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# MIDDLE EAST BULLETIN

STUDY GROUP OF THE CENTER FOR MEDITERRANEAN  
& MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES (C.E.M.M.E.S)

A REVIEW OF MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS

The Archangel Gabriel (Egypt/Syria 8th century), Bernard Lewis (ed.),  
*The World of Islam*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2002



## contents

Embarking on a Hopefully Long Trip	page 02
Darfur: The International Community Facing a Humanitarian Catastrophe	page 03
Palestine: A crisis in Search of a Solution	page 06
Proteus in Iran's Political System	page 09
Azerbaijan..... inside Iran	page 12
The Kurdish Piece of the Iranian Puzzle	page 14
The Road from Riyadh to Moscow passes through Grozny	page 18
Iran, Turkey and Egypt: an interesting comparison	page 21
Islam and Constitution: The Case of Iraq	page 24
Morocco, Ready to Change?	page 26
Algérie: Déroulements Intérieurs avec Résultats Incertains	page 28
Israeli Army at a Crossroads	page 30
Books: <i>Idith Zertal, Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood</i>	page 33





## EMBARKING ON a HOPEFULLY LONG trip

Sotiris Roussos

*A trip from Greece to the Middle East seems always short and safe. However, Greek policy and decision making community has yet to undertake a genuine «exploration mission» concerning the Middle East. Speaking of geographical and cultural proximity substitutes for the lack of serious analysis of the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean affairs and for the absence of academic and scientific discourse on modern Islam and Euro-Middle East relations. There have been some attempts to initiate the study of these issues albeit sporadic and unsystematic, due mainly to the unwillingness of both the public and the private sector to support them.*

Since 2000 a group of young scholars, researchers, postgraduate and mature graduate students embarked on an ambitious plan to initiate an academic dialogue on the Middle East and the Mediterranean. The Institute of International Relations, understanding the crucial needs facing the Middle East and the broader region of the Mediterranean, established the **Centre for Mediterranean and Middle Eastern Studies (CE.M.M.E.S)**. The CEMMES team prepares, writes and publishes the monthly **Centre's Newsletter on Mediterranean and Middle East Affairs**, and its bi-annual **Bulletin in English and French with timely and in-depth analysis of various themes. Both are the first and only Greek publications on modern Middle East.**

The Newsletter (in Greek) is distributed to a large number of businessmen, academics and journalists, in Greece and has welcoming reception. In particular, the Centre aims at:

- The systematic documentation, study and analysis of the political, economic, social and cultural environment of the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries, within the scientific discipline of International Relations
- The design and creation of a web site for the Mediterranean and the Middle East
- The building and promotion of a closer set of relations with the International Relations communities involving themselves in the study of the Mediterranean and the Middle East region
- The strengthening of relations among Mediterranean countries through the promotion of research programs
- Policy recommendations on the development of various schemes of co-operation and study between the European Union, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Muslim world.

The Greek trip to study the Middle East may have started rather late but it coincides with a critical moment for the region and the Muslim world in general. It is our duty to establish a safe port for Middle Eastern Studies in Greece.

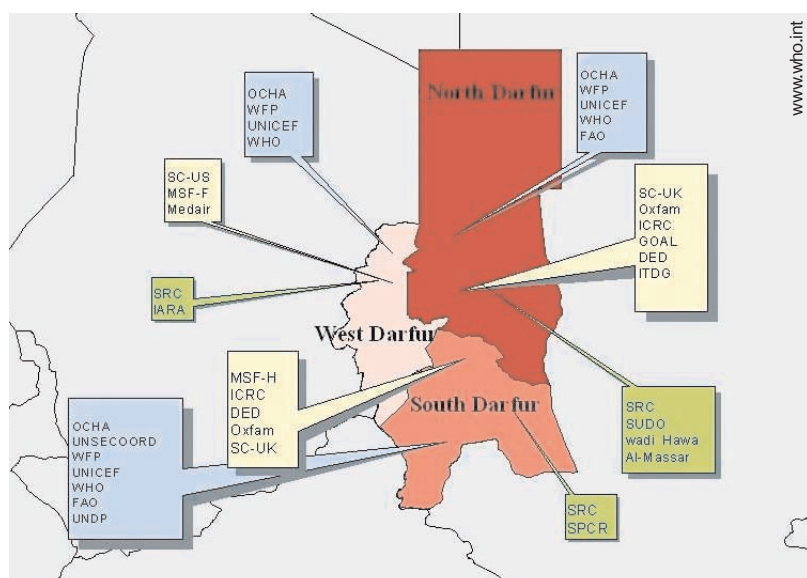


# DARFUR: THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FACING A HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE

Stella Simantiraki

*The conflict in the region of Darfur - between the Sudanese government and the non-Arab peoples of the region - that began three years ago doesn't seem to have altered a lot during that time. The actor, mostly involved, since the beginning has been the African Union, as they consider the conflict to be a «purely African matter». Recently, the United Nations was asked to be more actively involved in the negotiations and, perspective, in the peacekeeping process as well, but the Sudanese government hasn't agreed to its presence in the country yet, although an accord was achieved last month between the latter and the Sudan Liberation Army...*

The conflict in this region of Africa - the Darfur region in western Soudan -, began in February 2003. The parties involved are, on one hand, the Sudanese government - although they will deny that they support the Janjaweed, a militia group recruited from local Arab tribes (collectively termed Zaghawa) - and on the other hand, the non-Arab peoples of the region, like the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa. Both groups are Muslims, but they have different economic interests, as Fur and Masalit are agriculturalists, and Arabs and Zaghawa are nomadic herdsman, which leads to disputes over access to land and surface water.



Since 1958 there have been numerous military dictatorships, and since the independence of Sudan in 1956, the Sudanese government has acquired a strong Arab character. The First and the Second Sudanese Civil War followed in 1955 and 1983, where the latter ended after the peace conferences in 2005 with an agreement under which state revenues would be shared between the government and the south rebel groups.

The two local rebel groups are the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM). In early 2003, they accused the government of oppressing non-Arabs in favor of Arabs. As a result, they attacked government forces and installations. The government's response was a campaign of aerial bombardment supporting ground attacks by the Janjaweed. Although seemingly the conflict has a political basis, it has also acquired an ethnic dimension in

which civilians were deliberately targeted on the basis of their ethnicity, and an economic dimension related to the competition between pastoralists and farmers for land and water.

On April 8 2004, Chad brokered negotiations led to the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement between the Sudanese government and JEM and SLM, and the African Union formed a Ceasefire Commission to monitor the implementation of the April 8th ceasefire. The European Union has also sent monitors to observe the ceasefire in the region. Despite this first agreement, Janjaweed and rebel attacks have continued.





Both sides have been accused of committing serious human rights violations, including mass killing, looting and rapes of the civilian population. The crisis took an international dimension when over 100,000 refugees poured into neighboring Chad. International Crisis Group has reported that over 350,000 people could potentially die as a result of starvation and disease.

A very important development was the fact that in July 2004 the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives passed a joint resolution declaring the armed conflict in Darfur to be genocide, and two months later, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell declared to the U.S. Senate that genocide was occurring in Darfur. On the other side, the United Nations, just like the African Union and European Union have not declared the Darfur conflict to be an act of genocide. This is crucial, because if it does constitute an act of genocide, international law could allow other countries to intervene.

Nevertheless, we should ask ourselves what the real motives and intentions of the US policy in Darfur are and whether they really acknowledge the fact that human rights violations are taking place in the region and that genocide is occurring. We should take into account the fact that in April 2005 was reported that the US Administration of George W. Bush had forged a «close intelligence partnership» with the Sudanese government despite their presence on the US list of state sponsors of international terrorism and the declaration of genocide in Darfur by the administration's former Secretary of State, Colin Powell. The following month, claims began to surface, because of that, that the Bush Administration's toning down of its description of the situation in Darfur - stopped calling it genocide and claimed that the UN death toll estimates may be too high - was due to increased co-operation from Sudanese officials towards the US' War on Terrorism.

Amnesty International, releasing its 2006 Annual Report on May 23, condemned states such as the USA and China for focusing on narrowly defined interests, diluting efforts to solve conflicts that need to be solved - such as the Darfur conflict. It has been put in a very proper way by Irene Khan, Amnesty International's secretary general in AP Television News, concerning the issue of Darfur, that «The US has basically mortgaged its moral authority on the streets of Fallujah and Baghdad and lost moral authority to speak on this issue»

Since the beginning of the conflict, in 2003, two million people have been expelled from their homes by the Sudanese government's campaign of crimes against humanity and «ethnic cleansing» conducted in the name of counterinsurgency and are trapped in refugee camps in neighboring Chad or in internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps inside Darfur, according to a Human Rights Watch report on the situation in the region, published in January 2006.

In this conflict there has been a regional organization and an international one that have tried to play a significant role in order to help the parties involved to reach an agreement and find a solution to the humanitarian crisis. In the beginning, was the African Union that was actively involved, as in the April 8th ceasefire agreement was mandated to send military observers to monitor and report on the ceasefire. In October 2004 there was an increase in numbers (3,300) of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) personnel, as well as changes to the mission mandate and structure. AMIS was transformed to a major operation that included armed force protectors, unarmed civilian police, and support teams, so that they could more effectively monitor and observe compliance with the ceasefire agreement, assist in confidence building measures, contribute to a secure environment by facilitating humanitarian assistance and return of IDP's and to contribute to overall security. Currently, there is a total of 7,700 personnel, after the full deployment of the enhanced mission AMIS II-E.

Nevertheless, that seemed too optimistic. Mission personnel were lacking training, operational capacity and political initiative to achieve the mandate through proactive mission operations. Subsequently, the AU decided to accept military planners and budgetary and logistical experts from outside the continent.

The African nations were reluctant from the beginning to let the United Nations or any state out of the continent to get directly involved or interfere in the Darfur crisis, as, in a meeting in October 2004, the leaders of Libya, Sudan, Egypt, Nigeria and Chad rejected the idea of foreign intervention. They believed it to be a «purely African matter». The Sudanese president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir has stated that «The international concern over Darfur is actually a targeting of the Islamic state in Sudan», and has warned the United States and Britain not to interfere in the internal affairs of the East African country, saying it will reject any military aid, while asking for logistic support.

Despite that fact, the United Nations on July 30 2004 gave the Sudanese government a 30-day deadline to disarm and bring to justice the Janjaweed, with the adopted UN Security Council Resolution 1556. In case the deadline was not met, it expressed «the intention to consider» sanctions. It also imposed an arms embargo on the Janjaweed and other militia. According to the Secretary's General report of the situation after the expiration of the deadline, there have been some improvements on the ground, «but remains limited overall». However, he did not threaten or imply sanctions.

There was a second Resolution (1564) by the UN Security Council on September 18 2004, pressuring the Sudanese government to act urgently to improve the situation by threatening the possibility of oil sanctions in the event of continued noncompliance with Resolution 1556 or refusal to accept the expansion of African Union peacekeepers. This Resolution also established an International Commission of Inquiry to look into human rights violations and to determine whether genocide was occurring.

In October 2004, the UN committed to offer \$100 million to support the expansion of the African Union force in the region. The International Commission of Inquiry delivered their report to the Secretary General, and according to their findings, the Sudanese government and the Janjaweed are responsible for serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law - and identified 51 individuals responsible for those violations-, however, the government of Sudan had not pursued a policy of genocide in Darfur.

A third Resolution (1591) was adopted on March 29 2005- delayed due to the failure of the Security Council to agree on the mechanism to be used to try war criminals and the application and extent of the sanctions-, for the deployment of an additional 10,000 peacekeepers, and in which they strengthened the arms embargo and imposed an asset freeze and travel ban on those deemed responsible for the human rights violations in Darfur. (It was finally agreed that they would be tried by the International Criminal Court.). At the same time, the UN made also known a new estimate of 180,000 who have died of illness or malnutrition during the 18 months of the conflict.

In February 2006, the members of the UN Security Council agreed unanimously to begin the planning process to send troops, with a final decision to follow later on. It called for a 12,000 to 20,000-troop presence in Darfur with the 7,000 African Union troops already deployed there being given new weapons and being incorporated into the UN Mission, and also provisioned with a greater mandate to protect civilians. Certainly, difficulties are expected to arise, mostly in finding states to contribute troops to the UN Mission, and because Omar al-Bashir has frequently stated his opposition to UN peacekeepers.

During this month (May 2006), there have been some developments in the process of finding a solution, resulting to a signing of an accord (May 5) between the government of Sudan and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA). However, two smaller groups, JEM and a rival faction of the SLA, have rejected this agreement. This accord, backed by the African Union, the USA, Britain, the EU, and the Arab League, called for the disarmament of the Janjaweed militia, and, also, for the rebel forces to disband and be incorporated into the army. This text is an AU draft, which is the result of tough negotiations on security, wealth sharing and power-sharing that have lasted for two years while the conflict in Darfur has escalated.



The UN Security Council, took a step forward and established a UN peacekeeping force in Sudan's Darfur region by unanimously adopting a Resolution (Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter) calling for the deployment on the ground of a joint UN-Africa Union team to pave the way for the operation, which would take over from the AMIS force now monitoring the region.

According to the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland, once host country approval is given it would take up to six months or more to get a more numerous UN force fully operational. Therefore, he added, that it is vital that the AU force receive a more robust mandate to protect the civilian population and that its number at least doubles. Last, noting that more than 3 million people in Darfur are currently depending on humanitarian aid for their survival, he called the international donor community to provide more funding for the ongoing relief activities in the region.

The accord that was achieved a few weeks ago is definitely a step forward and we can allow ourselves to be a bit optimistic, but nothing more. It's a long way to the implementation of what was agreed between the warring parties and a long way to the relief of the 2 million people that were uprooted during these last three years.

## PALESTINE: A *CRISIS* IN SEARCH OF A *SOLUTION*

Marina Eleftheriadou

*While Iranian nuclear program monopolizes the international interest, the «rejuvenated» Palestinian question poses more imminent threats than the long-term prospect of nuclear Iran. The perils in question are basically humanitarian, but they also pertain to internal and regional stability, and international, primarily American, prestige as well.*

Henry Kissinger once stated that a conventional army loses if it does not win; the guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The problem in Palestine is neither that the «conventional army» -Fatah- lost, nor that the «guerrilla» - Hamas- won. The crucial is that Hamas didn't just manage not to lose but it achieved a stunning victory, winning 76 seats in the Palestinian Authority's (PA) 132-member parliament while Fatah only 43, completing the recent successful show-up in local municipal elections in Gaza and West Bank. Just few days before January 25, Khalid Jadu, a Hamas councilman, said «anything more than 55 seats would be an achievement-and probably a headache.» Having formed an almost entirely Islamic cabinet -with the exception of few technocrats-, Hamas becomes the first democratically-elected Islamist government to ascend to power in the Arab world -except the Algerian case which in fact sparked off, straight away, the civil war.

In the Palestinian case, the environment in which Hamas has to «survive» further aggravates her standing. Jordan, Egypt along with Israel and the United States apparently have the most to fear. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood won over 60% of the seats they contested in Egypt's recent parliamentary elections. In Jordan, the Islamic Action Front appears ready and competent to assume the reins of government after the elections scheduled for 2007. For Israel, Hamas is a terrorist organization; and the USA tries to explain why this time democracy «had the wrong outcome» with-



out de-legitimising the campaign for the democratic reform in the Middle East and also to contain independent initiatives from Russia and Europe. Hamas, in this context, as it is facing internal and external pressures, will be forced to distance itself from the generalities it would have used had it been put in the comfortable position of parliamentary opposition or of a slight majority.

First, Hamas has to deal with the «economic suffocation» imposed. The annual Palestinian budget is approximately \$1.9 billion, of which \$1.3 billion came last year from foreign aid, making thus Palestinians the largest per capita recipients of foreign aid in the world. Hence, the decision of the United States and the European Union (EU), that offered last year \$400 and \$649 million respectively, to suspend assistance -after the Hamas-led government rejected the Quartet's preconditions of stopping armed struggle, recognising Israel and respecting all previous agreements reached with Israel- had an immense impact on the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories. The PA needs about \$150 million a month only to cover salaries and other administrative costs. Recently the World Bank admitted that the predictions made in March -that the rate of poverty might rise to 67%, the rate of unemployment to 40% and that the per capita income might decrease by 30% by the end of 2006-, constitute a low estimate.

At the same time, Israel decided to withhold \$54 million in monthly tax revenue owed to the PA. Israel's Bank Discount announced it would be terminating all links to Palestinian banks within six months, shutting off that way the Palestinian companies that make business in and through Israel and Palestinian labourers who work inside Israel. Moreover, other -including Arabic- banks are reluctant to take over money transactions to Palestine, owing to the prospect of American sanctions. Besides, as Palestinians lack their own central banking system, this would have to be done through the Israeli Central Bank, which, however, decided on further restrictions on the money going to the territories. Shortages have been reported in some foodstuffs, medical equipment and oil. Indeed, the Israeli oil-company, Dor Alon, which is currently the PA's only fuel supplier, has stopped, for the third time since the beginning of the year, supplying fuel to the PA because of unpaid debts. The Karni cargo crossing, on the Gaza Strip border, was fully opened only few days ago for the first time in several months, following a decision by Defence Minister Amir Peretz.

The EU's initiative to alleviate the crisis, if finally materializes, will in fact strengthen Hamas' position. As EU External Affairs Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner said, the proposition is to create an aid mechanism that would bypass the Hamas-led government. The current mechanism the World Bank has in place, the Emergency Services Support Project, relies on the Hamas-controlled Ministry of Finance. The new mechanism would consist of a World Bank trust fund that would funnel aid directly to key sectors. However, the latter insisted that a prerequisite would be for the United States and Israel to provide «explicit assurances» to any agency, company or bank involved that they would not face sanctions. Such assurances do not exist yet. The irony is that over 90 percent of non-security related public expenditure in the Palestinian Authority's budget goes to such key sectors and 75-80% of the non-security employees (of a total of 150,000 employees in the public sector) work within the health and education fields. These sectors happen to be almost completely governmental services. Thus, Hamas cannot be avoided.

On the other hand, Hamas has to manoeuvre through the tense internal situation. Fatah that dominated the Palestinian political landscape since the 60s, has infiltrated every piece of PA's administrative structure and it won't be willing to abandon it. Replacing the Fatah-supporters in the public sector by those of Hamas, especially in the security forces, has already led to eruptions of violence. Last week clashes were reported in Gaza between the newly-created unity called the «Security Forces Support System» -that aspires to give an aura of formal authority to Hamas' military wing- and policemen deployed in the area after Mahmoud Abbas' order. A constitutional crisis concerning the «distribution of labour» between the president and the government is due to emerge.

It's interesting that via a last-minute vote in the outgoing, Fatah-dominated parliament, the president was also given the authority to appoint a nine-judge constitutional court with powers to resolve

any dispute between the presidency and the parliament, including the president's right to cancel any law approved by the parliament on the grounds that it is unconstitutional.

Fatah, at the moment, resembles an amalgam of coalitions and personal networks, while Hamas still manages to keep a relative unity. The insurgency of many high-ranking Fatah-members during the pre-election campaign such as the Former Finance Minister Salam Fayyad resulted in a situation wherein, a week before the elections, there were around 120 «independent» Fatah candidates standing against 130 «official» candidates. The number of rebels was gradually reduced to 74 and Abbas succeeded in getting Marwan Barghouti (the most popular politician) who is held in an Israeli prison, back to the official list. Still, the damage was already done and the dissatisfaction remained.

Abbas faces great difficulties in controlling the dissatisfaction of factions inside Fatah-affiliated paramilitary groups such as the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and Tanzim. The previous years whenever a rebellion occurred (for example in June 2004 and March 2005), Arafat and Abbas placated the rebels by inviting them to be incorporated into the PA's security forces. Now, that is quite difficult to do. Hamas has a parallel long-term problem as it cannot integrate hundreds of activists that cannot easily move toward political action as they are targeted by the Israeli security forces.

Fatah is a «weary» party eroded by the imperatives of power holding. What Abbas is trying to do is to regenerate the hidden dynamics of the movement. It's not an accident that Abbas, talking to the parliament, after the presentation of the new cabinet, stressed the role of PLO -to a large degree bonded to Fatah- in the Palestinian struggle. At the same time, he continues to play the role of a moderate alternative -the only legitimate to negotiate a peace agreement- ready to take over when Hamas fails, but still expressing his respect to the will of Palestinian people by urging the international community to «give Hamas a chance to adapt» and by keeping aside the most belligerent of his party. In the meantime, he tries to distance himself from Hamas by refusing to participate in a national unity government. Also, he struggles to empower his posture vis-a-vis the Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyah, running the risk to weaken the institutions made for and dominated by Fatah.

On the other hand, Hamas won the elections based on a political platform of a struggle against corruption and mismanagement. Hamas is well aware that its victory is not the product of an Islamic rebirth of the Palestinians, rather it's a vote of discontent. Besides, many of the candidates that run for the elections under its list were independent, largely respected personalities, short of a concrete Islamic reference. As long as the international community refuses to talk with Hamas, it can easily, in the short run, pass the buck of dealing with the pressing economic and security issues by claiming international and Fatah-backed conspiracy.

At the same moment, Hamas gives -carefully articulated- signs of cooperation such as some conciliatory suggestions of Abdul Aziz al Rantissi and the proposition of few Palestinians imprisoned in Israel, including Marwan Al Barghouti from Fatah and Abdul Khaliq Nisheh from Hamas. The latter two advocate confining the resistance to territories occupied by Israel in 1967, not 1948. Similarly, there was a careful leakage suggesting that Hamas was also going to accept the Saudi peace initiative of King Abdullah, announced at the Arab Summit in Beirut in March 2002 and which refers to collective Arab peace with Israel in exchange for a return of all territories occupied by Israel in 1967. By doing that, Hamas eases the pressure without compromising its dedication not to recognise Israel as the latter has ceased looking for a Palestinian partner for peace negotiations several years ago, and is pursuing a unilateral course. This can be achieved even with a hudna (ceasefire) and Hamas, as long as Israel is providing it with enough room to manage internal affairs, seems willing to provide Israel with the necessary security.

However, even in the light of this «tacit understanding» between Hamas and Israel, the outcome is not secured. Hamas will have to deal with Islamic Jihad, Fatah and many others that have nothing to gain by trading governance for annexation. Resistance would erupt, and would be difficult to contain, placing Palestine on the verge of chaos. Under these circumstances, street fighting and looting -already present and alarming- could become the order of the day leading to fitna (civil war), facilitating





the entry of al-Qaeda-minded groups, as many Jordanian officials insist to point out –especially after the recent claims that some Hamas members were involved in weapon smuggling in Jordan. In a situation like that even the existence of PA is not certain. This could lead to a new massive refugee wave to neighbouring Jordan and Lebanon, destabilizing their own subtle balances. An Israeli initiative to retrieve the territories and to restore the order cannot be ruled out, as well. It is interesting that there are people inside Palestine arguing that the only option for now is to dismantle the PA and to force Israel to reoccupy the West Bank and Gaza, rendering the wall meaningless, putting Olmert's plan to an end and returning to the clear reality that Palestinians are people under a foreign occupation, and Israel will be a direct occupier instead of being able to hide behind pretences. Setback as it may seem, for some, it's an escape from a stalemate.

## PROTEUS IN IRAN'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

**Stella Athanasoulia**

*Iran's complex political system combines elements of a modern Islamic theocracy with democracy. Power is practiced by a network of elected and appointed institutions in a system with no distinct limits. The recent developments in the country's interior have clearly shown the political system's complexity along with the Iranian society's contradictory tendencies. It is those aspects that create a strong impact on the international image of Iran, which is, once more, in the limelight.*

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader since 1989, succeeded in unifying under the control of the hardline coalition that supports him, all the various Iranian institutions. The Presidency was the last holdout of Iran's reformists and Ahmadinejad's victory gave total control of Iran's state institutions to hardliners. Khamenei controlled the judiciary, the army, radio and television and now he's able to control the Presidency as well.

The people's electoral behavior plays an important role in this change. Young people under 25 constitute 65% of the population. The voting-age being at 16 years makes their participation have a strong influence over the electoral results. That became evident at the election of President Mohammad Khatami in 1997. Khatami has been trying to wrench politics and society out of the grip of Iran's highly conservative clergy, aiming at the promotion of social justice and wider civil freedoms, while limiting the power of clergymen and enhancing collaboration with other countries, especially from the Arab world.



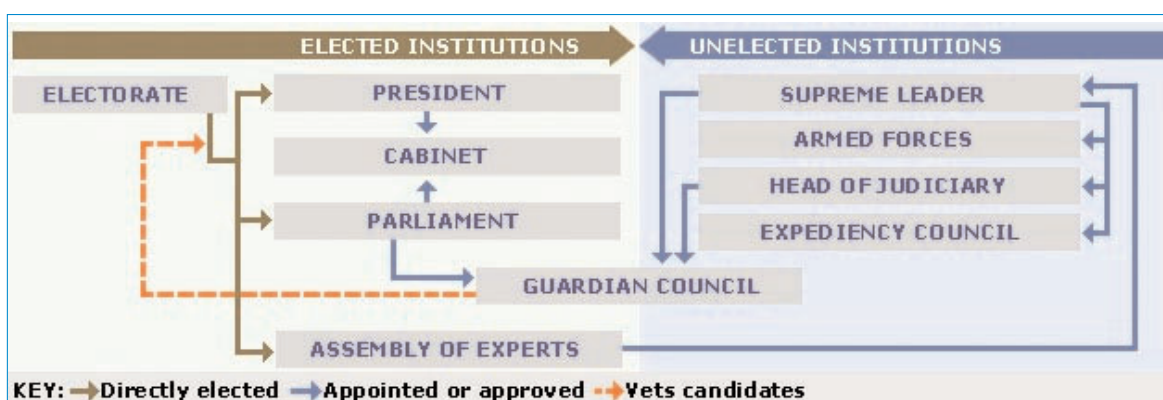
However, his ambitious reformist agenda was structurally incompatible with the underlying framework of the existing Constitution. The Guardian Council has to approve all bills passed by Parliament and has the power to veto them if it considers them inconsistent with the Constitution and the Islamic Law. This is the most influential body in Iran, currently controlled by conservatives. It consists of six clerics appointed by the Supreme Leader and six jurists nominated by the judiciary and approved by the Parliament. Because of the Council's war tactics against the reforms, Khatami's governments failed to make good on their promises and disappointed the supporters of social and institutional changes. Gradually, the center piece

of the Iranian society has moved over from demands for institutional and constitutional reforms to the anxiety in front of unemployment, poverty and the problem of drugs. The abstention from both the parliamentary elections of 2004 and the presidential ones of 2005 has led to the enforcement of the traditionally conservative powers and the reformists' marginalization from the Parliament and the administration.

Former officer and one of the most vocal regime's dissidents, Mohsen Sazegara, in a study of the conservative powers, underlines the rise of militants as an independent political force that gains power as a regulating factor, i.e. members of the Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and smaller militias, like the Basij force that are under the IRGC control. The 1979 Islamic Revolution's spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini specifically forbade the Guards from becoming actively involved in politics. However, his heir Ali Khamenei allowed the security and military forces' direct political engagement and relied on them to support conservative candidates. The IRGC was created in the early days of the Islamic Revolution to protect the regime, safeguard it from its internal and external enemies and, as it is included in the 1979 Constitution, to be «responsible for accomplishing an ideological mission, that is the Jihad for the sake of God, as well as for struggling to open the way for the sovereignty of the Word of God throughout the World». The revolutionary Guards remain fanatically loyal to the Islamic Law, to Khomeini's political heritage and to the Revolution that led to the Shah's overthrowing in 1979. They are against the liberalization of Iran's political system, the market-economy technocrats and the, politically neutral, professional military.

Gradually, Khamenei appointed many ex-IRGC officers to highly politicized and administrative positions, often at the expense of old conservatives. Military officers have moved into key-political positions, as well as the presidential position, being their last achievement. The new President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, ex-IRGC officer, is the first non-cleric President during the last 24 years. Sazegara claims that the new fundamentalists seek to militarize the Iranian government through the political opportunities afforded them by the Supreme Leader and that such militarization could in turn undercut the religious and political legitimacy of the system, and therefore of Khamenei himself. Such a development is possible in the case of the Assembly of Experts, the only body responsible to appoint the Supreme Leader, monitor his performance and remove him if he is deemed incapable of fulfilling his duties. The Assembly is, at the moment, dominated by conservatives, but the next direct elections for its 86 members, where the fundamentalist Guards' power is spreading, will be held in 2006.

The new, conservative President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is determined to return to the policies of Mir-Hussein Mussavi's government (1980-1989), often referred to as Iran's First republic, during which all of the revolution's theories were put into effect. His presidential campaign focused on poverty, social justice, the distribution of wealth inside Iran, agricultural reform and the confrontation of unemployment and corruption in the upper cleric ranks. In foreign policy issues he might prove less willing to do oil and gas deals with foreign companies. He is against the WTO membership and not keen to privatization because «it would create unemployment». According to analysts, his version of



reform called for a focus on Islamic socialism rejecting the privileged and corrupted and covering its conservatism with a populist message. This message and his simple way of life, led him to a stunning 61.7% over his rival Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, upper cleric who has amassed great personal wealth during his former 8-year presidency.

However, only few months after taking office, Ahmadinejad is found at odds with his political rivals and the Iranian society as well. Writer Nasrin Alavi reports that his extremist policies against the clergy's power have caused great discontentment and the non-elected clerics, who control the unaccountable state institutions, resist pressure from business and political reformists alike.

In an attempt to compromise the conservative politicians against Ahmadinejad as well as the militants that support him, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei entrenched the position of Expediency Council Chairman Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and expanded the powers of the Council, giving to it greater oversight of the regime's overall policy and three branches. By doing so, Khamenei officially anchored Rafsanjani's status as Number Two in the Iranian leadership.

Apart from the coordinated restriction in his power, Ahmadinejad also confronts a part of the Iranian society, which is nearer to the politically marginalized reformists. This part, especially young people from the middle classes, aspires to a more western lifestyle, do not bother to attend the Friday prayers and believe in Iran's integration in a global economy that will bring jobs and prosperity. Equally, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's campaign was based on promises of a better economic future. Almost a year after his election there are no visible results, basic groceries and metro prices go up, union workers get arrested and parliamentary debates have been increasingly filled with accusations and counter accusations of corruption. There is also growing and open criticism of the new government's strategies towards the sensitive issue of the nuclear program, which many Iranians considered up to now as a matter of national pride and their undeniable right. Mohammad Khatami's governments dealt with it with moderation and cooperative disposal towards the west and had been the object of massive criticism on the part of the fundamentalist conservatives. Many ordinary Iranians may logically believe that acquiring nuclear energy is in their long-term economic and growth national interests, but the hardening of the Iranian line on the issue and the resumption of its nuclear research program has thrown Iran into an open clash with the international community, initiating fears that it could spiral up into armed conflict and the query if the nuclear is indeed a matter of national security.

Mohsen Sazegara, in his criticism towards Ahmadinejad's conservatism, marks that returning to the First Republic's theories will bring the country to two possible paths:

First, greater reliance on oil income, which represents a small percentage of the country's GDP, not being able to solve the economy's problems, nor to reduce the inflation rate that reached 25% within the past 3 years.

Second, greater persecution of regime opponents in a systematic and continuous way for the regime's survival. The ban of thousands of presidential and parliamentary candidates, the closing of the pro-reformist papers and imprisoning of the dissidents like Sazegara himself, would lead to greater social repression while the Iranian society would not tolerate a regime of this sort.

Political infighting has been a defining characteristic of the Islamic Republic from the time of Ayatollah Khomeini. Such infighting did not take the form of open competition between conflict interests, which is the essence of the democratic process. Instead, Iran has suffered from a hidden power struggle with leading actors the conservative regime, the clergy and the armed forces that change roles, faces and masks depending on the most profitable alliances. This merciless struggle hampers the government's functioning and further troubles the external relations. While the West's principal concern is Iran's nuclear program, Tehran seems more focused on domestic political manoeuvring. That said, Iran's complicated political situation may impede external negotiations regarding the nuclear program. Almost every Iranian faction-religious, political or military- will find it difficult to offer compromises to the West, fearing that opponents at home will criticize the concessions.

# AZERBAIJAN..... INSIDE IRAN

Marina Eleftheriadou

*The Azeri minority in north-western Iran seems to be the «Achilles' heel» of Iran. By comprising 1/4 of Iran's population and sharing more bonds with the neighbouring Azerbaijan and Turkey rather than with the Persians of Iran, embodies the necessary qualities to develop secessionist tendencies. Nevertheless, the reality is far more complex as some imponderable factors with an inhibitory function edge in.*

The state of Iran, beyond its strongly Islamic character, is imbued, in such a degree, by the Persian tradition that the fact that the citizens of a Persian origin correspond hardly to 51% of all Iranians, is usually overlooked. Actually, the country's borderland is populated by other religious or national minorities. Most important of these are Azeris (24%), Kurdish (7%) Arabs (3%), Baluchi (2%). On the contrary, there is a relative religious homogeneity as 89% are Shia Muslims and roughly 9% Sunni.

The most sizeable, the Azeri minority, is concentrated primarily in north-western Iran, in a region that borders with Azerbaijan, Turkey, Armenia and Iraq. The geographic position of this region in combination with the fact that the Azeris of Iran have many national, linguistic and cultural characteristics in common with the people of Azerbaijan and, as such, with Turkey too, nevertheless, «stumbles» at one paradox. Although they have all the above characteristics, the Azeris, do not present the same tendencies of self-determination and separatism as for example the Kurds or the Baluchis.

When the dissolution of USSR led to the creation of the state of Azerbaijan one would expect that it would become a pole of attraction for the Azeris of Iran. That for sure was the fear of Iran. From 1828, when the «wider Azerbaijan» was divided between the Russian and Persian empires, up to the end of the Second World War, north-western Iran was often the field of revolts and declarations of - short-lived- autonomous regions. In the post-war era, on the one hand, the logic of the Cold War did not allow any serious «mobility» and, on the other hand, the pre-revolutionary and, later on, the Islamic regime of Iran were successful in neutralising such secessionist tendencies.

The Azeris were integrated to a larger degree than other minorities in the political and economic life of Iran, acceding even to high-ranking posts. In the urban centres with mixed population occur high percentages of inter-marriages between Azeris and Persians. As Dr. Hassan Javadi pointed out -Iranian of Azeri origin, professor in the university George Washington-, separatism represents fringe thinking. Any opposition to Tehran and any demands concern -beyond the subject of more cultural rights- political, social and economic problems that preoccupy all the country. Indeed, Azeris demonstrate for the same reasons the Persian students and the reformists do. The economic crisis that reached climax during the presidency of Khatami was accompanied by inflation of the order of 50% and high rates of unemployment. According to the pro-reform newspaper *Hambastegi*, in the period 1991-2002 the relative cost of basic goods was increased by 20%, whereas the wages remained stagnant. At the same time, the number of individuals entering each year the job market was threefold of the new jobs created. The rate of unemployment in the north-western region, according to the official statistical service, is 8,65% (actually it is calculated to amount to 25%). It's high, though lower than the national average (11,95%).

The identification of the Azeri community with the state of Iran does not mean that the emergence of Azerbaijan went unnoticed. A sizeable part of them started to be self-identified as

«Azeri» and not as «Turk», as they did in the previous years. However, as long as the contacts between the two sides grew frequent, it became apparent that the Islamic revolution from the one side, the Soviet experience from the other, had changed - to different directions - the way of life of the Azeris of «southern» and «northern» Azerbaijan.

There is no doubt that neither Tehran disregarded the post-Cold War developments. Initially, it adopted a «generous» policy, allowing, for example, the circulation of newspapers in the Azeri language. It tried, in other words, to «incorporate» the cultural agitation in its north-western region. Soon, however, it changed its tactics, most likely realising that in the long run it could not control it. For example, the magazine Yol came out for the first time in 1991, exclusively in the Azeri language. Soon it became very popular among the Azeri-speaking population. Nonetheless, its publication was stopped in 1993 due to an order of the authorities. In 1993, also, the creation of an additional administrative region (Ardebil) was decided; and thereby the bisection -virtually with a vertical section on the borders with Azerbaijan- of the administrative region «Eastern Azerbaijan». Thus, the Iranian authorities completed the initial -administrative- division, dated back to 1946, between «Eastern» and «Western» Azerbaijan. As a matter of fact, in the period 1993-1997 President Mahmud Ahmadinejad was the general governor of the new region, Ardebil.

At the same time, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan for Nagorno-Karabakh «impelled» Iran to provide discreet help to Armenia despite the public opposition -mainly Azeri. Tehran aspired to maintain Azerbaijan in a state of weakness so that it would not be in a position to exploit its enormous wealth in energy resources, which according to certain analysts renders it «Kuwait of Caucasus». In other words, a poor and powerless Azerbaijan, «hostage» of Iran, would not have the glamour and the required economic resources in order to attract «its brothers» in the south. As an Azeri merchant in Tabriz pointed out: «We almost control Iran. Why we would wish to become slaves of Alieyv (President of Azerbaijan)». At the same time, however, an eventual collapse of the country posed the danger of a general regional instability that would easily expand towards Iran too. That is why, in 1993, when the Armenian army advanced to Azerbaijan's territory and increased the danger of a refugee wave in the direction of Iran, Tehran condemned Armenia's actions and immediately created refugee camps -however, inside Azerbaijan.

The last months, while Iran is presented as the next target of the USA, reports appear, such as that of Scott Ritter, former marine of the USA who was the head of the team of inspectors of the United Nations in Iraq. Ritter insists that the USA is already elaborating a plan of invasion in Iran via Azerbaijan. He claims that the two ultramodern radars (with a scope of 450 kilometres) recently built in Azerbaijan, with American financing, are an adequate proof. Simultaneously, the previous month from Chicago of USA started broadcasting the «Television of Southern Azerbaijan» (Gunaz TV). In its website, Gunaz TV claims to fight against Persian chauvinism. Moreover, it is stated that it aims at the rebirth of Azeri national identity. Gunaz TV appertains in the recently voted -\$75 million- program of the American government for regime change in Iran.

Tehran does not play down the importance of the sudden attention that the north-western part of its territory receives. In September of the previous year extensive military exercises were held in the region. Recently, the Iranian ambassador in Azerbaijan, Afshar Suleymani, reacted angrily, when in the 2nd World Azerbaijani Congress, that took place in Azerbaijan with the participation of organisations of the diaspora, some among the participants spoke about the violation of human rights of the Azeris of Iran and called for the unification of the «two Azerbaijan». The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran sent a protest note to the ambassador of Azerbaijan in Tehran. In addition, one month ago, the circulation of the Azeri newspaper Navid Azerbaijan, which was published for 8 years in north-western Iran, was prohibited.



From the other hand, Iran knows very well that organisations such as the «South Azerbaijan National Liberation Committee» (SANLC), based in Azerbaijan, have limited leverage. On the contrary, the majority of Azeris wishes to seek more economic and cultural privileges through the existing rules of the political game. The decision of the «Association of Islamic Iran Azeris» to support Mehdi Karrubi in the presidential elections of 2005, even though it did not have any impact on the political life of the country since the candidate in question had from the beginning little chance to be elected, is a proof of this attitude. Most likely, the Azeris of Iran would wish a united Azerbaijan, but as some of them come out in favour of unification with the state of Azerbaijan, others would prefer this unification to happen under the auspices of Iran. Besides, in Azerbaijan there are roughly 7 millions Azeris while in Iran 17 millions.

In sum, Tehran has more to be afraid of from the Kurds in the west of the country and the Arabs in south-west. Even for the USA, that is not the best alternative option. It threatens to affect the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan because of a potential military ignition in Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, that will upgrade the role of Russia in the world energy market, getting Iran after Iraq out of the oil supply, and at the same time will strengthen Russian position in the region of Caucasus and the Caspian Sea.

## THE KURDISH **PIECE** OF THE IRANIAN *puzzle*

Ilias Tassopoulos

*Approximately, 6 million Kurds live in Iran nowadays. This accounts for less than 10% of the Iranian population. This Kurdish minority causes occasionally disturbance to the official Iranian state, although not always in a coordinated manner. Iran's approach is often ambivalent, with an eye to avoid unpleasant surprises. What remains to be confirmed is whether the Kurdish piece fits to the pattern that the Iranian state tries to put it.*

The election of Mahmud Ahmadinejad in the Iranian presidency last June surprised the Kurdish population of Iran. Their surprise was much bigger than that of the western world. Ahmadinejad, who turns fifty in October, turned down swiftly all the suggestions of the Kurdish members of the Parliament (Majlis), which called for inclusion of Iranian Kurds to the ministerial cabinet. He turned them down just like he had forbidden fast-food restaurant and advertisements with famous football players, as soon as he had assumed his duties as mayor of the capital of Iran, Tehran. Kurds argue that Ahmadinejad had participated in the suppression of their people, as Supreme Commander of the Revolutionary Guards in the eighties, and as security advisor of the Kurdish province's Governor. He is also accused of participating in the events of July 13th 1989, when the Secretary General of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou and two of his associates were assassinated, while they were negotiating with delegates from Iran.

The Kurdish minority in Iran is in a more precarious position compared with other minorities, because of its size and the fact that a vast majority of the Kurdish population is Sunni Muslims. Their autonomy aspirations along with substantial Kurdish populations in nearby states, complicate things even more. The six million Kurds that live in Iran are about a quarter of the total Kurdish population in the region (although some sources, closer to a Kurdish view, refer to 8 million Kurds living in Iran, while most sources also refer to more than 13 million Kurds living in Turkey).



Kurds now live in the Iranian provinces Ilam, Kermanshah, Kurdistan and Western Azerbaijan, while there are reports about them in the region since 2400 B.C. No matter that they are the fourth bigger national and linguistic group in the Middle East, (following the Arabs, the Turks and the Persians) Kurds have not managed to gain an independent national home. Although the Kurdish province is officially recognized by Iran, it equals only to 15% of the regions that are populated by Kurds. Kurds, however, seem to have another divisive line from the Iranian population; that is their religious beliefs. Approximately three quarters of the Iranian Kurds are Sunni Muslims. Nevertheless, the governors of the Kurdish provinces are usually Shiite coming from the Kurdish Shiite minority. Sunni Muslims are by far the biggest religious minority inside Iran, equal to 10% of the total population.



While the Kurds in Iran had traditionally a nomadic element in their social patterns, nowadays they have settled permanently, due to the policies of the government. They talk several dialects and languages and are divided in many tribes. These tribal cleavages have been a serious obstacle in the Kurdish aspirations for autonomy.

In 1979, most of the Kurds initially supported the Revolution hoping for better treatment than the one they had under the Shah, and presumably an autonomy status. However, many tribal leaders preferred the privileges that the Shah had given them. In any case, when the new regime made clear that it had no intention of granting these rights to the Kurdish population, the Kurds insurrected. They tried to take advantage of the turmoil of the Islamic Revolution, and achieved a de facto high degree of self-governing in the first months, exercised by the Kurdish political parties. This lasted until August 1979, when

Khomeini moved against them using the almost intact army, which the Shah had created. The Iraqi- Persian war was used as a pretense by both Iran and Iraq so as to continue the oppression of the Kurds. However, since then, the Iranian Kurds use the ground of the Iraqi Kurdistan, (today the autonomous Kurdish province), as a base for attacking the Iranian territory. The Kurds continued troubling the Iranian authorities, as their activity culminated in the early nineties.

The Kurdish minority participated in the political process that resulted in the election of the reformist president Mohammad Khatami, aiming to improve their position, through the establishment of democracy in the region. However, a month after the election of Khatami, the Kurdish writer Tawahudi was convicted in a two-year sentence for «spreading non-Islamic lies»; an event that didn't bring optimism for the future.

At the end of 2000, a Kurdish parliamentarian (MP) declared that there was an effort to suppress and massively kill Iranian Kurds. Additionally, in October 2001 all six MPs from the Kurdish province, attempted to abdicate so as to castigate the denial of the rights of the Kurdish people. They intended to demonstrate the inadequacy of the Iranian state to face the Kurdish demands for justice in political, economic, cultural, and social issues. Their hopes for political reformation and improvement in their everyday life weren't fulfilled during the Khatami period.

The Khatami government managed better results in symbolic issues. It opened the so-called 'house of the ethnic groups' (khane ye aqvam) in the summer of 2002; within this framework, it authorized the ethnic associations to discuss their problems with the government authorities. The rationale was to find opportunities to talk to each other and discuss their claims about linguistic and institutional autonomy. The relevant articles of the Constitution, which recognize the linguistic and institutional autonomy of the ethnic regions, have been breached more often than not. Khatami adopted other institutions, which intended to fully embody these minorities in the Persian society, and simultaneously replace the traditional and radicalized elites of these minorities who were against this perspective.

Unfortunately, the practical problems were overwhelming. According to the Immigration Advisory Service, in July 2005, a preliminary report of a Special UN Rapporteur, based on recent visits to the country, highlighted discrimination and the denial of basic amenities to ethnic and religious minorities in Iran, and especially the Kurds. The regions which were inhabited by the Kurds suffered from unsatisfactory reconstruction efforts, not to mention the disproportionate inadequacy of services, such as water and electricity...

In 2001 the UN Special Representative received a complaint that Kurdish regions were used as a safe haven for drug addicts, criminals and other difficult groups from around the country». Nowadays, this is a more intense problem. Kurds maintain that Iran is trying to funnel drugs into Kurdistan and spread it among the Kurds, so as to weaken their society in every possible way, and discourage them from forming their own state.

The decision of the Supreme Council of the Revolutionary Guardians to forbid all the Kurdish participants (along with the vast majority of pro-reform candidates) to take part in the 2004 parliamentary elections was another severe blow. A non-confirmed source refers to the stated intention of Iranian officials to train and pay Kurdish tribesmen as militiamen for use against Kurdish insurgents as part of an Iran-Turkey joint security operation. The official Iranian authorities say that its purpose is to prevent terrorist acts, and that there is good cooperation within the country's ethnic and religious minorities. The main duty of the relevant Intelligence and Security Ministry is not to allow Iran's enemies to infiltrate and spread dissent amongst these groups. According to the Ministry, it has always taken appropriate action to prevent this. Beside that, Iranian troops have been - permanently- stationed for a long while in the Kurdish regions, observing the activities of Kurdish groups.

Iran is very sensitive when it comes to issues of Kurdish national identity and its reactions are often rapid and violent. In March 2005, celebrations by the Kurds who were waving flags and photographs of the imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Ocalan and chanting nationalistic songs, resulted in several arrests by the police that eventually dispersed the crowd.

The Ahmadinejad election unsettled once more the relations between Iran and the Kurds. In Mahabad, sixty years after the declaration of independence of the short-lived Republic of Mahabad, a sense of unrest was obvious. The unrest was ignited by the killing of Shivan Qaderi, a key figure in Mahabad's Kurdish national movement. According to some sources, Qaderi was shot at point blank range and then exposed, while the Iranian authorities assert that Qaderi was killed by security forces while attempting to evade arrest.

The unrest, ranging from peaceful sit-ins to violent clashes, soon escalated, spreading to many other cities in the region, as many in the Kurdish population expressed dissatisfaction with the cycle of violence, arrests and oppressive behaviour of Iranian forces. Iran denied that the uprising was constituted by the Kurdish nationalists. The Kurdish leaders, nevertheless, disagreed and pointed to the discriminations by the official Iranian state as the cause of this development.





In August 2005, the British Guardian reported the Iranian government had deployed large numbers of troops in cities in the northwestern region, which borders Iraq, in an effort to quell three weeks of civil unrest. Around 100,000 state security forces, backed up by helicopter gunships, had moved into the region to crack down on pro-Kurdish demonstrations. The locals assert that an undeclared martial law has been declared in the regions of Iraqi Kurdistan, as units of the Revolutionary Guards surround all the big towns, after the turbulence of July 2005. The British Immigration & Nationality Directorate (IND CIPU) reports that the Iranian regime's treatment of the Kurdish leaders is extremely violent, especially towards the two biggest Kurdish Parties, the KDPI, and the Marxist Komala (as well as to their armed supporters). The KDPI's estimation of the Kurdish human losses reaches the worrying number of fifty thousand citizens and more than 4 thousand of fighters.

The Revolutionary Organization of People of Kurdistan (Komala) is the second biggest party, first appeared in public in 1983 as the Kurdish branch of the Communist Party of Iran (although, some hold that it existed as an underground organization since 1969). Although it has disagreed many times with KDPI, both parties are generally in favor of autonomy. Its program is based in the separation of the religion from the state and the establishment of a secular democracy in Iran as a way to achieve autonomy for the Kurds.

KDPI, formed in 1945, is nowadays the biggest Kurdish party of Iran. Its supporters come from the middle class, the intellectuals, the merchants and the civil servants. Since 1981, it is a member of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, a coalition of antigovernmental political groups located in Paris. KDPI opposes militarily the Iranian government and simultaneously repudiating terrorism. Officially, it doesn't aspire for an independent state, because of the special relation between Iran and the Kurds, although its inability to achieve it may be a more probable cause. In the 13th KDPI Conference in 2004 the party's slogan was changed from «Democracy in Iran and Autonomy for Kurdistan» to «Federal, Pluralistic and Democratic Iran», severely confining the party's intentions.

It wouldn't be so accurate to address Iran as a nation-state, along with many other states in the region. The empires of West Asia were replaced by modern centralizing territorial states, which more or less used a nationalistic rhetoric so as to enforce their administrative systems and preserve their political sovereignty and territorial integrity. This also served in the denial of any demands of the minorities for representation or even survival, inside the state. Comparing to the assimilative Turkish policy towards the Kurds, Iran's policy is more dilatory. It is consistent with the general Iranian approach to the minorities, which are encouraged to cooperate with the authorities and receive broad cultural freedom in exchange.

There are also some other differences. Iranian Kurds are less educated and prosperous than the Kurds in Turkey, and consequently less incorporated in the society. Additionally, the Kurdish minority hasn't found any supporters inside Iran, like the support that the Kurds receive from a part of the left in Turkey. The Kurds in Iran aren't the biggest minority in Iran, as the Azeris are much richer, powerful and embodied in the Iranian society. The Iranian state feels a lot more threatened by the Azeris, than from the Kurds. Besides, the Islamic Republic is not only for the Persians, as Turkey is for the Turks.

Iran seems to prefer a religious minority, in which the Kurdish population can be represented. A religious minority is preferred from a national one, as it would be easier to control and harder for an outside power to use it as a destabilizing force for the regime. Moreover, the support for autonomy from Shiite Kurds is feeble. A religious minority is not likely to form an independent state that will jeopardize the territorial integrity of Iran. Protests for the abolishment of discriminations in the Iranian state are much more preferable than an ethnic group's aspirations of autonomy.



# THE *ROAD* FROM RIYADH TO *MOSCOW* PASSES THROUGH *GROZNY*

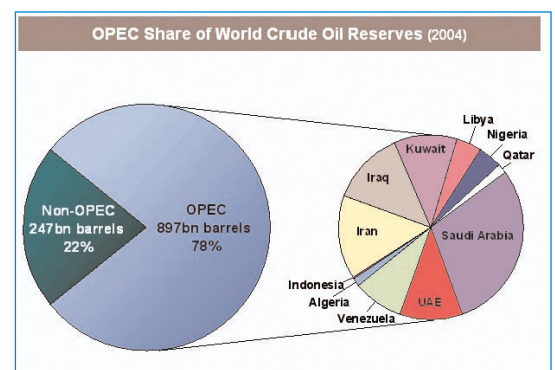
Marina Eleftheriadou

*While the «war against terrorism» brings Saudi Arabia on the defensive, Russia seems to exploit that in order to strengthen its position in the world oil-market and in her conflict with the Chechens as well. However, on the one hand, the competition between the two countries for the shares of the energy market is intense, despite some efforts for co-operation. On the other hand, peculiar «games» with the Islamic terrorism seem perilous.*

When the USA declared the «war against terrorism», many countries that faced parallel internal problems, such as Israel and Russia, were quick to «climb the bandwagon» of the global crusade against al-Qaeda and other affiliated organisations worldwide. Russia who, for 15 years, is in a belligerent situation with the separatists of Chechnya, always tried to connect the Chechen rebels with the international networks of Islamic terrorism. On June 15 2000, President Putin stated, in Berlin, that: «an international network of terrorists, that gets external financing, uses Chechnya as bridgehead in order to make attacks in Russia» and asked for the «moral support» of Europe in the fighting of terrorism in Caucasus. When the war against terrorism presented Saudi Arabia as the main «exporter» of Wahhabism, ideological base of fundamentalist terrorism, but also as the main sponsor of terrorism, Russia was among the first to adopt the rhetoric against Saudi Arabia.

In the reports referring to the Saudi charitable organisations, such as the «al Haramain Islamic Foundation» and the «International Islamic Relief», which were behind the networks, Chechnya was always among their fields of activity. In 2003, FBI announced that it will investigate every potential relation between the Chechens and al-Qaeda, owing to the death of an American citizen, who was taken hostage during the seizure of the theatre Nord-Ost in Moscow (October 2002). Moreover, certain hijackers of 11/9 had fought in Chechnya, while Bin Laden is believed to have offered \$1500 to every volunteer eager to fight in Chechnya. In the light of these developments the visit of prince Abdullah in Moscow in September 2003, given that the previous visit of a senior official was back in 1932, was definitely a surprise. It seems that, this initiative is not connected exclusively or, rather, is hardly connected to terrorism.

The USA often hints that Saudi Arabia is not only an unreliable strategic partner but also has ceased to be a reliable energy supplier. Many advocate that the agreement (May 2002) between the USA and Russia on «energy cooperation» signalled the turn of USA from Saudi Arabian oil to that of Russia. Consequently, the visit of Abdullah was actually an effort to estimate and reverse this trend or even to balance the USA. However, this alleged turn should be seen more as a tactical move of intimidation rather than a real change of policy. The reason is quite simple. Saudi Arabia provides 10% of the world daily supply of oil while, at the same moment, it possesses the biggest oil reserves in the world (25% of the world's known reserves). Today its reserves are estimated to be 264 billions barrels, while it is believed that in the coming years new reserves will be found, of the order of 200 billions extra barrels. The royal family has more to be afraid of from the tensed state of the internal affairs than from the potential loss of their role in the oil market.



On the other hand, the Russian reserves are distinctly inferior (5,7% of the world's known reserves) and their exploitation is relatively unprofitable as, first, most of them are situated in Siberia and, second, the production cost of a barrel of crude oil amounts to \$10-12 while the respective cost for Saudi Arabia is only \$1,5. At the same time, the instability in Central Asia and Caspian Sea rules out any forecasts for the future. Moreover, the pipeline network adds extra cost because of the long distances. Besides, it is to a large extent still under planning, and the existing pipes pass through «dangerous» regions such as Chechnya. Russia, no doubt, has enormous reserves in gas (roughly 1/3 of the world's known reserves). Here, however it has, beyond the constraints mentioned above, to deal with the fact that, even if the use of gas is propagated, oil remains the main energy source.

In this context, the visit of Abdullah should be seen from a different angle. Russia since 1999 has, by driving its production capacity to the limits and exercising a policy of prices' war -with the help of high market prices- contested the role of Saudi Arabia in the OPEC, as the regulator of world production in times of supply shortages. The efforts in 2001 (meeting of the oil-producing countries in Vienna -November 14, 2001) and also in 2002 in order to get an agreement between the members of OPEC and the other oil-producing countries, led every time to an off-hand agreement that remained in the papers as soon as the price of oil went up. Thus, the five-year agreement of bilateral cooperation on the oil markets stability that was signed in the russo-saudi meeting can be translated as a move of reverification of its role.

With Saudi Arabia's petroleum sector corresponding to 75% of government's income, 45% of GNP and 90% of the income from exports, the oil market is a one-way road. After the prospect of a gradual come back of Iraq, which has the second biggest reserves of the world, in the oil production, Saudi Arabia tries to secure some of the open «fronts». At the same time, it attempts to diversify, at least, its energy production, since efforts for general diversification of the country's economy repeatedly have failed. It is illustrative that the SGI initiative in order to invite foreign investments in the gas sector, which began in 1998 with poor results, recently acquired new dynamics. The contribution of Russia at that point is expected to be crucial since for the production of gas, large amounts of capital and know-how are required. In the agreement signed in January 2004 to explore for natural gas, Russian companies OAO and LUKoil were among those that were awarded with a contract. Moreover, according to a statement of the Russian ambassador in Saudi Arabia, Andrei Baklanov, appeared in, of Saudi Arabian interests, newspaper Asharq Alawsat on June 2 2005, the two countries agreed to make common investments in other countries.

Thus, as the «eternal» - religious, national - disputes between Saudi Arabia and Iran were mitigated with the agreement of 1999 on the reduction of oil supply, similarly, the disputes with Russia too, lost much of importance. There was also an «additional price» beyond the favourable -for Russia- economic agreement. Abdullah renounced the Chechen rebels as non-Islamic. Around that time, Sheikh Aqeel Abdul-aziz Al-Aqeel, chairman of al Haramain, in an interview asserted that: «The government of Saudi Arabia asked us recently to stop supporting the Chechens and we have done that a year ago». Another, more «interesting», agreement makes reference to subsidies -Saudi Arabian- for the reconstruction of the educational system in Chechnya. Even if we overlook the funds' likely fate (according to a report of Sergey Stepashin, chairman of the Accounting and Review Chamber of Russian Federation, 40% of the resources of the federal program for reconstruction (2000) never reached Chechnya, and there also the mismanagement was enormous), the choice of education raises questions concerning the real role of the «permanent revolutionaries» or «Trotskyists of Islam», as David Hirst has labelled them.

From the unilateral declaration of Chechen independence by Dudayev, in 1991, up to the end of the first war (1994-1996), but also during the first years of Maskhadov's rule, after the

death of Dudayev in 1996, Islam was one among the many components of Chechen nationalism. The presence of Arabs, Afghan veterans, as Ash-Shashani, Ibn Al-Khattab and Abu Walid, since 1995, when the Dayton agreements made their presence in Bosnia unnecessary, was marginal and the local population treated them as alien to their more permissive, traditional, Sufi Islam. Their reinforcement became feasible, because, on the one hand, the Chechens, contrary to Bosnians and Kosovars, lacked any exterior help while at the same time Russia implemented a policy of economic suffocation. At the same time, the end of bipolarism did not offer occasions to play «games» with the two superpowers, as once did the third-world movements. Consequently, the resources that these «foreigners» could offer, via various charitable organisations, were indispensable. On the other hand, the exodus of the old communist nomenclature and the weakening of central control led to what is known as caudillismo, where in the power is in the hands of local tribal leaders and warlords. Maskhadov was forced for reasons of unity but also in order to undermine the rise of Wahhabists, to adopt officially Islam. As Dimitri Furman pointed very aptly: «as it is very difficult for a Chechen to execute or imprison another Chechen, isn't it easier for all if this happens according to the will of Allah?».

In a state of anarchy, penury and amidst the often contradictory teachings of a few official religious experts, Wahhabism gradually began to enlist supporters -especially after the rapprochement of the hero of the first war, Shamil Basayev, and the Jordan-born Ibn Al-Khattab. Training camps were created in the village Serzhan-Yurt, east of Grozny, near the borders with Dagestan, but also in Pankisi Gorge in north-eastern Georgia, under the financial support of Saudi Arabia and the Chechen diaspora in the Middle East and Southern Caucasus, most known as Circassians. The attack on Dagestan, in August 1999, was the beginning of the consolidation of Wahhabism as a central factor in the march of events in Northern Caucasus. A combination of religious, nationalist and economic incentives explains the choice of Dagestan. The first party that expressed political Islam, the party of Islamic Rebirth, was founded in 1990 by Dagestanis. In 1997 some villages in the central Dagestan under the leadership of Baguaddin Mogomedov, declared the creation of an independent Islamic region. At the same time, references were made on the Caliphate of Shamil of 19th century, which in its new version would unite Chechnya and Dagestan. A lot of Chechens believed that the survival of an independent Chechnya would be possible, provided that it had access to the oil of the Caspian Sea.

Regardless of whether there was indeed an intervention plan in Chechnya even before the invasion of the Chechen rebels in Dagestan, as former Prime Minister, Sergey Stepashin admitted and whether, indeed, the explosions of September (1999) in Moscow were executed by agents of Russian secret services, the fact is that the second war in Chechnya (2000) has pushed fundamentalists towards the rest of Northern Caucasus, but also in the hinterland of Russia. In 1999, the majority of Dagestanis may have fought beside the Russian army; however, this tends to change. The spill over of the conflict beyond Chechnya and Dagestan, in the neighbouring regions Ingushetia (seizure of governmental buildings - June 2004), Kabardino-Balkaria (conflicts in the city Nalchik - October 2005), Karachayevo-Cherkessia and North Osetia (seizure of a school in Beslan in 2004) but also the terrorist attacks in Moscow (theatre Nord-Ost in 2002, explosion in a metro station in 2003) appear to be irreversible. The increased oil income, as long as the prices remain high, may allow the Kremlin to finance the costly military and police machine. The state of emergency may help the re-election of Putin in 2008, despite the opposite provision of the Constitution, as in 1999 allowed him to emerge out of the blue and to be elected in 2000. However, the experience of other countries that «played» with the Islamic factor should be a useful lesson. Besides, the Tatars are waiting and Tatarstan has a lot of oil.

# *Iran, Turkey and Egypt* an interesting comparison

Spyridon Katsoulas

*Bearing always in mind that, according to the theory of Sociology of Religion of Islam, Muslim women are not passive victims of their religious beliefs and that Islamic beliefs and practices vary widely because they are shaped by region, ethnicity, sect, class, and responses to economic and cultural processes that are transnational and local, we will try to define the social status and potential of women in three quite different countries, which are the Islamic Republic of Iran, the west-oriented Turkey and the generally thought more modern and developed Egypt.*

It is rather interesting examining the social status of women and connecting it to the progressiveness and the political development of these three important countries. Throughout the twentieth century, the Arab/Islamic world has faced a major challenge in adjusting to the forces of modernization, and more acutely globalization. The more traditional societies have wed many of their traditional tribal and/or cultural customs and practices with Islam. These societies have been particularly resistant to the forces of modernization, especially involving the empowerment of women and certain judicial processes and penal codes. At the same time, the Arab Middle East has long been characterized by political authoritarianism that has traditionally excluded not only women, but any opposition groups.

Comparing in brief the three states, we should note the following. In Egypt, although power is ostensibly organized under a multi-party semi-presidential system, whereby the executive power is theoretically divided between the President and the Prime Minister, in practice it rests almost solely with the President who has traditionally been elected in single-candidate elections for more than fifty years. As regards its international action and impact, it should be noted that Egypt is still the Arab world's most important single state, it has a major influence amongst other Arab states and most Arab nations still give credence to Egypt playing that role, though its effects are often limited and there seems to be a decline in Egypt's relative importance in the Arab world. According to statistics from World Bank Organization, Egypt is ranked 31st for its GDP total and 112th for its per capita income. After several years of slow growth, the Egyptian economy is on the road to recovery and during the past three decades, Egypt has considerably improved the well being of its people.

Second, modern Iran, a state of great geostrategic importance due to its central location in Eurasia and to its large supply of petroleum and other resources, as it is OPEC's second largest oil producer, has a solid middle class and a growing economy, actually a mixture of central planning, state ownership of oil and other large enterprises, village agriculture, and small-scale private trading and service ventures but continues to be plagued with high inflation and unemployment. Based upon World Bank Organization statistics, Iran is ranked 19th for its total GDP and 74th for its per capita GDP, only one position after Turkey.

Finally, in Turkey, unlike other Muslim-majority countries, there is a strong tradition of separation of religion and state. Turkey's political system is based on separation of powers. In its geopolitical region, the determining factor of Turkey's policies is its democratic and secular political system, its choice of a robust, free, market economy (Customs Union with the EU) and a social tradition of reconciling the modern society with cultural identity, and guided through the legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's policy of «Peace at Home and Peace Abroad». In recent years, the Turkish economy, a complex mix of mod-

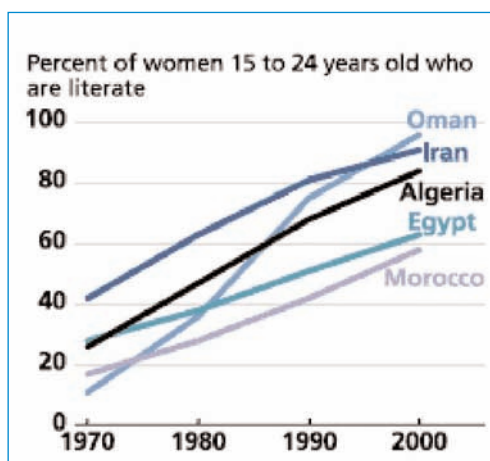


ern industry and commerce along with a traditional agriculture sector, has expanded particularly strongly, registering growth rates of 8.2% and 7.6% for the 2004 and 2005 fiscal years respectively. According to World Bank Organization statistics, Turkish total GDP is ranked 18th and its per capita percentage is ranked 73rd.

We are going to use the three following indicators to evaluate the woman empowerment: literacy rates, proportion in parliaments and contribution in labor. First of all, education and for life learning play an important role in the development of economy and society either for developed or for developing countries. Human capital is a basic factor that impels individual economic enlargement and improvement, but as well of non-economic effects, for example in health and social enrolment.

Woman illiteracy rate in Turkey is 22%, in Iran is 29% and in Egypt reaches 54%, while the same rate for Middle East and North Africa is 61% and the global rate is around 75%. Low educated women are quite possible to be unemployed in comparison to low educated men but also to high-educated women. In Turkey, for example, more than 40% of women aged between 25-64 without secondary education does not work, while 70% of men at the same education level and 63% of women holding degrees of higher education finds a job.

What we conclude by examining detailed statistic data is that overall participation in primary education is high for all three countries, in secondary education is satisfying for Iran and Egypt and less satisfying for Turkey, and in higher education the rates are very low for Iran and Turkey and little satisfying in Egypt. In general, we see that theocratic Iran and, EU candidate, Turkey have, more or less, the same proportion of woman illiteracy rate, while in generally considered developed Egypt almost one out of two women is illiterate.



Second, as regards woman proportion in national parliaments, statistics stands as below: in Egypt, in November 2005 elections, women took 9 out of 442 parliamentary seats, which is only 2%, and 18 out of 264 seats for the Senate, which is 6,8%, making it overall 4,4%. In Turkey, in November 2002 elections, women took 24 out of 550 seats, which is again 4,4% and finally in Iran, in February 2004 elections women took 12 out of 290 seats which is only 4,1%. As we see, in all three countries the women share in national parliaments is extremely low.

Finally, woman contribution in labor in Iran is estimated around 12%, in Egypt 21% and in Turkey 27%. In Turkey, woman salary is 22,5% lower than this of men, which is actually not bad even in comparison to some new EU members, but in a report made by Svetla Ntimitrova for Southeast European

Times, it is noted that Turkey should develop programs reassuring gender equity, access at labor market and education.

According to various thinkers, gender discrimination at labor in Egypt occurs due to cultural and economic reasons and woman employment is considered to be of low quality, productivity, devotion and credibility and not well paid, mainly referring to married women with children. V. Moghadam specifies the following six factors that make finding job difficult for women. First, law, as it is required father or husband's permission to travel abroad as well as for certain commercial acts; second, high illiteracy rates, low education level and quality of women; third, lack of acknowledgment and sensitization of governors and politicians; fourth, prohibiting labor conditions at private sector; fifth, lack of women movements and few woman participants at decision-making centers and, finally, many family responsibilities (breeding children and household). To sum up, the main characteristics of woman employment are that many women are occupied in agriculture, usually without payment, they are low-educated, they face prejudices for non-traditional sectors and the prevailing reason for searching a job is economic insufficiency.

According to Human Development Indicator of U.N of 1997, Turkey holds the 59th position among 146 countries and is the last among all the European states regarding gender discrimination. Inequity between sexes in Turkey has two aspects: first, the limited potentials in economic and social life, due to obstacles in access to, bad quality of educational system and cultural beliefs about woman role at house-holding and second region inequities. These two reasons result in a vicious circle, as woman employment is considered inappropriate and of low quality and therefore it is bad-paid and rare. Almost 8 out of 10 women are occupied in agriculture without payment or assurance. Therefore, it is quite impressive that since 1935 women are elected in governments. However, it should be noted that conditions of women employment begin to improve, especially for educated women in urban areas.

In addition, as Sarvichitsaz, the vice-president of Woman Committee of National Council of Iran, which is presented as exile shady government of Mudjahedin, declared in a series of interviews given in Greek media, some problems women used to face at the past have not actually changed. Even if this opinion stems from the rival political side, it is worth to quote her view saying that «for a while, with Khata-mi, in the West people thought that things have been improved. It is true that a kind of «liberalization» of woman clothing has been noticed but in reality nothing changed in legislation. Regime becomes stricter and stricter against women by prohibiting their demonstrations and repressing violently their gatherings.» When Shah was overthrown, million of women protested asking for more freedom but, instead, they lost the rights already had, as they were made to wear dresses covering their entire body, they lost their jobs and some of them were forced to immigrate. Violence and crudeness against women is the same against all of them irrelevant of social class, education, nationality or religion because this is how fundamentalists are and this is the law. Finally, Sarvichitsaz said that in contrary to other Muslim countries, Iranian women used to live in totally different conditions, as they used to be politically and socially active before Ayatollah Khomeini come to power and impose them return home, lose their jobs and their civil rights making them feel as second class citizens.

In general, the religious influence on social policies can be subtle or clearly identifiable, depending on the country's national political ideology. If it is a theocracy, like Iran, then religion plays a far more prominent role in social policymaking. Moreover, the trend in Islamic societies that has been most harmful to individualism seems to be institutionalized totalitarianism enforcing compliance with religious obligations, such as prayers, fasting, dress codes, gender segregation, and the like, all of which further erodes individual choices and freedoms, and only promotes intolerance. The most dangerous manifestation of this extreme authoritarianism is the institution of the so-called religious police, better known as the department of the «Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice» (Amr Bil Maruf wa Nai Al Munkar), employed as well in Iran.

Gender disparities persist in Iran, according to United Nations Population Fund. Women's participation in development is hindered by societal expectations regarding gender roles and laws that discriminate against women. Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was rejected by the Guardian Council in 2003 but is being considered by the national legislature. Discussion about a number of gender issues - including gender-based violence, women's legal and labour rights, and reducing the social vulnerability of women, especially those who are heads of households - is ongoing, driven by the 4th National Development Plan of Iran.

It should also be noted, however, that the Literacy Movement Organization, a major adult education programme, was established in Iran. Designed especially for those who never learned to read and write, the programme is credited with much of the country's success in reducing illiteracy. Taking in consideration that educating women and girls is a powerful lever for their own empowerment and for their country's development, LMO is an outstanding initiative.

In a European Parliament Report for Turkey, it is mentioned that, no matter the so far legal transformation, women continue to suffer honor crimes, making it imperative to align to European Community Acquis about gender equity and it is also underlined the lack of political will to eliminate violence against women. Moreover, Amnesty International blamed the government and the judicial system of Turkey for



their insufficiency to protect women victims of social and family violence, concluding that the degree of violence against women in Turkey is much bigger than in other countries and that social as well as judicial conditions are unfair and even terrifying for women.

What we conclude from the examination of the statistics and data given above is that, no matter the general belief which prevails in the West, the woman status in theocratic and characterized as extremely conservative Iran is not much different from the relative in «European» Turkey and in west-oriented, semi-secular and «moderate» Egypt. The three indicators we used, make it clear that female rates in the Islamic Republic of Iran are equal, not say better in some of them, than those in the two other countries which are often used as examples for the rest in the Islamic world and considered to be much more developed, making it therefore necessary to reassess and to look deep inside to the mideastern societies.

## ISLAM AND CONSTITUTION: *THE CASE OF IRAQ*

Stella Simantiraki

*The political process in Iraq doesn't seem to have reached the end of the line yet. One of the major steps was the drafting and voting of a new Constitution, which has been the result of long negotiations and compromises, where Islam and its role in the state had been one of the most controversial issues.*

Imitating the first Constitution of Iraq, which was drafted in 1925, during the British mandate, the Transitional Administrative Law of March 2004, which was adopted by the Interim Governing Council, states that Islam is «the official religion of the state» and that «is to be considered a source of legislation». It should, therefore, be considered as one of the sources of legislation and not the only source of legislation.

The role of Islam in the state has been one of the most controversial issues during the drafting process for the new Constitution, which was passed after a general referendum vote on October 15. On one hand, the Shi'a political parties wished a role for Islam to be recognized in the framework of the state, and their aim was to reassure that the Constitution would recognize the Islamic identity and character of Iraq, something that was misunderstood by many observers. None, however, from those parties stated or admitted that their wish was to establish the «rule of the jurisprudent» (wilayat al-faqih), as it is happening in Iran. Although, Shi'a clerics lead the Iranian system, a theocratic governing system, it is not accepted by every Shiite around the world and especially not by Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who is the leading figure, among Iraqi Shiite clerics, both inside the country and abroad. On the other hand, Sunni parties, although they disagreed in many issues with the Shi'a parties, their opinions coincided as far as the request for a more enhanced role for religion in the state goes.

The Constitution seemingly followed the wording of the Transitional Administrative Law concerning the role of Islam in Iraq. More specifically, in Article 2 (Chapter 1) it is stated that Islam

is considered to be «the official religion of the state» and «one of the basic sources of legislation», followed by a clause that assures that no law can contradict the principles of Islam. The Constitution, also, guarantees the Islamic identity of the majority of the Iraqi people and full religious rights for all individuals. In Article 3, has been added, among other things, that Iraq is part of the Islamic world.





Nevertheless, for a number of foreign analysts and experts, one of the most controversial articles, deals with the role of Islamic clerics in the judiciary. Article 90 (Chapter 2) states that the Supreme Federal Court should consist of a number of judges and Shari'a experts. A law that should be passed by two - thirds<sup>1</sup> of the parliament members will set out this number, according to the Constitution. Therefore, there have been concerns, during the drafting process, that Article 90 could allow clerics to dominate in that branch of governance and imitate the systems already applied in Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Supreme Federal Court disposes exceptionally important duties according to the new Constitution (Article 91): controls the Constitutionality of the existing laws and regulations, as well as this of the federal laws before being issued. Another significant competence of the Court is its possibility to interpret the Constitution; a text that has been created after hard negotiations and a number of compromises between the Shi'a, the Sunni and the Kurds, and the interpretation of which will undoubtedly be a battlefield in the future. Moreover, it has the authority to rule in cases that have emerged from the implementation of federal laws, but also, in disputes between the federal government and the governments of the regions and the provinces, as well as, in disputes between the governments of the regions or provinces. Finally, its duty includes the endorsement of the final results of the parliamentary general elections. It can consequently, be understood the reason why the Supreme Federal Court will play a significant role.

Concerning the role of Islam in the state, Shi'a and Sunni parties achieved finding common ground with the Kurdish parties, which are secular and believe that an Islamic state will attempt to succumb the Kurdish identity under the banner of Islam. Another matter connected with that of the status of Islam in future Iraq is the debate of women's rights. It was being claimed that a Constitution with Islamic elements would automatically deprive women from their rights - especially in relation with divorce and inheritance issues. The truth, though, is that only few articles deal with the protection of women's rights, therefore, the fear mentioned is not impossible to turn out to be real.

The conclusion seemingly is what many people fear - that is the strengthening of the role of Islam and the consequent establishment of a similar to the Iranian regime - is also what no one desires: nor the Shi'a parties, nor the Sunni, nor the Kurdish, nor the United States neither the rest of the western world; not even Iran itself would wish to see a Shi'a power arise, a power that would constitute a basic ideological threat to the Iranian hardliner clerics who champion clerical rule. It is clear to some, that Iran backed the political process in Iraq, as they realized that it was the only way that will lead to a sooner withdrawal of the American troops from the region; Iran's first priority, since they (Iranians) worried for their security.

As a result of the existing tensions between Iran and the United States, the latter will not decide to exit Iraq unless they are positive that the new «democracy» of this country is secular and not based on religion, and that Iran is not a threat to this process. Besides, in Iraq, Islamic power will diminish as long as other political and religious parties exist; parties that will enjoy freedom to compete with the Islamists.

What seems to be of outstanding importance in the process that has been taking place in Iraq, is whether the democracy that is on the way comes from the inside or not. Democracy cannot be imported; it should have its roots in traditions, cultures and values of the people that form the community of a country. If a similar process could be encouraged, a process that would occur in a natural way in Iraq, Iraqis will then have the chance to create a genuine Islamic democracy; and the only way by which the new Constitutional democracy of the country would be able to present itself as dominant, is the withdrawal of the occupying forces.

During the last decades many political and philosophical opinions have been formulated concerning the relation between state and religion and for the need of a new revised interpretation of Islam among religious thinkers, and new reflection among secular intellectuals and some religious thinkers about the path to modernity. A significant proposition from the Islamic reformers for the re-interpretation of Islam is based on the following: that is a central Quranic value; and from this point, they are able to elaborate other values, like gender equality, human rights and democracy. Regarding the separation



between religion and the state, they believe that these corrupt one another; hence, their separation is vital for the survival of both.

This was the situation till December 2005, when Iraqis voted for a permanent government, and a few months have passed since then, with no major changes or events. Today, May 2006, the new administration, the first piece of good news from Iraq in many months, manages to maintain a balance between Shi'a, Sunni and Kurdish ambitions and succeeds in fostering the «Iraqi-sation» - as some call it - the US and British governments hope for. A man, product of Shi'ite political Islam, Nuri al-Maliki, heads the cabinet. He is a member of the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) who is influenced by Iran but according to some does not take orders from Tehran. The highly important news is that the Sunnis stayed on the political scene, and managed to secure three important posts. Despite that, there has not yet been a full withdrawal of the allied forces, but a timetable has been set, according to which the first handover date will be in July, as British officials have said.

## MOROCCO, READY TO CHANGE?

Anastasia Maria Kalliga Chrysogelou

*Morocco remained colonised for centuries while developing a rich culture blended from Arab, European, Berber and African influences. Its strategic position makes it very important for the West. It is also a commercial path from America to Africa to Europe and the Middle East. Today, 50 years after its independence, Morocco, is sometimes speeding and some other times walking on the rough road of changes.*

The political scene had already begun to change since the 1990s. The changes of the past decade were reinforced not only by the new political tendencies related to the national issues, but also by the abandoning of views against constitutional reforms and the development of social political plans, which the monarch intended to apply. These developments helped late King Hassan II to lead the country to two very important constitutional changes in 1992 and in 1996 respectively.

Currently, coordinated efforts (which have been made for the best function of a modern constitution) have partly come to fruition. Within the framework of this relatively democratic environment (which is steadily being established) many moderate Islamic parties were allowed to operate legally. Political prisoners were released and notorious and officially «non-existent» prisons were closed. Restrictions on the press were eased and a programme of economic liberalisation attracted foreign investment. These reforms, have marked the end of a dark period of authoritarianism and political tension.

The key change, which the new monarch Mohammed VI has initiated, is the defense and the legal strengthening of women empowerment with the adoption of a new family law which is in tune with the Islamic principles of the Koran. This, known as Mudawana in the Islamic world was put into force in 2004 with the aim of replacing an earlier law, which gave men many rights within family. With this new law (Mudawana) any man, who wishes to divorce his wife is obliged to go to court and ask officially for his wife's leave. This important change in the family law constitutes most important safe net for women, and it is expected to keep low the rates of the abandoned women and children who live homeless in poverty.



Today, Morocco is aiming to enter the international market and thus it is adjusting itself to the international trade requirements. Up to now there are considerable steps that have been taken towards this target concerning, most importantly, privatizations. Moreover, Morocco constitutes also a transit center for Algerian gas exports to Spain and Portugal, across the Strait of Gibraltar via the Maghreb-Europe Gas (MEG) pipeline. Morocco has proven oil reserves of 2 million barrels and gas reserves of 43 billion cubic feet (Bcf). In 2000, a new oil and gas field discovery in the Talsint region near the border with Algeria raised hopes that Morocco could add another important asset to its economy, reducing its energy deficit and attracting new investment to the country.

Big steps of progress have been made for the improvement of the infrastructure, i.e. the very old system of transportation. This programme includes the construction of colossal hotel units in six coastal regions, which are expected to raise not only the domestic tourism, but also and most importantly the overseas tourism. In 2004, USA signed a trade agreement with Morocco, in order to foster their relationship with one of their most important partners. Within a larger economic development framework by 2010, 95% of the products, which are exported from both countries, are expected to be customs free. Therefore, it is foreseen that Morocco will very soon constitute a trade hub of American industries and other foreign investors.

Although, the situation seems to have sufficiently changed, the country still suffers from many social and economic problems. Unemployment, poverty, urbanization as well as illiteracy compose thorny issues, which seek immediate solutions. Unemployment in urban areas is reaching 12,3%, whilst in many rural areas it is even surpassing 20%. Furthermore the increasing phenomenon of urbanization is connected with the lack of investment strategies in rural areas, the key factor behind peasant immigration.

Morocco also faces problems in the south, where the issue of Western Sahara remains unresolved, Its refusal to join the African Union (because of the official political recognition of the Arab Sahrawi Democratic Republic by South Africa), contributed to its political isolation in the region. Large demonstrations took place last May in the two biggest western cities of Morocco El-Ayoum and Smara. The violent way, by which the crisis was thwarted by Moroccan authorities, complicated matters even more.

This incident pointed out a turn to the history of this conflict and indicates that Morocco does not have under full control the situation in Western Sahara. The demonstrators might not enlist support to Polisario Front (FP), but they supported a more general framework for independence. The disturbing fact is that both protagonists of the crisis remain steadily uncompromising to non-retreated positions, a fact which makes the work of UN as a mediator too difficult. Moreover, many expect that the intense interest the USA show lately for the region of North Africa, will help towards averting the crisis. The USA, in their effort to enlarge NATO's sphere of influence, want to use Morocco's army as a means for ensuring the stability in the region. At the same time, American companies, have invested vast capital in utilizing Algeria's physical resources (oil, natural gas), so they do not want any tension in the region.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia last February seeking to accelerate the creation of a counter-terrorism alliance in North Africa to combat efforts by terrorists to establish a new network across the region. The US have become particularly sensitive to efforts by al-Qaeda to establish major network linking groups and cells throughout the Maghreb states and in largely Muslim sub-Saharan Africa, which constitute an increasing important source of energy supplies for the U.S. For this reason Rumsfeld stressed the Algerian President Abdelaziz-Bouteflika to co-operate with Morocco and Tunisia against the jihadists. The US are currently training counter-terrorism forces across the region under the Trans-Sahara Counter Initiative and also builds a vast military surveillance base at the region to monitor jihadist movements.

In May 2003, 41 people were killed and many were injured in a series of suicidal bomb attacks in the business capital Casablanca. This climate of uncertainty and violence which Morocco came to face with, led it to side with the international antiterrorist front. Therefore, as a sign of gratitude George W. Bush recognized the country as the most reliable non-NATO Washington's ally in the region.



# ALGERIE DEROULEMENTS INTERIEURS AVEC RESULTATS INCERTAINS.

Stella Athanasoulia

*Début mars, le Ministère algérien de la Justice a annoncé la libération de plus de 2000 islamistes, ex-combattants sur la base du projet d'amnistie qui vise à la promotion de la réconciliation nationale après dix ans de guerre civile. Le Reuters marque que cette procédure constitue une épreuve critique aux efforts du gouvernement à porter la stabilité, dans ce pays qui joue un rôle important pour la sécurité de la région méditerranéenne.*

La fin de la guerre froide a eu des conséquences graves au pays, dont les plus importantes étaient l'impuissance de contrôler l'ensemble de l'espace national et la réduction des revenus qui venaient auprès de la coopération avec l'Union Soviétique. On présume que s'il n'y avait pas de revenus du pétrole, ce serait très difficile d'éviter un effondrement total, égal à celui de la Somalie.

En tout cas, la guerre civile entre les islamistes et les forces armées a marginalisé le pays et inter-

rompu son cours de développement. L'espoir de sortir de la crise a paru avec l'élection du Président Abdelaziz Bouteflika en 1999. Le nouveau Président a mis en effet un projet de reconstruction de l'Etat avec des réformes aux structures et aux services, au système éducatif et judiciaire et, surtout, au secteur économique. Son objectif était le passage à l'économie du marché, l'accomplissement de rythmes de croissance élevés, l'attraction des investissements étrangers et l'amélioration du rôle international du pays, tant au niveau régional (Afrique, Méditerranée) que mondial.

Pour réussir à appliquer ces réformes, il était important d'apporter la paix entre les deux côtés du conflit et d'approcher le Front Islamique de Libération. En 1999, a eu lieu un référendum concernant le projet «Concorde Civile», qui a offert une amnistie partielle aux responsables de la guerre civile. Après la réélection de Bouteflika en 2004, les Algériens ont été appelés aux urnes en Septembre 2005 pour se prononcer sur la «Charte pour la Réconciliation Nationale».

Depuis le Déclaration de l'Indépendance et la création de la République Algérienne en 1962, le phénomène du recours à un processus de référendum n'est pas rare. Jusqu'aujourd'hui, 11 plébiscites ont eu lieu en Algérie,

la plupart concernant l'autodétermination, les projets de Constitution et, plus récemment, la réconciliation nationale.

Selon les chiffres officiels le taux de participation des Algériens était 80% dont le 97% a voté pour la Charte. Cependant, il faut souligner la disparité des résultats, car les partis de l'opposition en doutent.

Comme le professeur Benjamin Stora marque, «la vraie question de ce scrutin est de savoir si l'objectif des autorités algériennes, qui est de dépasser ou effacer les 150.000 morts et les environ 12.000 disparus de la guerre des années 1990, peut être considéré comme atteint. Les référendums de 1999 et de 2005 ont posé une question morale, car l'amnistie concerne en premier chef la société». Selon son analyse, il est «difficile d'effacer les souffrances des victimes car elles font toujours surface. Le processus juridique n'arrive jamais à fabriquer complètement l'oubli, puisque les acteurs continuent à réclamer justice».



En plus, la question de l'impunité heurte beaucoup les familles. L'idée qu'il s'agissait d'un plébiscite destiné à renforcer le pouvoir a été fortement dénoncée par toute l'opposition algérienne. Parmi les partisans du boycott ou du NON, on retrouve des adversaires d'hier, comme le Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS) de Hocine Ait Ahmed, le Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie (RCD) de Saïd Saadi ou l'ancien PC algérien.

Cependant, il existe aussi un aspect du problème, autre que le moral. Il s'agit d'une dimension culturelle et régionale qui se démontre par la répartition géographique des résultats du référendum. Kenchela, la ville d'où est partie la guerre d'indépendance de 1954, totalisait 99% de votants, en même temps qu'à Kabylie, la région berbérophone, le taux remontait de 10 à 15%. Cette différence montre un problème de la société algérienne, qui compte presque cent ans d'existence mais a toujours été minimisé par les analystes. Il s'agit des revendications berbères et de la lutte pour la reconnaissance de leurs demandes. Mr. Maxime Ait Kaki, docteur en science politique et journaliste, dans sa publication « Les Etats du Maghreb face aux revendications berbères » dans le Journal *Politique Etrangère* analyse tous les aspects du problème et son dynamique acquise aux états du Maghreb.

Les historiens font des Berbères les descendants des populations autochtones de l'Afrique du Nord. Ils n'ont jamais réellement eu de structuration politique, ni revendiqué de souveraineté. Le seul vestige de cette longue histoire est la langue, le tamazight, autour de la préservation de laquelle s'est basé le mouvement berbériste du XXe siècle. La berberophonie représente aujourd'hui 18 millions d'individus, mais la population d'origine berbère se calcule à 54 millions aux pays de l'Afrique du Nord et en Europe, surtout en France.

En Algérie, la question a paru en 1920, mais elle est devenue particulièrement évidente en 1949 avec la « crise berbère », pendant laquelle les berbères Algériens ont refusé la désignation du mouvement anticolonialiste comme « arabe ». A Kabylie, au nord du pays où se trouve la plupart de la population berbère (presque 7 millions), le mouvement berbériste connaît un nouvel essor et il est « au bord de la rupture avec l'Etat central ».

Le « Printemps Berbère » de 1980 représente la première manifestation publique de la revendication berbériste. Jusqu'à ce moment les rares lieux d'expression de leur activisme, étaient les universités et les enceintes sportives. Après plus d'un mois de lutte avec le pouvoir central, ils n'ont pas obtenu gain de cause mais le mouvement s'est vite étendu à l'ensemble de la population. Graduellement, le Mouvement Culturel Berbère (MCB) a officiellement articulé les exigences berbères en Algérie. Après les changements internationaux de 1989-1990, le champ politique algérien s'ouvre et « le multipartisme, la liberté d'association et de la presse sont autant de nouveaux paramètres qui permettent la structuration de la question berbère dans l'espace social et politique ». Deux partis, le Front des Forces Socialistes (FFS) et le Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie (RCD), issu du MCB, ont inscrit dans leurs chartes respectives la reconnaissance du tamazight comme « langue nationale et officielle ».

Cependant, les autorités centrales refusaient de reconnaître le tamazight, en étudiant seules les modalités de son introduction dans l'enseignement et la communication, ce qu'au regard des organisations berbéristes était insignifiant. En 1994-1995 une radicalisation de la mobilisation populaire a été marquée, lors de l'enlèvement du chanteur Kabyle, Lounes Matoub, en 1994 et de son assassinat quatre ans plus tard. Depuis le déclenchement de l'insurrection du « Printemps Noir » en avril 2001 avec des centaines d'individus morts, la Kabylie est entrée dans une dissidence sans précédent. La question est de savoir si le culturalisme berbère initial n'est pas en train de muer en nationalisme à Kabylie.

Le mouvement des archs, qui confédère l'ensemble des tribus de Kabylie, consiste à une forme d'auto-administration où les décisions sont prises par consensus dans le cadre de « conclaves ». Les mots « maîtres » du mouvement sont « flexibilité » et « horizontalité » et ils ont fait preuve d'une capacité de mobilisation impressionnante, en organisant des manifestations gigantesques à Kabylie.

« Le mouvement a acquis une légitimité régionale, difficilement contestable », souligne Mr. Ait Kaki. « Les partis kabyles qui avaient d'abord contesté son régionalisme ont fini par se plier à ses décisions ».



et en 2002, le Président Bouteflika annonçait la constitutionalisation du tamazight. L'ensemble des revendications du mouvement s'exprime dans la « plate-forme d'El-Kseur » - une charte du mouvement demandant un statut de langue officielle pour le tamazight et le retrait des brigades de gendarmerie de Kabylie- caractérisée « scellée et non-négociable ». Cette démarche est redoutée par les partis kabyles qui craignent que la région tombe dans les bras des autonomistes. Ce discours autonomiste n'a cessé de gagner du terrain, depuis le lancement, en 2001, du Mouvement pour l'Autonomie de la Kabylie (MAK)».

La non-satisfaction des revendications berbéristes pourrait déboucher sur des velléités séparatistes des régions berbérophones. En trente ans, la dynamique de « reberbérisation » des Berbères initiée par les animateurs du « Printemps Kabyle » « n'a fait que prendre de l'ampleur, au point d'avoir débordé le cadre national. La question berbère prend ainsi une dimension de plus en plus trans- et internationale et le risque d'une « déflagration » généralisée est infime. Avec un poids démographique d'une vingtaine de millions d'individus, rien n'interdit d'imaginer un renversement de la donne géopolitique en Afrique du Nord ».

## ISRAELI ARMY AT A CROSSROADS

Anastasia Maria Kalliga Chrysogelou

*From the establishment of the Jewish state until now, the Israeli - Arab conflict , plays a fundamental role in the shaping of the society. After the '73 War, Israel has been taught by its mistakes. In the frame of the new era, which followed, the Israeli army has set new goals. Rabin, who promoted the expansion of the interior war industry and the encouragement of defensive programmes, has taken the leading role in this new era. The economic and political profits are very important, making the Israeli army one of the best-trained and equipped armies in the entire world. The change in the foreign politics of Israel in the early 90s with the initiation of the peace - negotiations of Oslo, has directly influenced the army and in general the people of Israel. Today, divisions between secular and ultra-Orthodox Jews continue to cause problems to the Israeli Society.*

The Arab- Israeli conflict is probably the key issue that has formed the character of the Israeli society. A society which is directly related with and influenced by the armed forces, as these play a fundamental role in the formation of civil life. The unique historical circumstances, in which Israel was born, created a real « military nation ». As a result of this prolonged war the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have a bigger social influence in Israel than any other democratic society. The fact that many generals stepped in politics expresses how powerful the army is. This tremendous conflict traditionally is defined by an imbalance of power, both in arms and in military manpower. Moreover, the land of Israel is much smaller in comparison to Arab countries, a fact that puts it in a disadvantageous position as far as its strategic depth goes. However, IDF managed to cover its weakness by its strict and realistic training in which it submitted its soldiers, thus creating an effective modern and high quality army.



Rabin played both a fundamental role in the organization of the Israeli army and generally in the building up of the national security. He was able to influence the political thought and concept in depth in the past 40 years from different leading political positions every time (as chief of staff 1965-1968, as ambassador of Israel in the US 1968-1973, as Minister of Defense 1984-1990 and as Prime Minister 1974-1977/1992-1995). The defeat of the Israeli armed forces in Yom Kippur in 1973, taught the political leadership that it was essential for the army to be placed on new bases.

While being Prime Minister of Israel from 1974-1977, Rabin gave special emphasis to the reorganization and the reinforcement of the Israeli armed forces. Within this new historical framework the supply of modern weapons constituted a stable political line of the government. This option had the aim to balance power (basically military power), which would drastically restrict the possibility of a new war. New anti-tank weapons, advanced radar-systems and new helicopters came to be added to the Israeli military collection.

Especially concerning the military equipment, the efforts of Israel to buy defensive weapon-systems were faced by difficulties, as its main suppliers at times seemed to be unwilling to develop a stable and serious commercial relationship with the country. On many occasions the development of coincidental commercial bonds with Western countries proved that this kind of relationship is part of a political-game and not a stable relationship of trust.

The defense-industry of Israel was born exactly at the time that the country had to face urgent military needs. On the one hand, the fear that the IDF will be totally depended by the West, and on the other hand, the comparative lower cost of the local production of weapons, in opposition to the expensive international market of weapons, lead the leadership of Israel to find another way to supply and equip the army of Israel. In addition, a strong industry of weapon production, besides economical profits, would also play in the future a fundamental role in the effort of the expansion of the secret diplomacy. As history remained to confirm, in the 80s and 90s the sale of weapons and new technologies became one of the most effective means of diplomatic and political claims.

However, the most important political and economical benefit is that Israel stopped being influenced by Western embargoes for weapons, as Israel itself has become a self-reliant supplier of these. Israel has today, managed - (due to huge commercial conventions with countries such as Romania, Poland, China, Philippines, Chile and Turkey - to compete with success with the biggest weapon industries of the West, causing simultaneously new turbulences (changes) to the balance of the free competition in the global market.

Today, the export of weapons is probably the most vital branch of the war industry. The viability of the war industry depends on the rate of its exportations. Analytically, Israel exports 70% of its production, while its annual income is approximately three billion US dollars per year, a fact which makes Israel the fifth biggest force in the field of arms-weapon-systems globally.

Furthermore, the formation of a strong weapons industry helped the economy further by creating many new occupation positions. The foundation of modern universities guarantees quality education for the students, which in the future would have the appropriate skills and the necessary know-how to be recruit by the weapon industries. The biggest secret of the weapons industry's success is well hidden in the immediate cooperation that the industries have with the universities and the army. The results of this complex cooperation is the emergence of a triangular network of information around new technologies and perspectives with final receiver IDF; a fact which makes the new weapon systems, technologically, more advanced and thus making the Israeli army more efficient.

Nevertheless, after 50 years the Israeli army seems not only to need a new ideological perspective, but also structure modifications. Indisputably, the change of a constitution, which plays a significant role in the daily life of Israel, influences the whole society. In the framework of this change, the ethical code of IDF, was designed to constitute the ideological link between the Israeli society and the army.

However, the new military code couldn't respond satisfactorily to its role. The long-term military plan «Kelah», which was designated for the years 2003-2008, lasted only for two years, not because of a change in perception or because of different threats, but rather because of changes in the securi-



ty budget. After its collapse, the army doesn't look ready to face radical changes and cutbacks; therefore during 2006 it is supposed to maintain the status quo and prepare a new military plan for 2007-2012.

The year 2006 marks the beginning of a transitional period, which is expected to last for three years. This period would enable the army to contract business relationships with various countries and make methodical changes without causing «shockwaves» and upheavals not only to the structure of the IDF but also to the Jewish society in general.

Furthermore, cutbacks are expected to be made in the military service, reducing mandatory military service for all soldiers by four months. In addition, soldiers with administrative positions will serve only for two years. This principle idea points out the need for separation of the operating units from the staff units, in order for the IDF to become more effective and flexible. This programme has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the army would save funds, but, on the other hand, it would also diminish the size of the combatant forces. The army plans to compensate partly for the shortage of combat support soldiers by making better use of the women's force, by recruiting them even to traditionally male position such as field intelligence officers. Currently, over 30% of recruited girls are released on religious grounds. This statistic is overly high and the IDF intends to target this phenomenon.

The focal point of the reform includes also the officer's schools, in which the shortened service will obviously lead not only to shorter training periods and shorter courses but also to the discharge of another few thousand persons by the career army. This means that in order to achieve greater efficiency, some of the corps will be abolished and a single operational body will be created, which will obey to a specific combat doctrine.

By all means this new model of organizational structure is intended to give raise to a different ground force army, which is fundamentally distinct from the army we currently know of. This new model of mandatory service is definitely better suited to the needs of society, better adjusted to the existing threats (especially now that Iran launches serious threats against the Jewish nation) and more in tune with technological developments.

Moreover, the new marked tendency by NATO to upgrade its relations with Israel reinforces the IDF. The Istanbul declaration, which was adopted on June 2004 and followed the Mediterranean Dialogue Initiative, provides a strategic cooperation between NATO members and seven Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. For the first time, official Israeli representatives, were invited not only to participate in the NATO sessions but also to participate in multilateral NATO maneuvers. Within its framework of cooperation, Israel was also invited to participate in NATO security activities against terror threats.

After September 11, the nature of the threats which are confronted by NATO have changed further. This fact has also altered NATO's attitude towards Israel. For the foreseeable future the major threat for NATO is radical Islam, whose primary sources of power lie mainly in the Middle East. Therefore, Israel, which is vulnerable to the same threat and has earned much experience in combating, would be integrated in NATO activities.

From Israel's point of view, such a process awards Israeli important political, strategic, military and economic potential advantages, and imposes no excessive restrictions on it. From the diplomatic aspect, strengthening the security cooperation with NATO will considerably enhance Israel's political status, which until now has acted with the image of a fairly isolated country in the international community. Furthermore, this kind of cooperation between NATO and Israel will improve Israel's deterrence capability regarding potential enemies threatening it (mainly Iran and Syria) and will raise the expansion of export markets for Israeli weapon and combat systems.

However, the ideological split which is noted in the IDF and other security services is reflecting divisions within the Jewish society (especially after the victory of Hamas in the recent elections) and might make members of NATO hesitant to establish full strategic relationship with Israel as long as the Israeli- Palestinian conflict continues and a political agreement is not in sight.



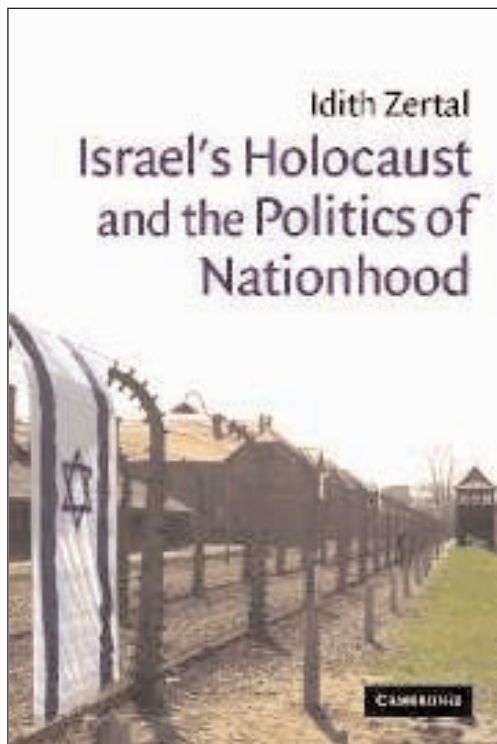


**Idith Zertal**

## *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood,* Cambridge: CUSP, 2005

**Chryssoula Toufexis, Izabella Koukorava**

*Idith Zertal, a leading member of the new generation of revisionist historians in Israel, presents through her analysis the way in which Israel's collective memory of death and trauma was created and re-produced, and how it has been processed, coded and put in use in Israel's public space, particularly during the half century which has lapsed since the destruction of the European Jewry. This book offers a new perspective on Israel, its history and the construction of national identity.*



The author opens the book with three constitutive Zionist- Jewish defeats, which uses them as a base for her theoretical approach in the rest of her book. Through them, she presents how some events are being transformed by state actors or those who try to obtain a state entity and how some myths are born in order to serve the aims of their spiritual parents.

The lost battle of the northern outpost of Tel-Hai (1920), where six fighters were killed while the site was abandoned, and the death of Yosef Thumpeldor, a Zionist-Revisionist leader, was the first event in the Zionist history that Zertal refers to have obtained - soon enough- a mythical extent through the dead leader's supposed last words. Hard heated debate burst out between scholars and the Zionist leadership about the way the facts really took place and in which death was interpreted by those left behind, while the memory of the dead was constructed, reconstructed and deployed. Zeev Jabotinsky was one of those scholars and political leaders, who searched through the testimonies of the survivors and the myth of symbolic "beautiful death" that followed, and raised doubts about Zionist "theory of death" and the "authenticity" of Israel's history formulated by Zionists. According to the writer, these kinds of symbols are vital to the existence of a new-born society, fighting for its land and shaping patriotic sentiments to its new generation.

Twenty three years after Tel-Hai, in 1943, the Jewish ghetto uprisings in Nazi -occupied Poland played their part at that formation procedure of the Zionist «theory of death» and the purposes which laid in ambush. Despite the various differences between the motives, the circum-

stances and the desired outcomes of those battles, given in European grounds this time, Zionists presented them as a realization of Zionist values connecting them with Tel-Hai battle. The motives for viewing the uprisings as Zionist acts extended in many fields. The imperative need to urge patriotic sentiments of self-sacrifice and heroism (Massada) to the well-settled Zionist collective of Palestine, the will to prove the existence of a new Jewish generation following the Zionist values in the Diaspora, the intention to give a global dimension at the Zionist fight and, at the same time, to establish an uncontested link between the fate of European Jewry in war times and the right to a Jewish state in Palestine after war were the basic reasons for interpreting the acts of the rebels as such. Even though, the prospect of total annihilation of the Diaspora constructive youth put Leaders of Zion under consideration and forced them to alter their approach. Their efforts for presenting the Warsaw uprisings connected to Zionism confronted contradiction spirit from many of the still-living participants. According to them, the rebellion was just a matter of survival.

The Exodus affair (1947) involved 4500 Jewish survivors from the Displaced Persons German camps, which were sited at the south of France, and embarked for Palestine. At this time, Palestine was under the British Blockade and the matter was investigated by the UN committee, UNSCOP. When the vessel approached Palestine shore, after an unequal battle, British captured the vessel and returned the refugees to their port of origin. France rejected British demands and denied to force the Jewish refugees to descend on French shore and, finally, they were sent back to Germany. The Zionist leadership didn't miss the occasion to take again the advantage of this unpleasant event and the worldwide press coverage for the realization of their goals. The writer raises a rhetoric question of whether Exodus passengers were given the opportunity to decide by themselves their fate and chose the option of disembarking in French territorial waters than landing back in Germany. According to the author's conclusions, they were not free masters of their fates; from one hand, from the very first moment that the war ended, they entrusted their lives and meagre possessions to the Zionist agents as most of the countries of the world were barred to them, and on the other hand, the Zionist leaders lead the situation towards preventing any solution other than Germany devising the whole affair to fit their own needs.

The second chapter examines the legal and judicial dimension through which the Israeli society and official authorities tried to confront the wrongful deeds of Jewish drama during Holocaust. Israel had proclaimed and actually made itself home destination to numerous survivors and refugees after WW II, and saw itself as the historical, material, moral and legal heir of those murdered. The fact that survivors found themselves sharing a new country with their former persecutors- those Jewish inmates that were responsible to the Germans for the proper management of each camp (the Nazi collaborators -kapos)- inflamed social life. Despite the huge range of casualties provoked during the first Arab-Israeli war (1948) extended widely from material to human resources, laws relevant with Holocaust and its remembrance, the accused and the accusers were introduced into Israel's legal code, generating serious debates between its supporters and the law enforcement community. Questions were raised about why the settlement of this social predicament, which was clearly a second-rate issue, had taken priority among the other problems. At the future, a critical eye would be able to reveal the whole mantle of victimhood which was promoted, in every chance given, during Israel's nation building. According to the writer, what is certain is that the formulation of laws and the trials that followed reflected and helped mold the «spirit of the times».

At the third chapter, Zertal examines the ways in which the Holocaust discourse formulated, from its repression of the memories to the reestablishment of the grief back to collective memory, through A. Eichmann's trial and its enormous impact on civilian and military Israeli elites and leadership and their perception of 1967 war crisis. Numerous references had been made



prior to 1957, comparing the Arab leaders with Hitler or the Palestinians with the Nazis, in order for the Holocaust memories to be transferred in Middle East reality. Yet, the event that would organize and mobilize the holocaust in the service of Israeli politics was the Eichmann Trial Event, and therefore would «create a false sense of the imminent danger of mass destruction and total annihilation», through the transplanting of one threat, that of the Nazis, into another, the threat from the Arab world.

The Eichmann Trial served to create a «national consciousness building» and for renewing «national unity through memory», against the Arabs. The aim was to use the meaning of European Jewery destruction, within justification for the establishment and existence of Israel, infiltrating memories of the Holocaust, primarily into the new generation and, secondly, to those Israelis who have never felt the impact of Nazism. Another objective of the trial was the «sanctification of every inch of the Israeli soil for the Jewish settlement», stretching the necessity of the protection of the Jews by the Jews and their state. The Eichmann Trial swept through Israel's society, and Israeli militarism and security consciousness were boosted. Thus, it gave new meaning to the fight against the Arab enemy, when one enemy was combined to the other.

The trial obtained further significance after June 1967, where any military threat or rival against Israel meant a new holocaust, evoking the old culture of victimhood and of a nation beleaguered by an anti-Semitic world». The internal Israel, economic, social and political interests were combined with the rhetoric hatred of Arab leaders making thus an Israeli - Arab war inevitable. After the Six Day War, the Israeli occupation of Sinai, the West Bank and the Golan Heights was conceived as a «victory over Auschwitz» a piece of land then, became non-negotiable transforming the State of Israel into the Land of Israel.

In the forth chapter, the author aims to reestablish Hannah Arendt's image and her loyalty towards Judaism, Jewish people, Zionism and Israel, the main issues that she was accused of lacking, in a campaign directed against her, by the scholarly community in Israel, when she published her book about the Eichmann Trial, a report of the way in which the trial was conducted, its aims and lessons. The book that revolved around three central issues, - Eichmann and the Nazis, the collaboration of Jews with the Germans during the Holocaust, and last, Israel and the court it established, being critical about the propaganda which Ben Gurion had imported to the event, in order to use it as a means to serve his policy on the construction of nationhood - turned out to be intolerable in the early 1960s.

The aim of the fifth chapter is to trace the way in which Holocaust memories were infiltrated and mixed together with the ongoing Arab - Israeli conflict and connected with the Israeli discourse of power. To trace the «fatal» effect created by «sanctification of Israeli military power, of homeland and its sacred borders and of death for the sake of them», when this sanctification was likened to the Holocaust.

One of the most dangerous national myths created at the basis of the Zionist's vision of a Jewish homeland, states the author through Arendt's skepticism, was that «throughout history the Jews were not history makers but history sufferers», a myth opting to discharge the victim of responsibility. Through this, a perception of anti Semitism was perceived, «where the world is a hostile place with only Jews and anti Semites». Zionism sought solution through the establishment of a Jewish State. Therefore, Israeli power and the Jewish State were connected with the history of total powerlessness and victimhood. Memory of the Holocaust was invested in the Arab - Israeli dispute and extracted it, from its political and historical dimensions «in a way that the two situations were bound together, sustaining one another». The 1967 Six Day War restored to this an additional central element: The State's and the Land's borders. «Israel's military victory was perceived as total salvation from absolute destruction, shaping not only national consciousness but also national being». The author is pointing out that the Zionist project, by deliberately refraining from defining its territorial borders, had stimulated the notion of «Greater

Israel». The homeland was then perceived, from all parties of Israel, to be a «living body», whose borders are sacred and renunciation of any part of this was linked to the threat of total destruction. A discourse, which was heightened by the Holocaust and every withdrawal from occupied territory during hostilities, would be likened to it.

Therefore, by the wake of the 1973 War, the Jewish settlers in Sinai and the West Bank had become the «self - appointed bearers» of the Holocaust discourse, in its relation to the withdrawal from their territories. They perceived themselves as «the only true Jews of the world and of Israel», projecting themselves on their political opponents who were in favor of peace, portraying them as traitors, whose main purpose was to endanger the life of the community. The process of Nazification of the Arabs, which began in the late 1940's and reached its height with the settlers in the 1980's and 1990's, led, in the end, to the tragic assassination of the Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

This book constitutes a powerful historic analysis through which Idith Zertal's penetrating eye discloses at her reader a whole new- and, maybe, disturbing for many- perspective in Israel's project of nation building, its power politics and in its perception of the conflict with the Palestinians.



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