies of terror organizations, such as provocation, recruiting support and media activity, were effective in achieving tactical political goals. However, the terror organizations that used these components effectively could have translated their tactical successes into (partial) strategic successes only

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<sup>74</sup> Weinberg *et al.* 2009: 25–35.

on the condition that they consciously engage in some kind of legitimate political activity, or that they transform themselves into some kind of political entity. Is the strategic transformation of terror organizations into political entities a model for success? This question remains to be answered. Recent dramatic events in Egypt indicate that even though the MB had historical political success, they were unable to capitalize on this achievement and the movement is once again outlawed and excluded. The limitations of this analysis derive from the extent to which terrorism can be isolated as a factor influencing political developments or events, as well as public reactions, the media and governments. Analyzing the strategies of several terror organizations over long periods and focusing on political goals as perceived by the terror organizations themselves helped to minimize this limitation.

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# The Islamic State, Clash of Civilizations and Their Impact on the Development of Contemporary International Relations

HOLGER MÖLDER

**Abstract** This paper makes the claim that the current spread of Islamic extremism which caused the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) is not so much a result of Western-Islamic civilizational enmity as the outcome of local ethnic and religious rivalries in which external powers intervened. Political developments in the Middle East over the last 35–40 years which have sometimes been followed by external interventions have reinforced religiously motivated political rivalries (i.e., between Saudi Arabia and Iran) and facilitated the spread of Islamic extremism based on the politicization of Islam. The emergence of the Islamic State has had a significant impact not only on the Middle Eastern regional security environment but also on the global international system. The IS, a new type of international actor, manifests neither a traditional model of the modern state nor a typical terrorist network with restricted political goals. Based on the historical narrative of the Caliphate, it claims to have authority over the entire Islamic world and intends to establish its supranational authority through affiliated organizations. As the IS is not capable of any kind of mutual relations other than war, other states will hardly recognize them as a part of the international system.

**Keywords** Islamic State, Middle East, clash of civilizations, Islamism, Salafism, regional security

## Introduction

On 29<sup>th</sup> June 2014 the Salafist rebel group *ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah fī 'l-'Irāq wa-sh-Shām* (Islamic State in Iraq and Levant) proclaimed a worldwide Islamic Caliphate, a self-declared successor of Prophet

Muhammad's Caliphate from the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The leader of the Caliphate Abu Bakr al-Baghdhadi declared himself world leader of Muslims as Caliph Ibrahim. The Islamic State (IS) represents a new type of international actor which manifests neither a traditional model of the modern state nor a typical terrorist network with restricted political goals. Based on the historical narrative of the Caliphate (632–1258),<sup>1</sup> it claimed to have authority over the whole Muslim world and, through its affiliated organizations, IS controlled territories in the Middle East and North Africa. Since 2017 the Islamic State lost ground following successful offensives against its capital cities of Raqqa and Mosul, however the phenomenon of IS requires particular attention in order to examine why such a relatively small extremist group was able to successfully enter into the local power games and once controlled large areas in Syria, Iraq and Libya. The powerful advent of the Islamic State in 2014, after their successful offensive in Iraq during which they occupied most of the Sunni territories there including the second largest city of Mosul, demonstrated that any challenger with a proper strategic plan may have an advantage in an unstable security environment. They were suddenly able to conquer and control territories despite their disadvantageous position with respect to the number of fighters and their military capabilities.

The regional security environment in the Middle East is full of various long-term rivalries and hostilities of different origins which can be easily used for the sake of extremist ideologies. The Islamic State is not committed to following any generally recognized norms of international law and is not capable of entering into relations with any other state of the international community, making this case exceptional. The exceptionality of this new actor, not recognized by the international community of states or any other internationally recognized body, makes the problem for other actors difficult to handle. Furthermore, the international community cannot punish it with sanctions or other relevant measures widely used against norm-breakers. This therefore presents a

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<sup>1</sup> The historical Caliphate was formed after the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632. The Rashidun Caliphate (*al-Khilāfatur-Rāshidah*) was ruled by his four successors elected by Shura (a consultative body of Muslim community) and followed by dynastic Umayyad (661–750) and Abbasid Caliphates (750–1258). In 1362, after the conquest of Edirne by Sultan Murad I, the Ottoman Empire claimed to be a Caliphate.

political dilemma as any action other than war against the Islamic State could be interpreted as unofficial recognition of this political entity, a limitation which ties the hands of the international community of states.

This paper argues that the current spread of Islamic extremism is not so much the result of Western-Islamic civilizational enmity as it is the outcome of local ethnic and religious rivalries and enmities in which external powers have intervened. The West has not always interfered in these conflicts as a traditional peacemaker but has often sided with one or other of the local actors in these numerous conflicts. The powerful emergence of extremist movements can be seen as a direct result of unsuccessful interventions, the influence of conservative Islamist regional powers, and the lack of any regional peace plan. Military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 respectively did not bring peace but forced a long-term conflict producing instability and violence, a phenomenon which has characterized the regional security environment throughout the last two decades. The popular narrative of civilizational enmity does not seem very convincing anymore when emanating from the hegemonic requests and ambitions of actors like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar or Turkey. The West supports the Sunni powers in the regional Sunni-Shia rivalry politically led by Saudi Arabia and Iran. In the shadow of the popular narrative of a clash between Western and Islamic civilizations, power games between regional powers, an ideological clash between Islamism and Arab nationalism, and contrasting cultural narratives between Israel and Arab countries continue to play a major role in the Middle East.

### **The myth of the clash of civilizations**

The clash of civilizations has become a powerful narrative often used by politicians for populist purposes in the so-called post-truth world by “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.”<sup>2</sup> The current conflicts tend to be long-standing and multipolar with multiple mutually fighting actors involved. During the last decade and going by evidence from Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya,

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<sup>2</sup> English Oxford Living Dictionaries, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/post-truth> (accessed on 04.01.2017).

among others, no considerable effort has been made by the international community of states to bringing peace any closer. This may indicate that the “war of all against all” (*Bellum omnium contra omnes*) introduced by English philosopher Thomas Hobbes in his 17<sup>th</sup> century books “*De Cive*” and “*Leviathan*” may be successfully re-introduced four centuries later. The Hobbesian concept of perpetual war was in many ways born again after the Cold War’s bipolarity between ideologically opposing systems came to an end in the 1990s.

In the generally hopeful decade of the 1990s, when the international community of states was probably more united than ever, Samuel P. Huntington created the narrative of the clash of civilizations in order to characterize the international environment of the post-Cold War era, declaring:

In this new world the most pervasive, important and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities. Tribal wars and ethnic conflicts will occur within civilizations. Violence between states and groups from different civilizations, however, carries with it the potential for escalation as other states and groups from these civilizations rally to their support of their kin countries.<sup>3</sup>

Huntington was simultaneously right and wrong. He correctly foresaw the enhanced use of cultural slogans for promoting ideological goals. At the same time, this distinction of cultural differences may effectively cover many economic and social disadvantages that the more globalized world faces but is not able to solve. Another of Huntington’s misperceptions is related to how civilizational identities rising as internal conflicts within civilizations may become even more violent than easily explained mythological war between civilizations. Huntington argued for the existence of a civilizational clash primarily between Islamic and Western civilizations because, in his view, both Islam and Christianity are missionary religions seeking the conversion of others and their mission is related to the goals of existence and purpose of human existence.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Huntington 1997: 28.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

The West has dominated the rhythm of the international system since the age of discoveries followed by the era of colonization. As a result, the West has often interfered in regional power games, which helped to empower the image of inter-civilizational conflict. The increasing influence of non-Western cultures on the patterns of the international system is indisputable. The influential international forum G-20, which consists of twenty major world economies, includes twelve rising powers classified as non-Western according to the Huntingtonian map of civilizations: China and South Korea (Sinic); Japan (Japanese); India (Hindu); Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey (Islamic); Russia (Orthodox); Argentina, Brazil and Mexico (Latin American); and South Africa (African). Just a minority of eight powers represents Western civilization: the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and the European Union. The rising influence of non-Western powers confirms that the West is probably no longer as much of a leading power of world civilization as it used to be over the last four-five centuries.

Hobbesian culture describes conflict as natural and unavoidable, often brought to a head by the powerful incentives of honour and fear. Zbigniew Brzezinski has noted that a culture of fear “obscures reason, intensifies emotions and makes it easier for demagogic politicians to mobilize the public on behalf of the policies they want to pursue.”<sup>5</sup> The myth of the clash of civilizations serves reinvented Hobbesian principles of a post-truth world as it can justify fear and hatred of other cultures.<sup>6</sup> Ever since September 11 2001 the image of the Muslim has been successfully merged with that of the terrorist. The media industry actively promoted Hollywoodian images of good guys and bad guys, similar to images of Batman and his archenemy the Joker, which were easily consumed by the masses. This Hollywoodian bipolarity offered by the media was gratefully accepted in political circles because fear-based hatred allows one to ignore real problems and may easily and inexpensively enhance their popularity. This also explains the progressive enhancement of extremist influences that started at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The image produced by political circles and widely spread by the media is extremely powerful and sets up a distorted mirror which convinces

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<sup>5</sup> Brzezinski 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Said (2004, 293) called the concept pursued by Huntington “the purest invidious racism, a sort of parody of Hitlerian science directed today against Arabs and Muslims.”

the audience that a clash between contrasting civilizations really exists. This refers to a process called Hollywoodization by which the rules of movie industry are transferred to the media industry. The Hollywoodian image of Islam tells us that Osama bin Laden and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi are trusted representatives of Islamic values. The actual number of active Islamic extremists pales in comparison to the Muslim population of the world, has been estimated at 85 000 to 106 000 out of a total number of 1.6 billion followers of the religion, and the number of terrorist attacks carried out by Islamic terrorists is similarly comparatively small.<sup>7</sup> However, the narrative empowered by the media makes them “large hordes of true believers” who represent the core values of the Islamic world. Powerful images produced by the media can augment their influence. Even a strong negative image may engage followers who are disappointed with the prevailing trends of their way of life and anti-heroes like bin Laden or al-Baghdadi could become heroes to them. They may be anti-heroes to the Western audience, but for those who feel themselves disgraced by the West they may easily become heroes who are followed blindly.

Robert Kagan has introduced the narrative of the return of history which in many ways follows the guidelines of the Huntingtonian concept of the clash of civilizations. However, he claims that “struggles for honour and status and influence in the world” have become key features of ideological line-ups in the competition between liberalism and absolutism.<sup>8</sup> Kagan emphasizes the natural rivalry between the United States as the only superpower and its main challengers Russia, China, Europe, Japan, India and Iran which pursue regional predominance. He identifies Islamic fundamentalists as being among the main challengers to the liberal world order, representing a fault line between modernity and tradition; they would struggle against modern powers and secular cultures which in their view could endanger the values of the Islamic world.

These narratives of the confrontational structure of the world order were accepted by neoconservative<sup>9</sup> politicians in Russia (e.g., Putin,

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<sup>7</sup> Bergen & Schneider 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Kagan 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Neoconservatism as an ideology that follows principles stated by the godfather of US neoconservatives Irving Kristol: patriotism is a natural and healthy sentiment and should be encouraged by both private and public institutions; world government is a terrible idea since



Rogozin) and the United States (e.g., Bush, Cheney, McCain, Graham, Lieberman, Wolfowitz) and were later endorsed by the current US administration of Donald Trump and far-right politicians in Europe. According to Christopher Hill, Trump has no peace plan for the Middle East; he has allied with Saudi Arabia and strengthened its rhetoric against Iran. In these discourses, Iran has caused all regional problems in the Middle East.<sup>10</sup>

The westernized world map sees the clash of civilizations from a perspective in which the West and its allies are identified as the “good guys” and all opponents, despite the values they actually represent, are defined as the “bad guys”. Relying on examples from the Afghanistan Civil War and the Vietnam War, the narrative of the return of history claims that there have always been “good and bad sides” throughout the history of mankind, where the good has been fighting the bad. In the Middle East this construction relies on a simplified representation of the public images of the Syrian government (Assad) and Iran (“bad guys”) versus Sunni Islamist opposition in Syria, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey (“good guys”).

The direct transference of the Huntingtonian concept of the clash of civilizations to the Middle Eastern security environment may produce an improper understanding of the sources of the conflict. Regional rivalries that appear in the Middle East do not support the popular narrative of a fight for global dominance. The Islamic civilization is fragmented into groups that often fight with each other, lacking unity and the capacity for global claims. It is more likely that the conflict in the Middle East stems from local problems which the West has proclaimed intercivilizational. These numerous local rivalries exist between the Sunni and Shia communities, between the Muslim and Christian populations, between religious and secular citizens, between Jews and Arabs, and between Kurds and nation states, but this conflict cannot be identified by solely cultural affiliations. The recent clash between Saudi Arabia and

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it can lead to world tyranny, and international institutions should be regarded with the deepest suspicion; statesmen should have the ability to distinguish friends from enemies; protection of self-defined national interests above all; the necessity of a strong military – Irving Kristol 2003 *The Neoconservative Persuasion*, *The Weekly Standard*, 25 August, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-neoconservative-persuasion/article/4246> (07.07.2017).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

Qatar divides the Sunni community, in which Turkey offered support to Qatar while Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates supported the claims of Saudi Arabia.

Another obstacle for peace in the contemporary Middle East is the result of limited democratic experience in its constituent societies. Notably, Israel and Tunisia, and to some extent Turkey, Kuwait, Lebanon and Morocco, qualify as free countries practising political rights and civil liberties according to the US-based non-governmental study *Freedom in the World*.<sup>11</sup> The divine rights perpetuated by contrasting religions, ideologies and rules still play an important role in its political landscape. Contemporary Islamist movements promote conflict between the legacy of fundamentalist Sharia law and secular states that rely on Western models of statehood. Moreover, secular states in the Middle East have only rarely been democratic states; autocratic traditions have maintained their prominence in the region similarly to practices from thousands of years ago, despite the existence of various forms of government.

The West has used the undemocratic nature of the Middle East to increase its influence in the region and for that purpose has often supported a strategy borrowed from the world of *a Game of Thrones*.<sup>12</sup> For the West, direct political gains have always downplayed value-based policy in the region. Many states in the region are under internal pressure from weak economies, a high birth rate and the resulting boom in the young population, deficient education, and repressive authoritarian regimes, while the United States is busy making friends with hated and uncompromising Israel, autocratic and fundamentalist Saudi Arabia, and corrupt and undemocratic Egypt.<sup>13</sup> After interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the West has been confronted with a number of internal conflicts that had not been immediately apparent under the previous dictatorships led by Saddam Hussein and the Taliban regime. There was no significant public pressure to invade Iraq in 2003 but the United States chose to act decisively in order to send a clear message to diverse Middle Eastern audiences and also to portray itself as sole hegemon of the world.<sup>14</sup> We

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<sup>11</sup> Freedom House 2015.

<sup>12</sup> *A Game of Thrones* is the first novel in the fantasy series of George R. R. Martin "A Song of Ice and Fire".

<sup>13</sup> Buzan & Waever 2003: 202–3.

<sup>14</sup> Lebow 2008: 441.

therefore face today permanent instability in the Middle East, which can be easily transferred into the framework of the clash of civilizations in order to justify the Hobbesian concepts of the state of war.

### **Contrasting curves of the historical legacy in the Middle Eastern security environment**

The rise of the Islamic State in the Middle East is the result of multiple unsolved lemmas which bring in actors with contrasting interests, and just few of them agree with any solution other than victory. The conflict in Syria describes the best colour rendering of conflicting loyalties: Russia fights for Assad<sup>15</sup>; Iraq, Iran and Hezbollah fight for Shias (and Alawites); Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey fight for Sunni Islamists, sometimes for different ones; the United States and the European Union fight for Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey; and finally, Israel fights for its own interests as prolonged conflict could ensure its security guarantees while its traditional opponents are involved in fighting. In such a stage of the Hobbesian state of war where everyone is fighting, regional peace may become an unreal phantasm. There are just a few states like Kuwait and Oman which practice a more or less neutral stance in regional power games and are willing to mediate with the conflicting parties. The rising trend of Islamism concerns the last secular regimes of the region Egypt and Algeria which have similar security concerns to those of Assad. Following the Arab Spring movement, only Tunisia was able to introduce the democratic formation of government and successfully survive two elections, which resulted in the peaceful transition of power from one political party to another.

The Middle Eastern political environment is facing some difficult issues stemming from its historical legacy. The state system dates back to the twentieth century, marked off by Western powers during a short period of colonization after World War I, and does not fit with ethnic and religious boundaries. Scholars often measure the impact of changes through the status of the elites who hold power in a particular society.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The Al-Assad clan is an Alawite family from the Latakia region which ruled Syria since 1970. Assadism is a neo-Baathist movement based rather on the cult of personality than nationalist and socialist slogans traditionally used by the Baath party.

<sup>16</sup> Caryl 2014: 289.

Extremism can easily spread if different ethnic and religious groups start to intervene in power struggles for dominant positions in multinational societies. Therefore, clashes between Sunni and Shia communities in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, but to some extent also in Bahrain, led to barely manageable civil wars and massive unrest where extremist movements, including those who represent the IS and al-Qaeda networks, can easily become major actors. If the society is involved in a total war of all against all, such groups can more easily make significant gains on the battlegrounds.

Past experiences have had an influence on the shape of the present-day political landscape and without studying the multiple ideologies that have emerged in the region throughout its time-proof history it would be impossible to establish reliable models that stimulate intercultural dialogue between the Middle Eastern nations. Clement M. Henry claims that, although the Middle East is predominantly Muslim and predominantly Arab, its most distinctive characteristic is neither religion, language nor culture, but rather its peculiar colonial legacy.<sup>17</sup> After World War I the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire had a tremendous impact on the region. The Middle East became a subject of Western colonialism in which the religious and ethnic composition of the countries and the patterns of former governance were ignored. At the same time, a revival of Arab nationalism had been gathering strength since 1916 after Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Mecca, declared the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire and accused the Turkish authorities of abandoning the core values of Islam.

The Arab revolt was not just an ethnic insurgency against Ottoman rulers but also a challenge for leadership of the Islamic world. Since 1362, the Ottoman Empire has borne the title of the Caliph of Islam. The last Ottoman Caliph after the Sultanate was abolished (1922–24) was head of Ottoman Imperial House Abdülmecid II (1868–1944). After the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, the Caliphate was terminated by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on March 3 1924 and Abdülmecid was expelled from Turkey. Afterwards, Hussein bin Ali<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Henry 2005: 108.

<sup>18</sup> On October 30, 1916, Hussein bin Ali was proclaimed King of the Hejaz and the Arab lands, *Malik bilad-al-Arab*. His claim was based on his prophetic ancestry and control of Islam's two holiest mosques, the Maşjid al-Haram and Al-Maşjid al-Nabawi. On 3 October

declared himself a new Caliph but was ousted from the throne of Hejaz by the Saudis, continuing to use the title while in exile. After his death in 1931 his sons did not take on his title. The vacant title was picked up in 2014 by Iraqi cleric Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri (also known by his *nom de guerre* Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi), who claims to be the leader of the Islamic State.<sup>19</sup>

Unresolved problems can easily feed the emergence of new conflicts. The recent phenomenon in the Middle Eastern security environment is a contest for power and hegemony between two potential regional powers Saudi Arabia and Iran, most powerfully impacting successful conflict management in the culturally divided societies of Syria, Yemen and Iraq. Saudi Arabia holds the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina, which gives legitimacy to the claim of being a leading nation of Sunni community. The theocratic regime of Iran claims to be a protector of the Shia community. The Sunni-Shia conflict manifests itself in the form of struggles in Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, and Yemen, but also in Saudi Arabia which has a large Shia minority in its Eastern Province, and Lebanon, home to the powerful militant Shia movement Hezbollah. In Yemen, Iran cooperates with the Houthi insurgency of Shia-dominated North Yemen, while Saudi Arabia supports the government of President Hadi which relies on the support of South Yemen with a majority Sunni population.

One frequently promoted but misleading interpretation claims that the Assad clan has a strong and religiously motivated Shia identity and that they are struggling for Shia hegemony in Syria. This narrative circulates among the Sunni opposition in Syria in order to strengthen the religious character of the fighting, supporting anti-Iranian stances in Western societies. The Assad family<sup>20</sup> is indeed an Alawite clan from the Latakia area as Saddam Hussein in Iraq represented a Sunni clan from Tikrit. Alawite identity is more about the cultural background of the ruling clan than its fight for Shia power in Syria. The Alawites hold

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1924, after the Saudi invasion, Hussein fled Hejaz and passed the kingship to his son Ali, but retained the title of Caliph.

<sup>19</sup> He belongs to al-Bu Badri tribe which in the 18<sup>th</sup> century moved from Medina to Samarra, Iraq and descended from Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and grandson Hussain.

<sup>20</sup> Not all members of the Assad family are Alawites. President Bashar al-Assad is married to Asma al-Assad who was born and grown up in London and her parents are Sunni Muslims from Homs.

some leading positions in the armed forces and security forces, but in general Syria is a secular and Arab nationalist regime with most of its government being Sunnis. Laki al-Arsuzi, a leader of the Ba'ath branch from Latakia where the rulers of Syria Said Jaddad and Hafiz al-Assad came from, called himself an atheist.

Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Israeli-Palestine conflict has significantly destabilized the Middle Eastern security environment and also tangled Western powers up in local rivalries. The Aliyah process, which started at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, brought waves of Jewish immigration into the Palestine area. This process resulted in Israeli statehood in 1948, but simultaneously launched the most complicated Israeli-Palestine conflict. Initially it was mostly an Arab nationalist insurgency which took on an ideological character from the Cold War environment insofar as the United States supported Israel, so in order to provide a counterweight to such American influence the Soviet Union supported secular Arab regimes, particularly Egypt (before the Camp David peace deal), Syria, Algeria, Libya, Iraq, South Yemen, and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Emmanuel Adler suggests that a complete process of regional identity-building could have a chance of establishing regional peace in the Middle East. Such an initiative would produce new narratives and myths supported by voluntary civil-society networks and civic beliefs instead of by blood or religion.<sup>21</sup> One of a few positive examples of national reconciliation in the Middle-Eastern peace process can be found in the upheaval of the Israel-Palestine relationship of the 1990s which established the preconditions for a long-term peace settlement in the region. However, Salafist Hamas won the parliamentary elections in Palestine in 2006 and Benjamin Netanyahu's government in Israel adopted a more fundamentalist stance towards Arab statehood in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, bringing the Oslo Peace Process<sup>22</sup> between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to a dead end.

Growing social division in Israel may increase tensions in the region as Orthodox Judaism enjoys more support in Israeli society. Jewish nationalism is extending its impact among the descendants of Eastern

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<sup>21</sup> Adler 2005: 236–7.

<sup>22</sup> The Oslo Peace Process includes a set of agreements signed by the government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993 and 1995 (Oslo II).

European Jews, which consolidates the positions of fundamentalist political parties for the future. The more nationalistic and religious Israel is making little progress in the Oslo Peace process and its recognition of a sovereign Palestinian State. Additionally, Israel sees Iran, a potential nuclear power, as a major threat to its national sovereignty and tends to express silent support to Saudi Arabia in regional power games. The fighting between secular Fatah and Salafist Hamas in the Palestinian Authority does not only undermine the unity of the Palestinian society, but also decreases its ability to enter into international negotiations.

The birth of the State of Palestine, recognised both internationally and by the State of Israel, would be an inevitable result for any Middle-Eastern peace process, a result which will have a deep impact on peace-building in the region and could decrease the growing influence of religious extremism. Besides, the status of Jewish settlers in Palestinian territory and the status of the holy city of Jerusalem require a comprehensive agreement between both parties of the conflict. The implementation of UN resolution 181(II) of 1947,<sup>23</sup> adopted on November 29 1947, is a good roadmap for a two-state solution that also confers special status upon Jerusalem, the key issue in the Israel-Palestine peace process.

Besides the Israeli-Palestine conflict, the problem of Kurdish nationhood represents an old dilemma which has remained unresolved for centuries. The Kurds comprise an ethnic minority in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, but their identity rights are often rejected by Turkish, Persian and Arab rulers, provoking ethnic confrontations in their native countries. Paradoxically, the Kurdish armed groups Peshmerga in Iraq and YPG (People's Protection Units) in Syria have probably been the most effective forces in balancing the rising influence of Islamic fundamentalism. The Kurdish dilemma, in which the West identified them as friends and Turkey and the Islamist opposition identified them as enemies or rivals, does not fit with simplified scenarios of conflict management in the Middle East. There are two possible solutions: the eliminating path of secession and the establishment of a Kurdish state, or the managing path of broad autonomy for Kurdish minorities in Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria. The involvement of the Kurdish people through comprehensive

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<sup>23</sup> The resolution established a partition plan for Palestine and recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States along with a Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem. The UN General Assembly adopted it on 29 November 1947.

discussion and a subsequent period of transition must however be followed by some concrete political decisions.

The Kurdish movements have been mostly secular, which have come to be a rare exception in the Middle East; there have been some Islamic fundamentalist Kurdish movements with only minor influence on Kurdish society. In 2015 the moderate Kurdistan Islamic Union (founded in 1994) which has 10 seats in the parliament of Iraqi Kurdistan joined the Muslim Brotherhood. The Salafist movement Ansar al-Islam was established in 2001 and controlled territories around cities of Biyara and Halabja. On 29 August 2014 Ansar al-Islam merged with the Islamic State, though some factions of the movement opposed this act.

So far, local rivalries continue to flourish and the region is falling short of the agenda for peace that could bring all countries of the region together. Henry notes that “countries lack the domestic political space in which to negotiate compromises between the putative globalisers and the reluctant moralisers, whether Islamist or nationalist, within their respective communities.”<sup>24</sup> The social revolutions of the Arab Spring did not produce the expected “Westernisation” of the Middle East. Moreover, the Arab Spring increased Islamic consolidation in different Arab societies, particularly in Egypt and Syria. After challenges to secular dictatorships, Jihadism<sup>25</sup> strengthened its positions in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Yemen which were caught up in endless civil wars.

The Islamic State effectively used the Arab Spring movement to further its emerging ambitions and grabbed power over several parts of Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen. The Arab Spring was not instigated in mosques, although Islamist revivalism did receive a boost in popularity from the process. Many groups exploit religion to achieve their political aims. The Western intervention in Iraq in 2003 and in Libya in 2011, even if forced for humanitarian reasons, opened the door to Jihadist insurgency in both countries and the situation has not improved since; the secular authoritarian regimes were simply replaced by civil war between

<sup>24</sup> Henry 2005:105–129.

<sup>25</sup> Jihadism is a term that has been used in order to describe the extremist ideologies of Sunni Islamism (like Qutbism) or Islamic militancy. The term was commonly adopted by the Western media after the September 11 attacks. Jihadist movements include the Taliban, al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab, Ansar al-Islam, and the Islamic State among others.



sectarian movements.<sup>26</sup> The West overestimated the attractiveness of liberal democracy, which may be the main reason why the West tends to fail in the Middle East. The process of the Arab Spring has been a good example of misperceptions that have overwhelmingly spread in Western countries. Tunisia may be the only positive outcome of the Arab Spring where democratic procedures have been successfully introduced, but the regime that had been governing the country since the 1950s was probably the mildest of the lot and Tunisia was probably already more integrated into the Western system than the other Arab countries involved.

In Syria, the revolt against the secular regime of the clan of Assad turned into a multi-ethnic and multi-religious conflict where Shias/Alawites and the majority of Christians and many seculars sided with Assad because the Sunni Islamist opposition turned out to be no less repressive or violent than the regime led by Bashar al-Assad. In Yemen the regime led by a Shia president from the North, Ali Abdullah Saleh, was replaced by his Sunni Vice President from the South, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, a move which in fact did not result in regime change. In Egypt, democratic elections brought representatives of the Islamist movement the Muslim Brotherhood to power. Their attempts to increase the influence of Islamism on state structures led to a military coup and the establishment of a regime similar to departed President Mubarak's one. In Libya disagreements between Islamist and secular rebels led to civil war and the division of the country into two separate parts, the western parts being controlled by the Islamist government in Tripoli and the secular Tobruk government controlling the Eastern part of Libya.

### **The revival of Islamism**

Paul Danahar (2015) has noted that in recent years "God has returned to the Middle East"<sup>27</sup>, which means that Islamist movements have been strengthened in the region and increased their impact over secular movements which were dominant there in the middle of the twentieth century. Old socialist and nationalist ideologies (e.g., Pan-Arabism, Ba'athism, Nasserism, Zionism) have been left behind and regional powers are more strongly divided along sectarian lines. This includes the struggle

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<sup>26</sup> Stern, Berger 2016: 286.

<sup>27</sup> Danahar 2015.

between Sunni and Shia Islam manifested in the regional ambitions of Saudi Arabia and Iran. Christians and other non-Islamic minorities must struggle for their place in new religiously affiliated societies. The Middle Eastern societies have always been multicultural with different ethnicities and religions sharing the same space.

Religious narratives have often been attributed to the Middle East which can be used to bolster the myth of the clash of civilizations. Even Western countries may often bring up religious motives that might justify their actions. For instance, former foreign minister of the Palestinian authority Nabil Shaath told “The Guardian” newspaper about one meeting between Palestinian representatives and President George W. Bush:

President Bush said to all of us: “I am driven with a mission from God. God would tell me, ‘George go and fight these terrorists in Afghanistan.’ And I did. And then God would tell me, ‘George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq.’ And I did.... And now, again, I feel God’s words coming to me, ‘Go get the Palestinian their state and get the Israelis their security, and get peace in the Middle East.’ And, by God, I’m gonna do it.”<sup>28</sup>

The frequent inclusion of God in Middle Eastern issues has made these conflicts long-lasting and barely manageable. The powerful emergence of Islamism at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was accompanied by the increasing regional ambitions of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iran which practice less secular policies than post-colonial states after World War II.

The new wave of Islamic revivalism emerged at the end of the 1970s. In 1979 the Islamic revolution in Iran led to rising Shia political activity in several parts of the region, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of that year helped to consolidate supporters of Sunni extremism.<sup>29</sup> Many radical extremist movements were born during the civil war in Afghanistan when Western-supported Islamists fought with the Soviet-backed secular government. Later, the first Sunni-based theocratic regime in the Middle-East was established by the Taliban movement that also contributed to the spread of religious extremism in and around the whole region. The 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington brought the focus onto the civilizational clash between Islamism and the West.

<sup>28</sup> MacAskill 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Mölder 2011: 241–264.

The Iraqi intervention of 2003 and the Arab Spring revolutionary wave, which started in 2010/2011, also contributed to the further spread of Islamic extremism in the region.

Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of the Iranian Islamic revolution at the time, focused on two particular areas above all, Palestine and Lebanon, and regarded the Arab-Israeli conflict as being primarily religious despite the fact that only a few Palestinians were Shiites.<sup>30</sup> Iran used the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon and SCIRI and the Dawa'a Party in Iraq in its regional ambitions to extend its influence in Middle Eastern societies, especially in those with a significant Shia population (including Bahrain with a Shia majority and eastern parts of Saudi Arabia). There have been some Shia Islamist movements which have been called extremist: first Hezbollah in Lebanon, and recently the Houthi movement in Yemen fighting for the restoration of Zaidi Caliphate which ended in 1962.

However, the spread of Islamic radicalism is largely a Sunni Arab phenomenon which is not a consequence of abusive Shia or Alawite regimes in specific countries, and it will not suddenly disappear if those regimes do.<sup>31</sup> Besides Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, Salafi ideological positions tend to be stronger in Maghreb countries in North Africa. Following the war in Afghanistan, Jihadist movements became more visible in Islamic societies. The Sunni-led resistance in Afghanistan has brought many Islamist movements into the arena of international politics, but has also forced multinational cooperation among Sunni extremists. The widely-known Afghanistan-born Sunni icons of the Jihadist movements have been the Taliban, the al-Qaeda network, and finally the Islamic State. The latter two have created multinational frameworks with the more moderate Muslim Brotherhood, the oldest Islamist creature.

The Salafi movement itself is not homogeneous and is certainly not necessarily always an extremist ideology; different kinds of political activism may manifest within it with various goals and ambitions. The one obvious precondition for the revival of Islamism is related to the strengthening of the positions of Salafi monarchies in the Middle East. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates get

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<sup>30</sup> Caryl 2014: 297.

<sup>31</sup> Hill 2017.

rich due to their enormous oil reserves and thereby acquire more power to strengthen their status in the region. They propagate the slogan that oil is a gift from God, which confirms their position as leaders of the Islamic community. Often leadership of the Gulf states in the Islamic community has entailed the introduction of Sharia norms enforced by donor countries in order to get access to funding.<sup>32</sup> Political experience and the failure of many past peace processes indicate that the reformation of such societies must begin at a grass-roots level. The examples of the Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006, won by Hamas, and the parliamentary and presidential elections in Egypt in 2011–2012, won by Mohammed Morsi and the Freedom and Justice Party, a political offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, prove that Salafi movements can indeed be successful in democratic elections.

The Taliban movement was probably one of earliest significant signs of a revival of Islamist fundamentalism; it emerged in 1994 under the spiritual leadership of former mujahideen fighter Mullah Mohammed Omar Mujahed (1960–2013) and ruled the country from 1996 until 2001. The Taliban practises militant insurgency and intends to restore a theocratic regime in Afghanistan – and perhaps in Pakistan – but so far it has not expressed any global ambitions. According to the narrative promoted by the Taliban, its leader is designated as *amir-ul-muminin* (the leader of believers) or *the khalifah* (Caliph) who rules the territory under his control in accordance with Islamic law. A *khalifah* is respectable among all Muslims in the world, with all Muslims and non-Muslims who live in the territory under his rule (*khelafat*) being obligated to obey him, and is appointed by a small council with religious capacity and communal trust.<sup>33</sup>

The oldest Salafi political icon, the Muslim Brotherhood (the Society of Muslim Brothers), was founded in 1928 by Islamic scholar Sheikh Hassan Ahmed Abdel Rahman Muhammed al-Banna in Egypt and stands for the political manifestation of Salafism and Islamic revivalism, aspiring to milder forms of Islamic statehood while maintaining a parliamentary democracy. Al-Banna set the goal to drive Islamic societies out from Western influence and saw Islam as a credible source

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<sup>32</sup> Peterson 2016: 2214–2219.

<sup>33</sup> Nojumi 2002: 152–157.

for overcoming this colonial legacy.<sup>34</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood was legalized in Egypt during the Arab Spring in 2011 and their political offspring the Freedom and Justice Party won presidential and legislative elections in 2011–12, but in 2013 they were ousted from power by a military coup; supreme leader of the Brotherhood Mohammed Badie and the President of Egypt Mohamed Morsi were arrested, among other leaders of the movement. Despite its ideological similarity to the leadership of the Gulf states, since 2014 the Muslim Brotherhood has been officially declared a terrorist organization in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. Before that they were designated as a terrorist organization in Russia (2003), Syria (2013) and Egypt (2013).

There is competition in the moderate factions of Salafi Islamism between the Wahhabi faction, led by Saudi Arabia, and the Muslim Brotherhood, supported by Qatar and Turkey. The hegemonic ambitions of potential regional powers caused the current rift in Saudi Arabia, supported by Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates with Qatar. Qatar has traditionally supported the Muslim Brotherhood, but not without controversy. One spiritual leader of the Brotherhood, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, has lived in Qatar since 1961 and is close to the ruling dynasty of al-Thani. He is a staunch critic of Saudi-led Wahhabism.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, Qatar has become a prominent donor country to Salafi movements and competes for influence on Islamist movements with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates which continually view the Muslim Brotherhood movement as the backbone of Qatar. They accuse Qatar of promoting cooperation with contesting power Iran, enhancing its influence through the al-Jazeera network, and of supporting Islamism.

Hamas is the Palestinian offspring of the Muslim Brotherhood; it was born during the revival of Islamism in 1987 after the first intifada began against Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 2006 Hamas won the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council after those clashes with the secular movement *Fatah* ruined the reliability of the Palestinian Authority. The following year *Fatah* was ousted from the Gaza Strip, which became a Hamas stronghold. In 2017 Hamas declared its willingness to accept an interim Palestinian state within pre-1967

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<sup>34</sup> Davidson 1998: 97–98.

<sup>35</sup> Trager 2017.

boundaries without recognising the State of Israel. In its new political agenda Hamas also accepted non-violent struggle, though it did not renounce armed insurgency. Hamas also declared its independence from the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>36</sup>

Since 2001 symbiosis between Islamism and terrorism has reached a new level. The powerful image of al-Qaeda and its charismatic leader Osama bin Laden increased in power, supported by the media which diligently spread the image. Al-Qaeda became the primary icon of Islamic fundamentalism, successfully attributed to the image of a clash of civilizations. The organization was founded by Osama bin Laden (1957–2011) and his mentor, Palestinian Islamic scholar Abdullah Yusuf Azzam (1941–1989) who promoted the concept of Jihadism during the war in Afghanistan in the 1980s while both were involved in funding mujahedeen fighters against the Soviet invasion. Jessica Stern explains the rise of al-Qaeda, how the movement aimed to restore the dignity of humiliated Muslim's youth. Violence would become a means of obtaining support and sympathy as the goal is "boosting Islamic morale and lowering that of the enemy." Al-Qaeda is therefore following the Hollywoodian action movie strategy by which violence should attract the audience.<sup>37</sup> They adapted a structure of a virtual network called "leaderless resistance", popularized by American right-wing extremists, in which "individuals and groups operate independently of each other, and never report to a central headquarters or single leader for direction or instruction, as would those who belong to a typical pyramid organization."<sup>38</sup> This strategy was further developed and expanded by the Islamic State.

Since 2014 the image of the Islamic State has begun to replace the previous dominance of al-Qaeda as enemy number one of the Western world. The Islamic State, with the powerful help of the Western media which spread the narrative, soon started to claim leadership of the Islamic world. In 2004 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi affiliated his movement *Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* with the al-Qaeda network and it became commonly known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (officially called *Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* or the Organization of Jihad's Base in Mesopotamia). Despite having similar goals and close ties between the

<sup>36</sup> Khoury 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Stern 2003: 30.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*: 33–34.

organizations, rifts between Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden soon appeared. The strong anti-Shia stances of Zarqawi and the massacres of civilian victims conducted in Iraq allegedly caused tension between al-Qaeda and its Iraqi branch.<sup>39</sup> Later, the current leader of the al-Qaeda network Ayman al-Zawahiri claimed that al-Baghdadi had come to power “by force and with explosions and car bombs,” rather than by “the choice of the people.”<sup>40</sup>

Since October 2006 the organization created by Zarqawi has started to use the brands of Islamic State, first Islamic State in Iraq, then the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant, and finally since 2014 the Islamic State with claims of a worldwide Caliphate. In comparison with two major networks, al-Qaeda is oriented towards fighting against Western civilization along the lines of the Huntingtonian concept, although some its offshoots are actively involved in local conflicts in Yemen (AQAP), Somalia (*al-Shabaab*) and Syria (*Jabhat Fateh al Sham*, previously *Jabhat al Nusra*). The Islamic State calls for interventionism and the implementation of the idea of an Islamic caliphate along the lines of the early Arab conquests, keeping the focus on regional dominance. In contrast to many other similar networks (e.g., al-Qaeda) the Islamic State has multifaceted goals and often operates in the same way as traditional actors. Moreover, IS simultaneously continues to act as an outlaw terrorist network in order to achieve its international goals worldwide.

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<sup>39</sup> Stern & Berger 2016: 95.

<sup>40</sup> Atyani 2015.

**Table 1. Rivalry between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State**

	<b>Al-Qaeda</b>	<b>Islamic State</b>
Organization	Network	State
Goals	Mostly ideological	Mostly structural, tends to be more focused on establishing its own rule on conquered territory
Main target	Traditional enemies: US, West	Islamic rule, anti-Shia
Strategy	Does not have clear ambitions of changing existing nation-state system	Expansionist, interested in creation of the worldwide Islamic Caliphate
Syria	Al-Qaeda branch Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (Jabhat al Nusra) can cooperate with other opposing forces, actively calling for the overthrow of the Assad government.	IS is fighting in Syria mostly on its own, though it can sometimes cooperate with other insurgency movements in Iraq (siege of Mosul) or in Syria.

### **The narrative of the Islamic State**

The Islamic State has brought a new quality to Islamic fundamentalist extremism as the Islamic State motto of “remaining and expanding” signals widening ambitions in comparison to any other terrorist network.<sup>41</sup> Al-Qaeda has shown little interest in controlling territories or in changing the existing nation-state system. The Islamic State rules territories, collects taxes, administers justice and establishes educational systems in its territories. According to his testimony in the US Senate, US special envoy of that time Brett McGurk explains that the IS’s ambitions for territorial control are because this would allow it to extract resources for funding operations, for establishing a violent and genocidal system of control over millions of people, for promoting the narrative of historical succession to the Caliphate, and for creating a safe haven for the implementation of external operations.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Blanchard & Humud 2018.

<sup>42</sup> McGurk 2016: 3.



The Islamic State is first and foremost a political-ideological movement, similar to Communist/Nazi regimes, where ideology serves the interests of new elites and uses a popular and politicized narrative of Islam. Their goals are purely political but their propaganda has developed a strong influence on popular images of Islam powered by the media. For the IS, religion is a tool for propagating their ideology and enhancing support for their goals. The narrative built around the Islamic State is shaped by “religious fervour, strategic calculation, and apocalyptic prophesy.”<sup>43</sup> Their ideology corresponds well to the myth of the clash of civilizations and can therefore be easily accepted by international society if they want to promote the Hobbesian concept of a permanent state of war. While al-Qaeda was committed to the organization of weak ties and a decentralized, leaderless resistance, the structure of the Islamic State can be regarded as similar to any strongly ideological state like the Communist or Nazi regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This does not mean, however, that leaderless resistance is not used at all in operations outside their area of control.

The Islamic State has turned to the extensive use of historical narratives but uses them as political slogans for mobilizing followers on behalf of its strategic goals.

It is a dream that lives in the depths of every Muslim believer. It is a hope that flutters in the heart of every mujahid monotheist. It is the caliphate. It is the caliphate – the abandoned obligation of the era ... Now the caliphate has returned. We ask God the exalted to make it in accordance with the prophetic method.<sup>44</sup>

The Sunni branch of Islam stipulates that a caliph should be elected by Muslims (Ummah) or their representatives. Shia Islam, however, believes that a caliph should be an Imam chosen by God from Muhammad’s direct line of descendants. Muhammad died without nominating any heir, a circumstance which has already been a source of conflict among his followers. The majority recognized the first four caliphs as his successors – becoming Sunnis – and the minority recognized that God had chosen Ali, cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad – becoming

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<sup>43</sup> Jones *et al.* 2017: 15.

<sup>44</sup> al-Adnani 2014.

Shias. The final rift between the two branches took place in 680 when the supporters of the Sunni Caliph Yazid killed Karbala Hussein, grandson of Muhammad and son of Ali, who then became a martyr for the Shias. It is also worth noting that in the years 796–809 the capital of the Caliphate was Raqqa, the city which became the capital of the Islamic State in 2014.

Fred Donner argues that standard Arabian practice at the time was to gather together after a leader's death and elect a new leader from amongst the most prominent men.<sup>45</sup> Capable men who could lead well were preferred over ineffectual heirs. It is notable that religious extremist movements in the Middle East, with the only exception of Iran, are not led by a theocratic hierarchy. In some cases they may be clerics by profession or education, like caliph Ibrahim in the case of the Islamic State, but for the most part they are often just politically motivated religious seculars without any connection to the Islamic clergy. Saudi Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh said in August 2014: "The ideas of extremism, radicalism, and terrorism do not belong to Islam in any way, but are the first enemy of Islam, and Muslims are their first victims, as seen in the crimes of the so-called Islamic State and al-Qaeda."<sup>46</sup>

The ideology followed by the Islamic State follows a popular narrative of Islam which is to be directed to the masses. They do not seek the support of the Islamic clergy but claim themselves to be the true followers of the Prophet. Although they propagate Salafi ideas and turn in their narratives to the original sources of Islam, they carry out an active media policy using all modern means (Internet) for this purpose. One target group they intend to attract is second and third generation Islamic youths in Western countries. The Islamic State does not just offer a popular ideology, but also manifests a power that offers alternatives to the Western system which has failed to satisfy the needs of many IS followers.<sup>47</sup> Somehow, the Islamic State corresponds to the expectations of the so-called post-truth world in which everyone can build their own world and live inside it. The Islamic State skilfully uses the advantages of contemporary media and powerful images which are spread by social media.

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<sup>45</sup> Donner 1981: 251.

<sup>46</sup> *Obaid; al-Sarhan 2014.*

<sup>47</sup> Stern 2016: 281.

Jihadist movements are not relics from the Middle Ages but are modernized insurgent movements that use narratives from the Middle Ages to justify their political goals in the modern security environment. They use social media and online applications (Youtube, Twitter, various chatrooms) in order to promote and spread their ideology among the frustrated youth who have already grown up in a secular environment. In his interview with “The Guardian” newspaper Thomas Hegghammer claims that Jihadist movements have become more pragmatic and act in ways that often run counter to their stated interests. Islamic militancy is more than just bombs and doctrines; it also appears in rituals, customs, dress codes, music, films, storytelling, sports, jokes, and food. In the Jihadist subculture, the youth will start to listen to Jihadi music and watch Jihadi videos before getting acquainted with doctrines.<sup>48</sup>

The Islamic State has secularized and politicized the notion of Islam by using popular images and placing Islamic symbols into a context which is easily accepted by potential consumers of its ideology. This tactic is reminiscent of sensationalism designated to “a yellow press”. As Craig Whiteside writes:

This selective attention to the sectarian element of the war, by taking incidents and rhetoric and embracing victimhood, helps IS media officials create what Haroro Ingram terms “the crisis”, which only IS can solve thanks to their superior ideology and shared identity. IS portrays all aspects of the war – whether it be the presence of foreign advisors (Western or Iranian), bombing raids, or the acts of sectarian militias – in the framework of this existential crisis.<sup>49</sup>

This might indeed confirm that the Islamic State, despite its Salafi slogans, practises a Westernized model of Islamism which uses the image of the clash of civilizations in order to attract its followers; and members of Western origin play an important role in the structures of IS. They use holy texts including the Quran to support their secular goals, i.e., getting power and justifying terror against those who are suspected of being disloyal to the regime, quite a common practice from authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

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<sup>48</sup> Anthon 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Whiteside 2017.

## The Islamic State and the Gordian knot in the Middle East

Now, after decades of civil war in the Middle East, US policy analysts are willing to concede that invading Iraq back in 2003 was a mistake that radicalized Iraqi society, exacerbated sectarian divisions, and gave birth to an unrelenting Sunni insurgency against the heavy-handed and discriminatory policies of the Shia-dominated Iraqi government.<sup>50</sup> Jürgen Todenhöfer, a German journalist who visited areas controlled by IS in 2014, claimed that IS is “a reaction to violent actions taken by western countries in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya” and “the baby of George W. Bush and the violence that we face now is the fallout or boomerang effect of our own wars.”<sup>51</sup> The legacy of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq in its Islamic form has been successfully incorporated into the narrative as many former high-ranking militaries of the Iraqi armed forces joined the movement during the insurgency which started in 2003. The Bucca detention camp became a meeting point where the Islamist militancy was able to find new allies from the ranks of Saddam Hussein’s army.<sup>52</sup>

The political landscape in the region is more redolent of a *Game of Thrones* fantasy than the principles of international security governance. The success of the Islamic State in introducing itself as a powerful player in regional games has also produced voices keen to wield it against competitive powers and lend mild recognition to it as a political entity. The Hollywoodized image of the Middle East presents Iran as a bigger threat than the Islamic State, a concept once defended in the United States by Senator Lindsey Graham, Tom Friedman and David Petraeus. Iran, whose potential nuclear capability may threaten Israel, is making Israeli-related strategists seek out strategic alliances with Sunni fundamentalists. Friedman asks: “Why are we (the United States), for the third time since 9/11, fighting a war on behalf of Iran?”<sup>53</sup> Efraim

<sup>50</sup> Nauman 2017.

<sup>51</sup> Todenhöfer 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Former Iraqi officers in the IS leadership were Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, Haji Bakr, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, Abu Ayman al-Iraqi, Abu Abdulrahman al-Bilawi, Abu Ahmad al-Alwani, Ayad al-Jumaili; Abu Omar al-Shishani served in the Georgian army and fought in the Russia-Georgia war of 2008; Gulmurod Khalilov was a commander of the police special forces of Tajkistan, but defected to the IS in 2015, etc.

<sup>53</sup> Drezner 2015.

Inbar claims: “A weak but functioning IS can undermine the appeal of the caliphate among radical Muslims; keep bad actors focused on one another rather than on Western targets; and hamper Iran’s quest for regional hegemony.”<sup>54</sup> This may provide an answer to why the movement, without political support or firm allies, has managed to successfully establish itself as a serious actor in the Middle Eastern security environment.

In 2014 proclamations that the Islamic State was winning became very popular stances in many Western analyses.<sup>55</sup> The Middle Eastern battlefield of the Hobbesian war of “all against all” might be summed up by the concept of tactical bipolarity in which the team of “good guys” is represented by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Sunni Salafists, and the Islamic State all supported by the United States, Israel and the Western countries. The team of “bad guys” would include Iran, Qatar, the Muslim Brotherhood, Assad’s regime in Syria, Hezbollah and other Shia movements, all supported by Russia, China and Turkey. In the “good guys versus bad guys” dichotomy, the Islamic State might find a backdoor for survival by which it could be used as an effective force in fighting against the Assad regime. Such a construction may easily illustrate the Western-Sunni alliance supported by Israel, useful for diminishing the influence of Iran. However, Syria led by Sunni Islamists may easily take the role of Afghanistan led by the Taliban movement where Jihadists from all over the world could establish a stronghold in fighting against the influence of Western civilization.

The elimination of political extremism from Middle Eastern societies is one important requirement for regional peace. The main obstacle to that is the inability to build coalitions that are focused on the Islamic State as a primary target, including all interested powers in the region and globally that are able to provide support for anti-IS insurgency. The Iraqi armed forces (together with the Kurdish Peshmerga) and the Syrian Democratic Forces have been the main actors in offensives against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. On September 10 2014 US President Obama made a statement about the formation of a global coalition of 66 states which should “degrade and ultimately defeat” the Islamic State.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Inbar 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Tamimi 2017.

<sup>56</sup> McInnis 2016: 1.

The coalition organized air-strikes against the Islamic State and supported the Syrian Democratic Forces, a multi-ethnic alliance of local militias, in their offensive against Raqqa the capital of the Islamic State in Syria, and supported the Iraqi armed forces in their offensive against Mosul in Northern Iraq. In 2017 the Iraqi armed forces recaptured Mosul and the successful finish of the Raqqa offensive made significant progress in destroying the Islamic State. By 2019, IS lost its last territories in Syria and Iraq. Does this bring us any closer to regional peace?

The Islamic State has been involved in the insurgency of around a dozen countries and performed or inspired terrorist acts in the United States, Belgium, France, Germany, Denmark, Canada, Turkey, Australia, and Indonesia, among others. IS established a number of provinces (wilayats) in Yemen, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, and Nigeria. An escalating number of jihadist networks have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State.<sup>57</sup> This demonstrates the significant and widespread influence of the organization on contemporary international relations that exceeds the real capability of IS. Maintaining controlled areas in Syria and Iraq allows them more easily to recruit, fund and organize attacks in other countries, including the West; but, if necessary, they may move to other more suitable areas for establishing strongholds. In this respect, their strategy reminds one of that of Che Guevara in Latin America in the 1950s–60s.

The failure of the Islamic State in Raqqa, Mosul and Libya does not necessarily mean failure for its organization and ideology. Unemployed Islamic fighters may still look for new battlegrounds and terrorist activities. The now deceased Islamic State's official spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, claimed in May 2016 that the loss of territories does not mean the end of the fighting.<sup>58</sup> The real problem could be IS's image as a brand of Islamist and jihadi action and thought. It has "real power because it is rooted in the numinous and because it is also tethered in the language and aura of political revolution."<sup>59</sup> Even if IS were to lose its territories in Syria and Iraq the response of the international community should be strong enough to prevent the return of the Islamic State or any other organization with similar goals. The unstable security

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<sup>57</sup> Jones *et al.* 2017: 3–4.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Tamimi 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Fernandez 2017.

environments in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Somalia and Afghanistan offer such opportunities for extremist forces. The most dangerous way forward is to keep IS alive with its purpose of influencing local rivalries intact.

## Conclusion

The conflict in the Middle East is not so much a result of a civilizational clash between the West and Islam, but rather one produced by local rivalries in the region in which Western powers have intervened. The Islamic State effectively uses the lemmas of Middle-Eastern conflicts by challenging major sides as a “third alternative”. Strategic games are being played by regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Iran, and Israel decisively supported the emergence of the Islamic State. However, the Western alliance with rich Salafi powers has strengthened conservative movements within Islamism supported by other potential regional powers like Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The West has often seen Saudi Arabia as its primary ally in the region while demonizing its main adversaries Assad and Iran and ignoring the threat of Islamic extremism.

The phenomenon of the Islamic State is the result of inconsistency from the international community of states in the management of regional peace. The US-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq lacked any long-term strategy which might normalize the situation and complete the peace-building and state-building processes in fragile states. Islamic extremism, despite its religious slogans, behaves like a typical revolutionary guerrilla movement with politicized goals and ambitions. The West underestimated their influence and instead of strengthening local authorities, which could introduce grassroots-level measures in fighting the causes of Islamic extremism, it entered into a *Game of Thrones* approach involving local rivalries. The most dangerous result of the Islamic State is its revolutionary image that could attract the masses, similarly to Che Guevara who became an icon of leftist guerrilla movements after his death. The image of the Islamic State as a revolutionary movement may survive the real construction of an Islamic Caliphate.

Western policy in the Middle East has been inconsistent, not always peace-oriented, and often influenced by local rivalries between

contrasting interest groups. The continuation of the Oslo peace process in Israel/Palestine and cooperation with moderate forces in Iran, allowing the inclusion of Iran in the international community, would offer some mitigation of these Middle Eastern lemmas and help to avoid further enlargement of Islamic extremism. However, the current trends of international politics do not support traditional methods of conflict management. Building bridges between cultures and stimulating intercultural dialogue for national reconciliation may reduce the influence of these extremist movements within their societies.

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