

PATRIOTS

FOR EUROPE FOUNDATION



DECADE AFTER
ARAB SPRING:
TURKEY, LIBYA
& SYRIA

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE
ARAB SPRING, ITS CAUSES,
CONSEQUENCES AND IMPACT
ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

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the European Union**

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INTRODUCTION

The publication *Decade after the Arab Spring: Turkey, Libya & Syria* primarily analyzes the modern political science phenomenon of the 21st century, which is called the **Arab Spring**.¹ The project addresses the complex implications of the Arab Spring towards Europe and the European Union in a clearly predefined timeline since its outbreak, evaluating its consequences after ten years and the resulting issues aimed primarily at Libya, Syria and Turkey.

The Arab Spring, as a revolutionary wave of demonstrations, protests and unrest, redefined the European Union's existing geo-strategic concepts and security and foreign policy towards the Middle East and North Africa and Turkey, and demanded a new flexible, prompt and coherent EU workshop concept.

The desire for freedom often needs an external impulse to fully surface and turn into a real revolutionary zeal. As revolutions overthrew authoritarian governments, a scenario of redrawing the political map of the region began to emerge. The triggers of the revolutions varied from country to country, but the main causes were comparable in some regimes.

In Tunisia, the street vendor Bouazizi set fire in despair due to economic difficulties and corrupt local authorities. In Egypt, a young businessman, Khaled Saeed, was arrested and tortured to death by police. The deeply resonant incident mobilized young people to protest against the brutality of President Hussein Mubarak's regime. People in Sudan have demonstrated against al-Bashir's autocracy, while in Algeria, mass protests have erupted against President Bouteflik's fifth term in power.

The revolutions mentioned demonstrate a common cross-cutting dynamic: the absence of a single leading force, which has led to the mobilization of various groups, including young people, women, workers and intelligentsia, all of whom have played a key role in the protests.² The catalyst for these events in Tunis was the overthrow of Tunisian dictator Ben Ali in January 2011 (he has been in power since 1987). The revolutionary spirit soon spread to Egypt (Mubarak ruled from 1981). The revolutionary waves continued with mass protests by the Sudanese people and overthrew President al-Bashir's regime in December 2018, which he ruled since 1989. The Arab

¹ A series of protests and demonstrations in the region against the Middle East and North African regimes has become known as "Arab Spring" (Arabic: ar-Rabi al-Arabiya), On: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12339521>, (17.12.2011)

² <https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/webdossiers/arab-spring-africa-ten-years-after>

Spring launched reforms in Morocco and finally the Algerian population forced President Bouteflik to resign in 2019 (he was in power since 1999). The popular revolutionary slogan "*Ash-sha 'b yurīd isqāṭ an-nizām*" - "the people want to overthrow the regime" sounded in the squares of these countries, was the slogan of defiance against long-standing authoritarian regimes.³

While the above-mentioned revolutions succeeded in overthrowing the heads of the regimes in large-scale popular protests and uprisings, in two countries the development of a much more violent and drastic trajectory took hold. In **Libya** on February 17, initially peaceful demonstrations erupted into a revolution that escalated until the intervention of NATO forces. Colonel Gaddafi, who had ruled ruthlessly since 1969, was captured and killed on October 20, 2011 after the Battle of Sirte. Images of his public defenestration by opposition rebels have traveled the world.⁴

One leader's response to the Arab events was so brutal and persistent that it plunged his country into a state of humanitarian catastrophe and civil war. This country is **Syria**, and the leader is President Bashar al-Assad. The conflict began on March 15, 2011 during nationwide demonstrations, which were the logical outcome of a wave of protests. The protesters demanded the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, as well as the end of his nearly five-decade-long *Ba'athist* government.

Outside the Arab world, the imaginary tectonic waves of the Arab Spring spread to the **Republic of Turkey**. In May 2013, a group of activists organized a peaceful space in Istanbul's Gezi Park. They protested against the Turkish government's plans to demolish the park in order to build a replica of the Ottoman-era military barracks Taksim, which would include a shopping center. The forced eviction of protesters from the park and the excessive use of police forces sparked an unprecedented wave of mass demonstrations. During the first three weeks, about 3 million people took to the streets across Turkey to protest against a wide range of concerns⁵ about Turkey's future.

³ <https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/webdossiers/arab-spring-africa-ten-years-after>

⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-gaddafi-finalhours-idUSTRE79K43S20111021>

⁵ <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2019/10/24/legacy-of-gezi-protests-in-turkey-pub-80142>

After ten years, there can be no doubt that the revolutionary events of the Arab Spring (2011) marked a historic moment and the beginning of a new era for many Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries and Turkey. Until the aforementioned historical turning point of the Arab Spring, the Middle East region was completely untouched by Huntington's third wave of democratization⁶ and instead showed continuous political stability of the ruling autocrats, dictators and monarchs (Černý, 2012: 395). But the Arab popular uprising that began in Tunisia successfully spilled over to other Arab countries, surprising and stunning the vast majority of academia, as the uprisings were unexpected, the speeches unpredictable and their results rewriting the territorial-political map and destroying regional balance. In less than a year, four Arab regimes that survived several decades fell. The Tunisian and Egyptian regimes succumbed to "street" pressure and were overthrown.

The situation has escalated in Yemen, Bahrain, and Colonel Gaddafi in Libya has been lynched and killed by his own people, and today the country remains devastated by conflict and plunged into chaos, and its population is bleeding despite its vast oil wealth.⁷ In Syria, peaceful protests have turned into a relentless civil war, fueled by regional instability and an unprecedented humanitarian cataclysm in the 21st century. Turkey has tamed protests and survived an alleged coup d'etat attempt in 2016, today it is an unpredictable partner with its own geopolitical interests and ambitions.

The Mediterranean or Middle East region is today marked by the prisms of "cradles of global terrorism" or turbulent security environments and instability, at best it was seen by EU citizens as a non-drying oil well, but also a huge economic market. The same goals have been pursued in various variations of European policy titles over the last 65 years: energy, market and security.⁸ But the events of the Arab Spring open up not only new opportunities for political and economic cooperation, but also an imaginary "pandora's box" of risks and security threats to which an adequate and coherent response needs to be found.

⁶ Huntington understands his theory of the waves of democratization in the global, i. on a global scale. He defines it as: „*a group of transitions from non-democratic to democratic political systems that occurred at a certain time and that were significantly more numerous than the changes that took place in the opposite direction*“ (Huntington, 2008: page 24).

⁷ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210210-libya-mired-in-chaos-10-years-after-arab-spring>

⁸ Global Mediterranean Policy (1972-1992), Euro-Arab Dialogue (1974-1989), Renewed Mediterranean Policy (1990-1996), Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (1995-2008), European Neighborhood Policy (2004-2012), and finally, European Union for the Mediterranean (2008-2012), (Khader, 2013: page 9).

The Arab Spring gave its name to a wave of large-scale protests, uprisings and civil wars that have taken place in most Arab states since December 2010, primarily through civic activism and insurgency until 2012. as the second in Libya, where they broke out in a civil war that continues to this day. The specific motives for the outbreak of the protests varied from country to country. The common determinants were the fight against poverty, unemployment and the poor living conditions of the population, as well as the associated resistance to authoritarian and corrupt regimes in most Arab countries.

In total, unrest in Arab countries has so far claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, including the largest conflicts in Libya (more than 30,000 dead) and Syria (up to 500,000 dead). The unrest was also a source of massive illegal migration to Europe. Some analysts have redefined this ongoing conflict and its consequences for the region and beyond from the Arab Spring to the Arab Winter.

Turkey - a regional power with the largest Muslim population (84 million after Egypt with 102.3 million inhabitants) in the region is de jure still a secular state led by President Erdogan. However, Turkey pursues its own interests and is steadily moving its policy towards radicalization, armaments and Islamization over the last decade (especially after the alleged coup d'etat attempt in 2016).⁹

The Arab Spring changed the basic paradigms of the European Union's policy and perceptions of the European community towards the Mediterranean region, where it erupted in 2010. Before the revolution, the relative stability of the regimes guaranteed the security of the European Union; today, the EU and individual states face the question of how to absorb, accept these changes and then respond to them. The European Union is the world's largest market with a population of half a billion, with defense spending far exceeding Russia and China. The range of foreign policy instruments is even much wider than that of NATO and therefore has the potential to play a dominant role as a soft power player and a major pole of world politics. The turbulent events of the Arab Spring, but also the withdrawal of the traditional hegemon of the United States (as hard power) meant the end of American "peace" in the Middle East.

⁹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/7/15/turkeys-failed-coup-attempt-all-you-need-to-know>

The inevitable scenario is a vacuum, which is filled by ethnic-religious violence (Balkanization of the region), the rise of new security risks as well as the disruption of the original territorial-political conception of the Middle East. It is through the instruments of its foreign and security policy that the European Union has been given a historic chance to feel the "pulse of history" and to act as a strong mediator and actor in the region. However, there is also a need to answer the remaining critical questions and to analyze the consequences of the revolutions and the legacy of the uprising itself after ten years.

Key issues:

- ✓ What are the future development scenarios in Libya and Syria, which are now de facto collapsed states? What are the implications for the countries of Europe, the Community and the EU as such?
- ✓ These countries represent a partner for the countries of Europe and the EU as a whole or a threat in terms of migration, terrorism, organized crime, etc.
- ✓ Will Turkey continue its authoritarian course and eventually turn into an Islamic country after almost a century of secular Kemalist tradition?
- ✓ Will Turkey become a leader inspiring other countries in the region to autocratic tendencies?
- ✓ Do Libya, Syria or Turkey understand the values and identities of Europe and the European Union, and do they respect them as partners for cooperation?

Adequate, authentic and up-to-date literature and sources dealing with the given issue were studied in order to meet the set goals of the publication, but above all the determination of qualitative as well as quantitative research methods. First of all, it is necessary to specify the selection of the required data on which the given research will be focused and subsequently their abstracting will be started.

The publication will examine the period since 2011, the outbreak of the Arab Spring, and will analyze the EU's approach, response and response in each country under the common denominator of the Arab Spring, based on identifiers, determinants and factors. Three countries have been selected for the project due to their comparative added value, namely Libya, Syria and Turkey. The classified countries will be arranged chronologically from the outbreak of the uprising to the present.

The method of theoretical research of the issue will be used in the design of the project. The text of the project is primarily compiled on the basis of the study of professional literature in the preparatory phase (in the form of so-called active reading). After a thorough study and mapping of different catches of perspectives of the given issue, an objective comparison of the studied material (relevant book publications, professional articles and internet resources) will be made. The thesis will present the arguments supporting the obtained statements, but also those that could call them into question. An equally important component in the design of the work was the processing of information with an emphasis on the objectivity and timeliness of the research work in its final version.

1. SYRIA AND LIBYA - ARAB SPRING POLITICAL-HISTORICAL DETERMINANTS

In an effort to identify the key factors in the section on conflict analysis and development towards the EU, we will try to place the historical events of the Arab Spring in the broader context of the issue. It is precisely the case study, genesis and analysis of the conflicts that will answer the questions of what the future scenarios are in Libya and Syria, which are now de facto collapsing states. Likewise, what are the implications for the countries of Europe, the European Community and the EU as such?

It was the territory of ancient Syria, the historical mecca of many religions and the crossroads of Islam and Christianity, that became the battlefield of the various opposition factions and the Bashar al-Assad regime after the Arab Spring. As fast as the revolution broke out and spread, so did the imaginary "spring of hope" in political change into a bloody "winter of chaos" in the civil war. To understand the causes of this complicated conflict today, we must focus on its historical roots and the overall genesis that dates back to the last century.

After the victory over the Muslim Brothers in 1982, President Hafiz al-Assad (the father of Bashar al-Assad) vigorously declared: "*They are apostates. We defend Islam, religion and homeland.*" (Kropáček, 1996: 157). In this statement, Hafiz al-Assad, who himself uncompromisingly suppressed opposition forces in 1982, can draw a parallel with the present when the "Syrian lion dynasty" (lion - Arab. Adasad) is once again facing an uprising among his own people. In the context of the events of the Arab Spring, when a wave of uprisings swept through the Middle East, which

caused revolutionary social movements in many Arab-Muslim countries, questions arose about the power structure of the Syrian region. "Fertile crescent"¹⁰ (Arabic al-hilal al-chasib, Syrian-Palestinian region). In comparison with Syria, the revolutionary tensions were relatively calm in Muslim North Africa (Tunis, Egypt), but the "pernicious atmosphere of the uprisings" opened old wounds in the Syrian Arab Republic and resulted in a large-scale conflict that dates back to the past. The nation states in the Middle East should be seen as products of European colonialism, which often arose from the position of foreign powers by logic - "divide and rule".¹¹

After the First World War, the victorious powers (France and Britain) demarcated borders that did not respect the ethnic and religious stratification of society at all, nor the previous historical units that existed in the territory. From "Greater Syria", a new unnatural state was formed, which is an ethnically and religiously highly inconsistent and unstable state unit made up of Sunnis and Shiites and other religious groups (Černý, 2012: 389-390).

1.1 Assad's Syria: origins and characteristics of the regime

As a small country, Syria faced frequent coups, falling governments, military coups and political freedom in the 20th century. After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, it was under French administration and gained formal independence in 1941 (de facto independence only in 1946 after the withdrawal of French troops).

Independent Syria has become an unstable country, with the military securing a share of power and political influence through frequent coups, exacerbated by a close alliance with the Ba'athist Party¹² (Socialist Party of the Arab Revival), which came to power on March 8, 1963 (Ježová - Burgrová). , 2011). However, conflicts did not escape the party itself, where there was a power struggle between the civilian and military components. In November 1970, there was a final split

¹⁰ The area of Syria and today's modern states of Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon is also known by the historical name **Levant**.

¹¹ There is a legendary story demonstrating European frivolity in demarcating the Middle East, when Winston Churchill drew the Jordan border with a cigar in his hand one Sunday afternoon.

¹² **Baas** ("Revival") is a secular Pan-Arab party combining the ideology of socialism with Arab nationalism - the political direction of the so-called Ba'athism. The party's motto is "Unity, Freedom, Socialism" (Arabic *Wahda, Hurriya, Ishiraiya*). The party was founded in 1947 in Damascus, from where it expanded and divided into several factions (Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan, Iraq, Syria). However, it has built up a dominant position in Syria and Iraq, where it has usurped a monopoly on political power. Until the overthrow of Saddam Hussein (2003), she has ruled Iraq since 1963. The party is now headquartered in Damascus and its formal chairman is Syrian President Bashar al-Assad (Cejka, 2007: page 35-36).

within the Ba'ath party, and radical Salah Jadid was overthrown by Ba'ath party's new president and regional secretary, Hafiz al-Assad¹³ (Mendel, 1994). With the rise of Hafiz al-Assad (hereinafter Asad Sr.) to power (November 16, 1970 - 2000), a period of consolidation began and the country began to become a local power, a confident entity not influenced by powerful Arab neighbors, Egypt, Iraq, or Saudi Arabia. President Asad st. set the Syrian state in the ideological and geopolitical framework that formed "syrocentric" Arab nationalism (Gombár, 2001).

In addition to creating the perfect halo of power and the cult of personality, Asad st. he focused mainly on building the power position of the Syrian Alawites from whom he arose, the concentration of powers and the accumulation of power in the hands of the president. He launched a rigorous course of centralizing public life and mass recruitment. Alawites were formed around the president and his brother Rifat, who was commander of the Rôt of Defense (Alawit's Praetorian Guard), and the creation of important functions of the party apparatus and the public sector was also subject to confessional selection of loyal Alawites (Mendel, 1994). Mass support for the regime was provided by trade unions, farmers' unions and youth, student, women's and other mass organizations. The structure of the Assad regime was deeply rooted in the years 1970-1972, creating a power pyramid consisting of four levels:

1. President al-Assad, who sets the "high politics" general line and concentrates in his hands key areas such as security, intelligence, military and foreign policy issues.

2. A caste of senior officers, *mu'assasa* (establishment) - commanders of elite units and heads of security and intelligence services, the so-called "Snake eyes and ears". They have a privileged personal and economic status. These prominent positions of generals of elite units and intelligence organizations were 61.3% *alawits*.

3. Regional leadership of the Ba'ath party. The regional leadership did not represent a significant body of power, but served as a consultative or post-legitimizing body.

4. Ministers, high-ranking bureaucrats, provincial governors, representatives of mass and professional organizations. At this level, some freedom of opinion was allowed (Gombár, 2001).

¹³ **Hafiz al-Assad** was a pragmatic president inspired by Nasirism and Gaullism, but he did not rule the charisma of his role models, but he still had the talent to play a power game, he did not act impulsively, he was a patient strong figure who also attracted US President Nixon. At the height of his fame, he earned the nickname "Damascus Fox" (Gombár, 2001).

The political regime in Syria is not so closely linked to religion, but by its nature it is closer to the regimes that operated until recently in Central and Eastern Europe. Syria's political system can therefore be characterized *stricto sensu* as an authoritarian presidential regime with strong signs of clientelism and nepotism, which is determined by the parallel structure of power formed by clan and family ties (Gombár, 2001).

According to official statistics from 2010, Syria's population is estimated at 23,695,000 (Smith, 2012). The borders, which were largely set by the Western powers, created a very diverse population in the sovereign territory of Syria, both ethnically and religiously. A community made up of communities is characterized by strong internal solidarity, loyalty and identification of the individual within families, tribes and religious and ethnic communities, which even the regime's favored Syrian patriotism has not yet been able to suppress (Ježová - Burgrová, 2011) . The main ethnic groups are Arabs (90%), Kurds - almost exclusively Sunnis (9%), Armenians, Cherkessians and Turkmen. However, politically and socially, Syria's religious diversity is significant, representing a complex denominational mosaic in representation: Sunni Muslims (74%), Alawites (12%), Christians - who are Arabs (10%), Druze (3%), Smaller numbers of others. Muslim sects, Jews, etc. (Smith, 2012). Some ethnic groups, including Bedouins, were assimilated by the Arab majority. The Kurds, who form the second largest ethnic group after the Arabs, live in the north near the borders with Turkey and Iraq. The Armenian ethnic group is divided into two groups - early settlers who are Arabized and immigrants who came after the First World War (Armenian genocide) and kept their identity and language. The majority of the population practices Islam, with the Sunni branch (3/4 of the population) representing the majority in the whole territory except the provinces (*muhafazat*) of Suweida in the south and Lattakia in the north. Alawite (an extreme Shiite subdivision) is inhabited mainly by the provinces of Lattakia, Homs and Hama. Most drusen live in the province of Suweida, others in Damascus, Aleppo and Quneitre (Sardar, 2010: 307-308).

1.2 Rise of the opposition - "Quran versus lion"

Bashar al-Assad's father was already fully aware that the regional-confessional aspect of Syria's domestic policy could not be underestimated. His dream of a great Syria, which, however, stood on the shaky feet of religious heterogeneity and the regime had to legitimize power in the eyes of its own population (especially its Sunni majority).

Secular-minded President Assad st. since the beginning of the government (1970) he faced the unrest of the Sunni religious majority and therefore decided to make vigorous political gestures. "In order to blunt the edge of purposeful religious criticism on the part of his opponents, he made a pilgrimage to Mecca and occasionally indicated that he was praying and fasting" (Kropáček, 1996). In addition, 80 Alawic religious figures have issued a formal statement that their holy book is the Qur'an. He also received recognition from respected authorities that Alawites are Muslims. In Lebanon, the widely respected Musa al-Sadr confirmed the Fatwa confessional unity of the Alawites with the Shiites.¹⁴ When controversy took place in 1973 about a constitution into which the radical 'ulamas' fully secular text wanted to enforce an article on Islam as the state religion, Asad st. found a compromise solution in the provision that the head of state must be a Muslim. Even so, in the 1970s, criticism of Alaw's "lobbying" personnel policy began to escalate among Syrian opposition groups and dignitaries.

The dissatisfaction of secular and religious sections of the population and interest groups of various kinds was able to bring together the most consolidated, most united and wisest (even in the political sense) fundamentalist opposition, represented by the Syrian branch of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood (Mendel, 1994). As long as the Alawit community gained significant positions in the party and the military, the Sunni majority (about 69%) controlling production and trade only helplessly watched the nationalization by the Ba'athist government, which mainly affected Sunni businessmen. Tensions between the regime and the fundamentalist opposition have risen sharply since 1976, when the Syrian army entered Lebanon and helped Christian maronites against the Muslim-Palestinian alliance (Kropáček, 1996: 157-158) in the beginning of the civil war, radicalizing the part of the MB that began to focus on *jihad*. Society began to split sharply according to religious origins, and the conflict unfolded between two coalitions - the Muslim Brotherhood, which provided an ideological platform for resistance between the ruling Alawites. In a broader context later between the Sunni majority and the Ba'ath party (Mendel, 1994).

Radical supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood began to use the "*strike and disappear*" tactic, which carried a wave of individual terror against Ba'athist members in the form of assassinations, terrorist attacks and the assassination attempt on President Assad st. The regime's response was

¹⁴ Although the *Alawites* consider themselves part of Shiite Islam, most Sunnis (as well as Shiites) do not recognize Muslims as Muslims. Even the prominent Islamic scholar Ibn Tajmiya (13th-14th centuries) issued a *fatwa* that called the Alawites unbelievers and idolaters, and sanctified the leadership of *jihad* against this community (Ježová - Burgrová, 2011: page 115).

relentless and a law 49 was passed that penalized death in membership of banned organizations. Through retaliatory executions of members of the Muslim Brotherhood, security forces sought to suppress the Sunni opposition. Christian communities, Druze, Circassians, and Armenians expressed support for a regime that struggled to survive during this period (Mendel, 1994: 198).

The culmination of the Syrian crisis was the "fight for the city of Hama", which was considered a traditional stronghold of Sunni Orthodoxy. On February 3, 1982, extremists from Hama and Halab, led by Sa'd ad-Din, declared a "popular uprising" in Hama and took control of the city (Mendel, 1994). The regime hermetically closed the city and carried out a "preemptive strike" against the enemy and its own population, when it leveled the entire historic center with military intervention, while entire families were shot. Government sources have estimated the number of victims from opposition ranks at 20,000 to 30,000 (official statistics do not exist because objective observers have not been admitted to the area) (Gombár, 2001).

Syria has actually entered a state of civil war. The uncompromising intervention in the city of Hama was a devastating and frightening example, but on the other hand it meant domestic political appeasement and the end of the uprising (Gombár, 2001), while the fundamentalist opposition was subdued and forced to go deep into illegality. The partial easing of the atmosphere between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood did not occur until the mid-1990s in connection with the overall liberalization of the country, when President Assad st. issued an amnesty over 1,200 followers of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Since the events in Hama, Asad has reached st. almost complete control over a society where the government is "privileged" and pan-Arabism becomes an instrument for achieving regional hegemony, with the president himself taking on the role of "lord of nations" (Saleh, 2012). However, in the years 1983-1984, there was a succession crisis due to the illness of President Assad Sr., when his brother Rifat saw himself as a natural candidate. But the president distanced himself from his powerful, unpredictable brother, and the successor question focused solely on his eldest son, Basil al-Assad. Basil was a perfect successor because, in addition to his popularity, he was seen as a model of honesty and came from the ranks of the army (he was an aviator like his father), while in 1991-94 he commanded the Republican Guards (support of the regime). However, on January 21, 1994, he was killed in a car accident near his airport in Damascus. Immediately after the death of Basil, Hafiz al-Assad recalled his second-born son, Bashhar, who studied medicine in London, to prepare as his

worthy successor and become the "lord of the nations" as his father before him (Gombár, 2001; Saleh, 2012).

1.3 The story of Bashar al-Assad: from revolution to civil war

"I am not a puppet of the West. I was not created by him and I will not go west or to any other country. Syria created me, I have to live in Syria and I have to die in Syria!" Bashar al-Assad's statement in an interview with Russian television. (Russian Today, 2012).

Bashar al-Assad was not a soldier, he was not destined and brought up as a follower of the Assad dynasty, and he no longer ruled the attributes of a "cultivated" statesman like his brother Basil. Even so, this intellectual and doctor had to sit on the Syrian throne and assume the burden of power.

The beginning of the reign of Hafiz's son Bashhar al-Assad (2000) initially brought the hope of change to greater freedom of speech, the press and overall political openness (the so-called Damascus Spring). Although reforms have taken place, as is the case in the Arab world with the change of authoritarian rulers, the reforms affected only the economic sphere, not the political sphere (Ježová - Burgrová, 2011: 106). Indeed, during the reign of Bashhar al-Assad (Assad), new developments took place in the country's internal processes, such as the restructuring of the economy and the privatization of national resources, which should lead to an increase in wealth and the development of private property. Ultimately, a new "feudalism" came along that linked everything to the regime and, moreover, now had even greater privileges, absolute rights and political immunity. Assad entered into a marriage of political and economic exclusivity. Accompanying this development was the emergence of a "modernist" ideology, strongly inclined to the highest class of society and hostile to the general public, democracy, socio-cultural manifestations of Islam and political Islam (fundamentalism), (Saleh, 2012).

An important milestone on the road to political instability in Syria was the war in Iraq (2003), when waves of refugees began to flow into the country, estimated at 1.2 million in 2007. This unfavorable development had clear consequences: the impact on the economy, the consequent rise in food prices and the cost of living in general, created service and infrastructure problems (Al-Miqda, 2007: 19). In 2006, Nadžáh Attárová, the first woman and non-member of the ruling *Ba'ath* party in this position, became Vice President (Sardar, 2010: 38).

The year before the uprising (2011), on the other hand, the regime had relatively good results in protecting freedom of religion compared to some countries in the region, according to a 2010 report by the US State Department on Religious Freedom in the World and the provisions of the Syrian Constitution. Therefore, despite the growing criticism of the Assad regime by the opposition, it cannot be denied the pursuit of equal treatment of its population, dampening sectarian tensions and maintaining the country's integrity, which is one of the reasons for the legitimacy of the establishment. and Lebanon), (Smith, 2012).

The desire for freedom often needs an external impulse to fully surface and turn into a real revolutionary zeal. As revolutions overthrew authoritarian governments in Tunisia, Egypt, and then more violently in Libya, a scenario of "redrawing" the political map throughout the region began to emerge. But one leader's response to these emergencies was so brutal and persistent that it plunged its country into a state of humanitarian catastrophe and civil war. This country is Syria, and the leader is President Bashar al-Assad. The conflict began on March 15, 2011 during nationwide demonstrations, which were a natural result of a wave of protests known as the Arab Spring. The protesters demanded the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, as well as the end of the nearly five-decade-long *Ba'athist* government.

The uprising has its roots in protests that erupted on March 3, 2011 in the southern city of Deraa after the arrest and torture of several teenagers who painted revolutionary slogans on school walls. After security forces opened fire on protesters and killed several, people took to the streets.

In July 2011, hundreds of thousands of people were already demonstrating in cities across the country. The government did not wait long and used military force in an effort to crush the resistance (dissent), the tanks arrived in the city of Deraa at the end of March 2011. In July 2011, hundreds of thousands of people protested in cities across the country. In April 2011, the Syrian army was again deployed to suppress the uprising and soldiers were ordered to open fire on civilians. After months of military "surveillance" and escalating protests, initially non-violent demonstrations developed into an armed uprising (al-Jazeera, 2012), with opposition forces formed by deserters from the Syrian army (Sunni section) as well as foreign Islamic radicals (jihadists and al-Jazeera fighters). Qaeda), who also took part in the nascent civil war. Fighting soon reached the capitals of Damascus and Aleppo in 2012, and the country has since fallen into civil war (BBC: Middle East, 2013).

Opposition in the political sense was created within the Syrian National Council based in Istanbul. The National Council is diverse, from the Muslim Brotherhood to the so-called signatories.

Damascus Declaration and Syrian Democratic Organizations, which represent Assyrians and various regional centers (Lenč, 2012). He is currently leading the new opposition group Moaz al-Khatib. This man is a former *imam* of a mosque in Damascus, who has been persecuted and arrested many times, while bringing considerable credibility. The opposition group, as a new body, was formed largely at the request of the United States to demonstrate greater opposition unity as a result of American soft power¹⁵ in the region (Husain, 2012).

Today, Syria is embroiled in an armed conflict between forces loyal to President Assad and insurgent fighters fighting on the side of the opposition. Since the major riots began in March 2011, studies have estimated the number of victims to be between 22,000 and 25,000 Syrians killed several months later (Sharp-Blanchard, 2012). Official sources reported 42,000 deaths in 2012, with fighting taking place in the suburbs of Damascus, and the death toll has risen geometrically (Husain, 2012).

Despite international pressure from the League of Arab States and the United Nations, which in the Security Council on 21 March 2012 supported a peace plan drawn up by Kofi Annan calling for a ceasefire, a humanitarian approach and the withdrawal of security forces from urban areas, the situation in the country continued to escalate. Syria itself, ravaged by fratricidal struggles, has become somewhat part of more far-reaching conflicts than it might seem, as its sensitive geopolitical position has waged a power play between the Western powers and Russia, the United States and Iran, and has highlighted the disunity between Sunnis and Shiites. The interesting thing about the Syrian revolution is that this revolution is still evolving dynamically. A good example is the celebration of the end of the unrest in Syria after the Kofi Annan mission, but a few hours after the ceasefire was due to come into force, videos of the Syrian army fighting the insurgents had already appeared. Representatives of Arab countries also gave this ceasefire a very small chance (Lenč, 2012).

In August 2013, the number of refugees exceeded two million Syrians who fled across the country's borders to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq, as well as North Africa (1.8 million in 12 months). According to UN agencies, about half of the refugees are children under the age of 18. Another 4.25 million people have been forcibly displaced in Syria. Bomb attacks have become an

¹⁵ This term was coined by Joseph S. Nye in 1980. **Soft power** is the country's ability to persuade others to do what it wants without the use of force and coercion. Nye argues that successful states must use both hard and soft power, that is, the ability to force others, as well as the ability to shape their long-term attitudes and preferences. The United States can dominate among others, but also excel in designing soft power with the help of its companies, foundations, universities, churches, and other civil society institutions. Nye recognizes the limits of soft power: it tends to have diffuse effects on the outside world and it is not easy to achieve concrete results (Ikenberry, 2004).

infamous sign of the Syrian conflict. Many attacks targeting the regime's strategic facilities blame al-Qaeda-inspired "terrorists". Opposition activists, however, say Assad's security forces have staged attacks in an effort to discredit the rebels and the opposition. However, jihadists operating in Syria themselves reported the majority of the explosions. A dark group called Front an-Nusrat has confessed to a pair of suicide bombings that killed up to 55 people in Damascus in May 2012. According to UN inspectors, the massacres were committed not only by the Assad regime, but also by a heterogeneous group of opposition and especially sympathizers linked to al-Qaeda (BBC: Middle East, 2013). The very versions of the events emanating from the country were quite contradictory and contradictory, there was an information fog above the country. On August 21, 2013, footage of victims suspected of having a chemical weapons attack appeared in several suburbs of Damascus. Hundreds were killed, with both sides blaming each other for the incident. The government of President Bashar al-Assad has agreed to destroy its chemical weapons (al-Jazeera, 2013), and the question arises as to whether the regime is still able to protect its own facilities where chemical weapons are stored.

1.4 The Syrian conundrum - the complexity of the conflict, its geopolitical dimension and implications for the EU

All the Arab uprisings (2011) are quite complex, but the "Syrian case" is unique in its complexity, as it is at the center of various historical struggles in the region and beyond. This brutal conflict is compounded by external influences: the Arab-Israeli conflict, the related issue of resilience to imperialism, regional rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Qatar on the one hand and Iran on the other, real tensions and a game of geopolitical dominance between the United States and Russia, and a fundamental issue. Hezbollah¹⁶ that deserves its own category. The increase in regional sectarian tensions generated by the Syrian revolution is also raising the floor on the issue. We can say that the

¹⁶ **Hezbollah** (Arabic "Party of God") is a political and radical organization of Lebanese Shiites, which was founded in 1982 in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon ("Peace for Galilee"). The center's activities are located in southern and eastern Lebanon (Bika Valley, Beirut). The main sponsor is Shiite Iran, which sought to spread the values of the Islamic Revolution (1979) through Hezbollah. Hezbollah's militant wing undertook a series of violent actions against Israel and suicide attacks in the 1980s and 1990s. However, the Civil Wing operates hospitals, schools and social activities of various kinds. In the 1990s, he became the head of Sheikh Nasrallah's organization, and as early as 2005, Hezbollah won 23 (out of 128) seats in the Lebanese parliament and became involved in political life. In 2006, a new wave of radicalization of the Israeli movement ensued, escalating into a military conflict overthrown by the United Nations. Hezbollah is on the list of US terrorist organizations (Čejka, 2007: page 75-76).

Syrian uprising is a local, regional and international issue. Adding to the complexity is the fact that most of the forces (actors) that want to remove (or uninstall) the Syrian regime are in themselves dominant political / economic forces, regional and largely international in nature: the United States, Saudi Arabia, Qatar , and Israel, (Haddad, 2012). This is in contrast to the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen, which were largely domestic / internal affairs of the regimes, without outside intervention. The Syrian uprising implies external factors and actors that fundamentally illustrate and influence the form and development of the civil war in the region. In an effort to analyze the complicated Syrian conflict, the individual variables will help us to bring the situation closer and to read it in a geopolitical map: **external actors and religious polarization** (sectarianism / sectarian tensions).

Perhaps the most important external actors in the Syrian conflict are the traditional intervention in the Middle East - **the United States**. To understand the context of the American "covert" (anti) intervention, we will use a description of strategic American interests in Syria, which are precisely the uncertain developments at stake:

1. Prevention of the use and spread of Syrian chemical weapons. As the conflict escalates, weapons become a security risk for the Syrian people as well as the surrounding countries. The chemical weapons arsenal includes: sarin, mustard and nerve gas VX (agent VX). Although the regime declares their security, there is a real threat that they will fall into the hands of terrorists or groups linked to al-Qaeda. The volume of chemical arsenal stored in Syria is one of the largest in the world (Pipes, 2013).

2. Preventing the spread of conflict to neighboring countries. Not only the Syrian conflict, but also weapons, militant groups and sectarian tensions can spill over to neighboring Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Turkey across Syria's increasingly porous borders (Assenburg, 2013).

3. Minimizing Iran's efforts to dispel conflict in the region. Iran's alliance with Syria makes it possible to project Iranian influence into the Levant and to support Hezbollah in Lebanon and, to a lesser extent, Palestinian militant groups with a destabilizing impact on countries in the region.

4. Preventing al Qaeda-inspired "free operation" by groups in Syria. Al Qaeda-inspired groups are reportedly growing in numbers and their involvement in the Syrian conflict is growing. These militant formations could try to create a safe haven in some parts of the country that are not completely under the control of the regime or opposition forces (David, 2014).

5. Ensuring Israel's security.¹⁷ Especially at this point, American foreign policy must be very careful, because potential Islamist winners dominating Damascus could be more antagonistic towards Israel. However, a new regime that would limit its relations with Iran and Hezbollah and seek to be a Western partner could be more receptive to peace with Israel. However, the reality is that Israeli officials are deeply concerned about instability in the country and the security of chemical weapons in Syria.

6. Economic interests. As we are witnessing in Iraq, American capital has a large share in the country's reconstruction and political transformation. The US government is also working to support and alleviate humanitarian catastrophe and suffering. The United States has pledged more than \$ 100 million in humanitarian activities in Syria and neighboring countries (Dalton, 2012: 2).

President Barack Obama's current democratic administration is calculating the fate of Syria very carefully, instructed by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. US "policy makers" are aware of the stalemate in Syria, and direct intervention is too much of a risk that could jeopardize US strategic interests in the long run.¹⁸ However, the reluctance to take strong action has several compelling reasons:

- The Alawit minority in Damascus has been highly hostile to American interests, but the overthrow of al-Assad and its replacement by radical Sunnis may be an even worse scenario for Washington.
- Lessons from the past - the particular interest of the Arab states is the fight against Israel and thus the willingness to support radical Sunni groups. The memory of Afghanistan, where support for the *Mujahideen* against the Soviet occupation (1980) turned against American interests and resulted in terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.
- The Obama administration does not want to antagonize the Russians on the issue of military intervention in Syria, because it needs Putin's cooperation in the UN Security Council regarding Iran's nuclear program, but also the Syrian chemical arsenal.

¹⁷ America's Middle East policy, traditionally based on two pillars, is Israeli security and access to Gulf oil (Kepel, 2006) and cooperation with Saudi Arabia as a strategic partner in the Gulf region.

¹⁸ The current conflict in Syria could jeopardize US interests, no matter how it develops. Therefore, US foreign policy-makers need to develop strategies that capture future development scenarios and implement policies that cover risk.

- Last but not least, preventing further military intervention was an important point in the 2008 presidential campaign, which secured Barack Obama's victory.
- The number one priority is to limit Iran's nuclear program, so it was out of the question to confront Tehran with regard to Syria and thus jeopardize the negotiations (Katz, 2013: 10-11).

It is also a fact that US military capabilities are not unlimited and must be available in a "hypothetical clash" with Iran or elsewhere in the world. Also, the existence of large geopolitical players such as Russia and China not only meant blocking open military intervention in the UN Security Council, but in itself constitutes a complicated overlap of the strategic interests of these intersecting powers in Syria (Tartus port, economic interests). In the chess game of international politics in Syria, **Russia** has given a significant check not only by blocking a UNSC resolution, but has also strengthened its position in a geopolitical game with the West. Russia has been providing its military resources since 2011 (although it has not been directly involved), but it has also provided financial assistance to stabilize the Syrian lira and economy. However, Russia's most effective task was to fight on political and diplomatic fronts. President Vladimir Putin gained credibility and legitimacy at home and abroad by defending the Assad regime, which fights "terrorists." The main reasons for Russia's interest are not only the significant arms market, the strategic port of Tartus, but the loss of Syria could drastically undermine Moscow's global geopolitical interests, which fears a domino effect affecting its sphere of influence (former Soviet republics, Iran). But Moscow's policy towards Syria, deliberately prolonging the conflict, makes the result even more difficult to predict (Nizameddin. 2013: 12-13).

In light of the United States' inaction, **Israel** is diametrically opposed. Israel's recent attack on arms stores near Damascus is a shining example of a crackdown on the presidential regime. Israeli top officials operate simply, precisely and act uncompromisingly, when they have violently destroyed a supply of a large number of modern missiles designed for Hezbollah. Syria is becoming a safe haven for al Qaeda. Israel initially acted cautiously and refrained from retaliating against the breach of the integrity of its border areas, but in January and May 2013, the Israeli air force bombed a convoy carrying tactical weapons tied to Lebanon's Hezbollah, a conflict between the Jewish state and Assad's Syria (Assenburg, 2013: 13). Some US and Israeli strategists see the Syrian civil war as an opportunity to decisively weaken Iran and hope that the defeat of Syria in Levante would force Tehran to

reconsider its nuclear program, or at least pave the way for new negotiations, which was recently confirmed by signing a new agreement between Tehran and Washington (2013). Expectations are such that Lebanon's Hezbollah will be weakened by the fall of President al-Assad and political change in Syria would lead to the cutting off of the main transit route for arms supplies to Hezbollah's militant wing¹⁹. However, a Sunni regime hostile to Israel could create a "conflict zone" on the border between the Jewish state and Syria, so Israel fears a scenario of the fall of the Assad regime.

On the other hand, the **Iranian** leadership sees itself at the forefront of a strategic and ideological struggle to cleanse and liberate the region from American and Israeli hegemony. Iran therefore supports the Syrian regime with military advisers, weapons, financial transfers and energy supplies. While Syrian rebels receive political, financial and logistical support, as well as training from Western actors such as the United States, Turkey, the United Kingdom and France, on the one hand, and financial and military assistance from Sunni Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, Qatar). on the other hand. By no means does Iran want to lose one of the few military-political allies in the region, so even though it depletes it economically, it will provide Bashar al-Assad with certain guarantees of protection (Asseburg, 2013).

The civil war in Syria also brings us new scenarios of the **Turkish** structure, which under the auspices of the AKP (Justice and Development Party, Turkish: *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - in power since 2002) intervenes considerably in its favor. The accumulating Turkish force is thus gradually beginning to be realized elsewhere, and there is talk, among other things, of "neo-Ottomanism", a kind of revival of Turkish imperial ambitions in the Middle East in a modern guise (Čejka, 2011). Ankara, on the other hand, fears strengthening the autonomy of the Kurdish region (which extends to Syria, but especially in Iraq), which would increase separatist aspirations among its own Kurdish population, as these remote uncontrollable areas provide a safe haven for the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party, in Kurdish: *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* or PKK). The Syrian regime has largely withdrawn its presence from the Kurdish region in the country, and Kurdish militia structures have been set up here.

¹⁹ In the second half of the 1980s, Syria's geopolitical view of the situation in Lebanon and, in particular, of Hezbollah, which had been in co-tradition with the Syrian regime, changed. Assad's Syria was a strictly secular country and did not support movements based on religion (Hezbollah translated: Party of God). However, as a result of the defeat of the Syrian army by Israel, the Syrian ruling elites were forced to change their previous view of the overall situation and find a suitable ally against Israeli pressure in the area. The only suitable ally in the geopolitical situation was Iran, which resulted in the acceptance of Hezbollah and the beginning of its unofficial support, as Syria still supported the Amal movement. Also, the inability to defeat Israel militarily has led Syrian officials to support movements that would fight Israel by means other than military force (Norton, 2007). Today, government troops alongside Hezbollah are fighting against Sunni radical groups operating on the Lebanese border.

The armed struggle between the Syrian rebels and the PYD (Democratic Union Party, Kurdish: *Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat* is a Kurdish party in Syria), as well as political differences between Arab and Kurdish representatives of the Syrian opposition, have raised the question of autonomy, or even separation of "Western Kurdistan". undesirable development for the aforementioned Turkey. In this regard, the Turkish government engaged in talks with imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and agreed on a ceasefire in April 2013, withdrew PKK fighters and comprehensive reforms aimed at improving the position of the Kurds in Turkey, thus trying to eliminate the threat at least for a while. iredenty (Matthees - Seuffer, 2013).

The regional positions of the three non-Arab states - Iran, Turkey and Israel - were strongly influenced by the Arab Spring and especially the crisis in Syria, with relations between all three actors being severely hampered and Israel and Iran on the brink of war. Also, the conflict between **Saudi Arabia and Qatar** on support for individual rebel factions will undermine the positions of opposition forces. Qatar supports the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which Riyadh rejects and sees as a potential source of domestic instability in Saudi Arabia. Qatar also seems less concerned about the dangers of arming extremists within the opposition, such as *Jabhat al-Nusrat*, the Islamic State in Iraq and al-*Sham*. Saudi Arabia is trying to reverse Qatar's influence within the main opposition political group, the Syrian National Coalition, and is reportedly building its own "Islamic army", consisting of forty-three Islamist and Salafist insurgent brigades (Sofer, 2013: 9). Qatar and Saudi Arabia's struggle for dominance and future influence in Syria may expand if Iran's influence in the conflict weakens.

One of Britain's greatest historians and Orientalists, Bernard Lewis, said: "*It is simply unacceptable for a progressive modern mind for people to fight and die for common differences as a religion*"(Lewis, 1997). However, the Syrian civil war brought a massive increase in **sectarian tensions** and religious polarization, which marked the region as a result of the Iraqi civil war. Therefore, this aspect of the conflict and its perception as a "Sunni uprising" (supported by Sunni monarchies in the Persian Gulf and Turkey) against the Alawit (offshoot of the Shiite branch of Islam) regime led by the al-Assad family must be included in our geopolitical map. The Alawites form the imaginary backbone of the regime and the elite elements of the army. The main line of conflict runs along the sectarian lines between Sunni-dominated countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey, Shiite-dominated countries such as Iran, Iraq and Syria. The domestic supporters of the Alawit minority, Christians and Druze, external supporters of the regime, are Shiite allies (Iran, Hezbollah and Shiites in Iraq). Geopolitical rivals in Syria, but also in the whole region, Sunni Saudi Arabia and

Shiite Iran, this rivalry is accompanied by the particular interests of Qatar and Turkey, which destabilizes the security architecture and the absence of any arbitrator (mediator in the conflict) further fragile religious and ethnic lines. Sectarian tensions and polarization do not bode well for Syria's future or for the complex mosaic of society in the region (see impact on Iraq, Lebanon), (Asseburg, 2013: 16). In the "Sunni coalition" itself, which in itself is a bold label, there is a struggle for influence between Qatar and the Saudis for influence between the various factions of the Syrian rebels and opposition forces.

The never-ending bloody conflict in Syria and the associated strengthening of **radical jihadists** personified in recent weeks, mainly in *al-Qaeda*-inspired groups and its affiliated Islamic State in Syria and *Al-Sham* (ISIS), which represents "Greater Syria", which represents a region that includes Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan in addition to Syria itself, given the growing importance of other radical groups (such as *Jabhat al-Nusrat*), raises the question of where the "good boys" the West has supported (Daniel, 2014). The chaos in Syria has left its mark on Lebanon, which is facing an influx of Syrian refugees, as well as on the escalation of its domestic conflicts, which could destabilize this denominationally divided country and *Hezbollah* home in the short term.

The conflict is much more sectarian than ever before and its elementary basis is "geography," says Andrew J. Tabler.²⁰ Syria was a cornerstone of the post-Ottoman Middle East project after the Sykes-Picot Accord, which was a secret plan by France and the United Kingdom to divide the sphere of influence in the Ottoman Empire after World War I (Lewis, 1997). Many say the conflict in Syria has similar features to the 15-year war in Lebanon, and Syria is another country that pays for the arbitrary policies of the Western powers. The international community has no significant economic interests in Syria, but almost all of Syria's neighboring countries are strategic partners and allies for America and Europe: Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon.

The regional sectarian rivalry is reflected in Syria in a bloody struggle, the vanguard of which is formed by forces immediately from the American list of foreign terrorist organizations. Today, Hezbollah, Quds (IRGC, Iran's revolutionary foreign operations unit) and other Iranian Shiite militias are fighting alongside the Bashar al-Assad regime. On the other hand, there is the Sunni opposition, made up of Salafists and jihadists (many are Mujahideen for "retirement" from Afghanistan), some of which are al-Qaeda branches in Syria. This Sunni disparate counterpart of the regime is fighting

²⁰ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/syria/>

side by side (and often against each other). Democratic Union (PYD) fighters affiliated with the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) operate in Kurdish areas (Tabler, 2014: 6-7). It is the increase in activity and concentration of radical groups and jihadists in Syria, which has become a safe haven, a base for force regrouping and a field of action, that poses a critical security threat to the international community in the future.

The EU institutions and individual Member States remain committed to a peaceful settlement of the conflict, but after 10 years, the most urgent question seems to be the next thing to do. The question is whether the **European Union** will be just a passive bystander, an idle international player other than Russia, China, Iran or Saudi Arabia, or will take a more active role. From a European perspective, the most important issue in Syria is **security**. These are not only potential military or rather terrorist threats, but also those related to population migration and the refugee crisis. Most European politicians approach refugees with concern, but at the same time, the EU institutions are doing everything they can to help in Syria's neighboring countries, instead of allowing them to join the EU itself. The agreement reached between the EU and Turkey in June 2021 is the best example of this. The EU is even ready to turn a blind eye to the steps taken by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey to help keep the potential threat of another migration crisis away from its borders. Turkey thus gains effective diplomatic leverage over the EU with blackmail potential.

However, it must also be emphasized that, as a result, the EU is the largest donor of aid to those affected by the war. Since 2011, it has provided almost € 25 billion to support the Syrians. In addition, since 2017, it has been organizing annual conferences in Brussels on "Supporting the future of Syria and the region". During the last one in March 2021, the EU pledged 5.3 billion euros for Syria and neighboring countries that receive Syrian refugees. The threat of a migration crisis does not change the fact that the EU continues to pay attention to potential terrorist threats. Attacks by ISIS-linked militants in recent years have left traces on the actions and attitudes of leading EU politicians. In June 2021, Josep Borrell, as the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, attended a ministerial meeting of the Global Coalition against the *Daesh* - Islamic State. Although ISIS has lost its territorial base in Syria and Iraq, the EU is not alleviating the continuing threat posed by this terrorist organization and is ready to cooperate with any entity that shares its position on the matter (OSIEWICZ, 2021).

EU strategy for Syria

On 3 April 2017, the Council adopted the EU Strategy for Syria. This strategy is part of the EU's regional strategy for Syria and Iraq, as well as for ISIL / Daesh threats. The EU's strategic objectives in Syria focus on six key areas:

- ending the war through real political transformation
- promoting a meaningful and inclusive transfer / transition of power in Syria
- save lives by addressing humanitarian needs for the most vulnerable Syrians
- promoting democracy, human rights and freedom of expression
- promoting responsibility for war crimes
- promoting the resilience of the Syrian population and Syrian society²¹

1.5 Political science prediction of Syria's future trajectory

This subchapter will modestly try to predict future conflict scenarios and identify the most likely trajectories for Syria. Based on the conflict analysis and the study of the available literature, we come up with four possible scenarios: each of the scenarios below begins with a "trigger" event, followed by a set of possible key factors (relevant actors, regime and Syrian army, opposition and external forces).

1. The sudden death of Bashar al-Assad - the Syrian opposition or al-Qaeda manages to eliminate (kill) President Assad and a period of conflict ensues. The opposition will force Assad and take control of the country. Key events that will follow:

- The remaining members of the regime will retain control of most state institutions, but uncertainty and confusion after al-Assad's death will cause the opposition to attack the regime's positions. The Syrian opposition will declare victory, but it lacks a coherent strategy and credibility for the post-Assad transition (transition) and stabilization of the domestic political situation.

²¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/5/30/libya-today-from-arab-spring-to-failed-state>

- Al Qaeda-inspired groups will take advantage of a period of uncertainty to gain additional positions in key urban centers and will continue to attack the old regime's loyalists.
- In the aftermath of al-Assad's death, the weakening regime loses control of the chemical arsenal and can no longer guarantee its vigilance as it concentrates on averting the country's complete collapse. Radical opposition groups could gain control of some of the chemical weapons (Dalton, 2012: 3-4).
- Despite the death of the President, the power pyramid, the structure of the regime and non-Potist circles still exist, and their complete defeat may require a long time horizon.

"Anarchy in Syria, foreign intervention by neighbors, the prospect of al-Qaeda-linked Islamists taking power in Damascus, hostilities against Israel in the hitherto peaceful Golan Heights, and the spread of the chemical weapons system to terrorist organizations. The overthrow of Bashar al-Assad threatens to recapitulate the scenario of the elimination of longtime dictators of Iraq and Libya in 2003 and 2011, which led to years or even decades of instability and violence. Even worse, this result could revive the otherwise dying career of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is currently almost defeated by his own wrongdoing "(Pipes, 2013). In this scenario, the civil war becomes truly violent and sectarian. The persecution and bitter conflicts between the old regime and opposition factions continue.

2. Managed transition - an opposition-led coalition will take power through a controlled transition.

Key events:

- Most state structures are initially retained, but their ability and credibility weaken over time.
- With the help of the West and Sunni allies, the Syrian Free Army (FSA) and major militias conquer Aleppo and Damascus. The military opposition will unite the defectors and a credible part of the regime's bureaucracy, and form a transitional government. Al Qaeda-inspired groups are marginalized and overwhelmed by increasingly united and credible opposition, whose political strategy explicitly includes minorities and former members of the regime.
- The Syrian Transitional Government controls chemical weapons, with the advice and support of the international community.
- The low-intensity conflict continues for several years until the opposition reaches a sustainable political transition. The influx of refugees into neighboring countries is slowing

down and the situation is gradually stabilizing (Dalton, 2012: 4; Landis - al-Azm - Zweir, 2014).

- No matter how well the opposition manages Syrian political transformation, state institutions would be greatly weakened. Fear and mistrust among the Syrian population would persist. However, this scenario fails on the ideological diversity of opposition forces and the contradiction of their supporters (Asseburg, 2013).

3. Assad will remain in power after the devastating civil war

- President al-Assad will retain power with the help of Russia, Iran and China, but the conflict is having a very negative impact on the civilian population. Key events:
- Rebels hold peripheral areas in remote areas, but Assad crushes most of the opposition and his campaign involves mass murders, executions, torture and imprisonment of rebels and their supporters (Asseburg, 2013).
- Syrian chemical weapons are at risk, but ultimately remain under the control and oversight of the regime.
- Refugee flows have increased after Assad persecuted and persecuted the rebels.
- Iran is redouble its efforts to strengthen Assad's position (Dalton, 2012).
- Keeping Assad in power can be very worrying, as it will be reflected in the growing brutality of conflicts and the growing humanitarian crisis, and the regime will never be as strong as before.

4. Syria will disintegrate along sectarian or regional lines

In this scenario, the civil war escalates and state structures fall in the short term. Syria will fall into anarchy with considerable civilian casualties. The conflict is getting more and more sectarian and executions in the name of "retribution" are escalating. Assad leaves, is killed or becomes a marginalized actor, while the remnants of the regime are redistributed among the fighting factions.

Key events:

- The opposition cannot hold together and is not politically homogeneous. The various rebel groups mostly operate independently of each other.
- Rebel militant groups do not only attack the regime's positions, but they fight among themselves and maneuver towards gaining power and territory.

- Chemical weapons are at the highest risk of falling into the hands of extremists. The United States is forced to coordinate international intervention to secure or destroy Syria's chemical arsenal. This scenario is the most risky for American interests, and the country is creating an unstable political and power vacuum.
- The flow of refugees and fighters across borders is increasing turbulently (Dalton, 2013; Landis - al-Azm - Zweir, 2014).

Al Qaeda-linked groups will find it easier to conquer territories and establish "safe havens" in disintegrated and uncontrolled territory. Minorities (Alawites, Druze and Christians) will face increased sectarian violence as they collaborated with the regime in the eyes of radicals (opposition). Ethnic fault lines will be definitively fragmented and fragmented, which will create space for the particular interests of individual ethnic groups (groupings) and their efforts to create independent territorial units (Kurds, Islamists), (Landis - al-Azm - Zweir, 2014).

A great danger that can exacerbate the situation and destabilize the region is the so-called **spill over effect**. Syria's central location on the Middle East map is of geo-strategic importance, and the escalation of the conflict could have far-reaching consequences for the region. The growing number of refugees is putting enormous pressure on neighboring countries, especially Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq, which are facing an unwanted influx of immigrants and, last but not least, security risks. The provision of adequate housing, health services and logistics depleting local economies also create tensions among the local population. The spread of the conflict thus spills over to Lebanon and Iraq, and religious unrest destabilizes these states, which are themselves unstable and on the brink of civil wars. Both countries are involved in the Syrian government's conflict with the opposition, rhetorically, financially and at least in part militarily (Lebanese Hezbollah). Turkey itself, as the host of the Syrian National Council (SNC) and the operational base for the Free Syrian Army (FSA), is under pressure from the war. In response to the resulting threats in January 2013, Turkey authorized the deployment of NATO's Patriot fire batteries to protect border areas and civilians (Asseburg, 2013: 14).

1.6. Historical determinants of the Libyan revolution

Libya is a country with a population of about 6.4 million, made up mainly of Arab and Berber ethnic groups. There are also nomadic tribes in the south, such as the Tuareg and Teb tribes. After World War II, the territory of Libya was under the control of the colonial powers of Italy, Great Britain and France. In 1949, following a proposal by the United Nations (UN), Libya gradually gained independence. In 1951, a separate United Kingdom was proclaimed and the National Congress appointed Idris al-Sanusi (known as Idris I) as king. In 1969, however, there was a coup of the Free Officers and the revolution brings to the head of the state Colonel Gaddafi, who forms with the other officers the so-called Revolutionary Leadership Council (RLC). The triggers of the 1969 revolution were the politics of the royal regime, which usurped considerable power, without the possibility for the rest of society to participate in it, but also its parasitism on the country's oil revenues without their fair redistribution (Ježová, M. - Burgrová, H., 2011: 64). Colonel Gaddafi usurps power after the Libyan Arab Republic (1969) declares power after the swift coup and begins its own revolution and consolidation of power. The 1970s were characterized by the persecution of the "enemies of the regime" and the elimination of any opposition from their own ranks. The rejection of the principles of parliamentary democracy in 1973 led to a cultural revolution, the final phase of which was the so-called *jamahiriya*.²²

The Libyan constitution was repealed and replaced by Gaddafi's Green Paper, which defines the concept of state organization for the Libyan people and renames the country the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab *jamahiri*. For the character of the regime between 1969, from the taking of power by Colonel Gaddafi to its overthrow in 2011, there are **key elements** to its existence and survival. In the hands of the leader were **concentrated tools of power** and especially **security forces** operating on the principle of clan clientelism, i. repressive forces suppressing any opposition were entrusted to members of Gaddafi's loyal tribe (similar to Iraq).

Another element of the "survival" of the Gaddafi regime is the country's economy, which is different from its neighbors, as it is largely based on the **oil industry** without a greater need for diversification. Translated to a relatively small population, the significant domestic product (GDP)

²² *Džamáhírja* was so called „era of the masses“ and practice of direct democracy according to Gaddafi: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/160277>

per capita is one of the highest on the African continent, although in the past the Libyan economy was referred to as a "rentier" or "distribution" state²³ (Kalberg - Otnam, 2007: 21).

However, Libyan support for terrorist organizations has led to international isolation, sanctions and a boycott of Libyan oil imports by the United States. The situation has been exacerbated by terrorist support scandals²⁴, which have resulted in UN sanctions and the isolation of the regime in the 1990s. Gaddafi's regime has been accused of attacking a PanAm 103 plane that crashed after the explosion near the Scottish village of Lockerbie (1988). Devastating economic sanctions and international isolation forced Colonel Gaddafi to comply with the claim for compensation for the survivors of the Lockerbie victims, and in 2003 the sanctions were lifted. From 2004, Gaddafi began to move closer to the West when he visited Brussels to establish trade relations with the EU. Libya was removed from the US list of countries supporting terrorism in 2006 and later even elected a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2008-2009 (Ježová, M. - Burgrová, H., 2011: 70-71). Gaddafi and his regime issued a Green Paper to guide the only possible just order in society, with his arches enemies being parliamentary democracies usurping power by a narrow elite of politicians. The Green Paper was the backbone of the company's functioning in Libya until 2011 (Tureček, 2016: 162).

Between 1969 and 2011, one element was key to the very nature of the regime, namely Colonel Gaddafi's personality and his influence on the direction of Libyan society both internally and externally to the outside world. The implementation of the Green Paper created a unique state system with elements of clan clientelism combined with the variability of foreign policy and the unpredictability of Colonel Gaddafi's behavior. These determinants and growing dissatisfaction accumulated until anti-government protests broke out in 2011 and the regime gradually lost the ability to resist politically and militarily after Western intervention (Ježová, M. - Burgrová, H., 2011: 75).

²³ The rentier state can be characterized as a state where significant direct oil production and exports allow the government layer to redistribute social income. The population system and in return buy their obedience (Ježová, M. - Burgrová, H., 2011: page 71).

²⁴ The Gaddafi regime has been accused of attacking a PanAm 103 aircraft that crashed near Lockerbie, Scotland (Ježová, M. - Burgrová, H., 2011: 70).

1.7 Libya: from revolution to civil war

A wave of Arab intifadas²⁵ inspired by the events in Tunisia and Egypt spilled over into Libya. The eastern part of the country, which was heavily marginalized and oppressed under the Gaddafi regime, became a key epicenter for the rise of the opposition. The insurgents were mobilized against Colonel Gaddafi's ruling authoritarian government for more than four decades, which practically politically concreted, fought any political freedom, rampant corruption, and society lived in great social inequality. Libyan society is characterized by tribalism²⁶ in which Gaddafi's allied tribes practically dominate society. Another feature of the regime was the violation of human rights and the persecution of the opposition. In the *Freedom House Index*, which maps the criteria of the level of political rights and civil liberties, the Libyan regime is run under Index 7.0, similar to North Korea, ie regimes with a high level of political reprisals (Černý, 2012: 71).

The combination of all the above factors and their long-term accumulation resulted in peaceful demonstrations in January 2011, which were immediately confronted by Libyan security forces. The clashes of the opposition and the regime quickly turned into open violence. The situation escalated rapidly, and by the turn of February and March, the insurgents were already controlling the eastern half of the country and some isolated areas in the west. The center of the uprising became the metropolis of East Benghazi, which became the target of a counter-offensive by government forces. The successful suppression of the uprising was in sight, but on March 19, a coalition of mostly Western states launched air strikes and put government forces on the defensive (Brtnický, 2016: 131).

The international community reacted quickly. In March 2011, after the UN Security Council approved "all necessary measures" to protect civilians, NATO powers launched air strikes on government targets. The UN Security Council imposed sanctions, an arms embargo and froze Libya's assets in order to point out Gaddafi's crimes against humanity and turn to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Shortly afterwards, the League of Arab States suspended Libya's

²⁵ https://ips-dc.org/the_arab_worlds_intifada/

²⁶ Libya was built, for better or worse, around a tribal and regional system. The tribe thus plays a key role in shaping loyalty and affiliations. In fact, throughout the state-building process by the colonizing powers of Italy, Britain, and France, then under King Sanusi's short-lived monarchy, and finally during Gaddafi's presidency, tribal structures prevailed. They play a role that is more important in the daily lives of Libyans than ever before. In: <https://www.frstrategie.org/en/programs/observatoire-du-monde-arabo-musulman-et-du-sahel/tribal-structure-libya-factor-fragmentation-or-cohesion-2017>

membership and called on the international community to establish a no-fly zone at one of its meetings. The UN Security Council has complied with this request (Daalder - Stavridis, 2012: 2). With the military help of the West and several Arab states, rebel forces occupied Tripoli after six months of fighting, killing several thousand people. After four decades in power, Gaddafi fled and was captured and killed near Sirta in August 2011.²⁷

European foreign policy has opposed Gaddafi's efforts to defeat the uprising since the beginning of the conflict, and EU officials approved an arms embargo and economic sanctions against the Libyan regime in early March (European External Action Service 2011). During the further escalation of the conflict in mid-March, France, the United Kingdom and Italy were among the first to initiate (or join) the controversial air and missile strikes, which in fact aimed to defeat Gaddafi's armed forces (Brtnický, 2016: 131).

Eight months after the uprising, Libya's internationally recognized *National Transitional Council*, largely organized by local armed groups formed in cities such as Benghazi and Misurata as the governing body for the uprising, announced the "liberation" of Libya. However, the Libyans were soon frustrated by the inaction of the caretaker government. The Libyan National Transitional Council has promised to meet a long list of needs, including a functioning judiciary, a reconciliation process for officials who have served the old administration, disarmament militias, building a functioning national security force, rebuilding devastated areas and providing basic services such as health care. A major part of the failure was the stagnation of the Libyan economy after the removal of Gaddafi, but also the attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi in September 2012, when a heavily armed group attacked the US Special Mission in Benghazi and killed US Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans.²⁸

1.8 Influence of regional and global powers on the conflict in Libya

The Libyan conflict in 2014 initially led to a unique expression of unity among the foreign powers in support of the political process and a new political agreement within Libya. However,

²⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-12482311>

²⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/5/30/libya-today-from-arab-spring-to-failed-state>

the political institutions created under the agreement have failed to reach a consensus. International support for these bodies has become increasingly superficial and Western countries have adapted to this, with key European actors focusing more on their particular interests than on finding a comprehensive solution to the crisis. Gradually, in addition to domestic ones, regional and global powers with their proxy interests also emerged in Libya.

Field Marshal **Khalifa Haftar** has been part of the Libyan political scene for more than four decades and is moving from the center to the periphery and back. This military commander and leader of the Libyan National Army is currently involved in the civil war in Libya. On 2 March 2015, he was appointed Commander of the Armed Forces to the Libyan Parliament, based in Tobruk.²⁹ He has long relied on the support of the UAE and Egypt. Haftar launched his attack on Tripoli shortly after returning from a trip to Riyadh, where he probably secured approval to move with the support of the Middle East and North Africa. At the heart of this support are states that share a broad political vision for reversing the policies of the Arab uprisings, especially democratic and pro-Islamic forces. He is one of the possible future presidents of Libya.³⁰

Egypt is an independent player in Libya and its support for Haftar stems from a mixture of economic opportunism, direct threats to its security interests and a common ideology of militarism between Haftar and President Abdal Fatah al-Sisi as the only antidote to the existential Islamist threat in both countries. Although Egypt felt marginalized by the Haftar in favor of close contact with France, Russia and the United Arab Emirates after the attack on Tripoli, it reaffirmed its support.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) sees the Arab uprising's promise of a representative government and the prospect that (often Islamist-oriented) parties that have been in opposition for decades would one day come to power through a ballot box as an existential threat. The Emirates' leaders fear that the demand for civil rights and representation uprisings could reach their limits and have therefore come to the forefront of the regional fight against Arab uprisings and political Islamist groups - especially the Muslim Brotherhood. The United Arab Emirates considers Libya to be the central battleground in this fight. Like Egypt, the United Arab Emirates sees Haftar's

²⁹ <https://www.novinky.cz/zahranicni/svet/clanek/polni-marsal-chalifa-haftar-kandiduje-na-libyjske-prezidenta-40378198>

³⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/5/30/libya-today-from-arab-spring-to-failed-state>

political views and military style as complementary to its vision. Since 2014, the UAE has been key to strengthening its military capabilities as well as its political support base (in Libya and abroad) and its international standing. Like the UAE, **Saudi Arabia** has mobilized its propaganda machinery to win the narrative war around Haftar and his offensive. Through a network of blogs that published an average of 1,000 posts a day during the first 15 days of the offensive, Riyadh sought to dominate the Libyan media environment. Especially since Haftar's advance on Tripoli began. Haftar also has support from Russia and the United States. Since 2014, **Russia** has spoken to all parties to the Libyan conflict and sought influence in Libya. Russia's activities in Libya are probably the product of various state institutions, especially the Ministry of Defense.

Many Libyans perceived Haftar's advance on Tripoli as an existential threat and his prospective victory as another blow that would polarize Libyan society. They would also move key constituencies in western Libya to a state of war and move away from the UN process they once engaged in. This has created an opportunity for new regional actors such as **Turkey and Qatar** to represent the **anti-Hafara camp**. These countries were previously under-represented in Libya due to the inaction and political marginalization of many of their Libyan partners, but now have a chance to reassert themselves, thwarting the machinations of their regional rivals Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Like all external actors, they continue to see potential in political and economic reward if their Libyan allies gain control of the state (Megerisi, 2019).

1.9 Migrant crisis in Libya

The end of Gaddafi's government also marked the end of his security apparatus, which had previously controlled trade routes through Libya. Following the 2011 uprising, security has disintegrated and fighting militias are now operating on the long and permeable desert and sea borders, making money to transport people, petrol, food, drugs and weapons. Due to the political divisions of Libya and the declining economy, there are no facilities and desert patrols to fight trafficking networks. The Libyan Coast Guard does not even have the means to monitor sea voyages. More than 150,000 people have passed through Libya in the last three years. Libya's

proximity to the Italian island of Lampedusa and the closure of the EU-Turkey borders have increased the flow of migrants entering Europe across the Libyan coast.³¹

As of October, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that there were 212,593 internally displaced people in Libya, or about 42,506 families, with the largest number in Benghazi, followed by Tripoli and then Misurata. Between January and September 2021, at least 46,626 people came to Italy and Malta via the Central Mediterranean Road, most of whom left Libya. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), arrivals in Malta and Italy in 2021 were higher than in the same period in 2019 or 2020. The organization recorded 1,118 deaths off the coast of Libya from January to September 30, 2021. IOM identified as of October 2021 610 128 migrants from Libya. The European Union continued to work with the untrustworthy Libyan Coast Guard forces and provided fast boats, training and other support to detain and return thousands of people to Libya. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees were arbitrarily detained in inhumane conditions in *Government of the National Accord* (GNA) facilities and in "warehouses" operated by smugglers and traffickers, where they were exposed to forced labor, torture and other evil. treatment, extortion and sexual abuse. According to the IOM, at least 5,000 people were detained in official detention centers in Libya as of August.³²

Libya has long faced a confusing situation between the power-fighting factions, which led to the signing of a ceasefire in October 2020 and the appointment of a caretaker government of National Unity in March 2021. The December 2021 presidential and parliamentary elections rights. Continuing disagreements over the organization of the election plunged Libya into uncertainty again in September 2021 (Khedher, 2021: 1). The country is plagued by constant mass displacement, the dangers posed by new landmines and the destruction of critical infrastructure, including health care and schools. Hundreds of people are still missing, including many civilians, and authorities have discovered mass graves with dozens of bodies left unidentified. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Libya faced arbitrary detention, during which many experienced ill-treatment, sexual assault, forced labor and extortion by groups linked to the Ministry of the

³¹ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/libya>

³² <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/libya>

Interior of the Government of National Unity, members of armed groups, smugglers and traffickers.

On the positive side, several European Libyan border protection institutions were trained in Warsaw as part of the European Union's EUBAM-Libya mission in cooperation with Frontex. The content of training and education programs is focused on the so-called integrated border management, which should contribute to the consolidation of the state, economic development, the fight against organized crime and terrorism in and around Libya (Brtnický, 2016: 134-135).

2. THE FUTURE OF EU-TURKEY RELATIONS. PARTNER OR RIVAL?

- ✓ Will Turkey continue its authoritarian course and eventually turn into an Islamic country after almost a century of secular *Kemalist* tradition?
- ✓ Will Turkey become a leader inspiring other countries in the region to autocratic tendencies?

Turkey (*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, official name - Republic of Turkey) is a parliamentary representative democracy and one of the few countries with a Muslim majority in which there is an explicitly secular political system. However, Turkey's political culture is a reflection of historical and political developments that have gone through turbulent changes from the fall of the Caliphate to the founding of the republic to the present day when Turkey stands at the European Union and fulfills its civilizational role in the Middle East. In the intentions of contemplating the current form of political culture in Turkey, we could use an imaginary pendulum that oscillates between two different determining tendencies (factors), namely political Islam and the value message of *kemalism* (political secularism), and this oscillation generates a large number of paradoxes and questions. These paradoxes characterize Turkish society, which is quite heterogeneous (Kurdi, alawiti) and its political orientation rotates between Islam and secularism, between Eastern and Western culture and tradition.

Turks' social consciousness and political culture have undergone major changes since the collapse of the Caliphate³³ and the founding of the republic³⁴, but despite stubborn efforts to separate Islam from politics, religion still resonates in national developments and completes political culture in Turkey. An analysis of the political realities of the present and the past will help us to understand the current face of Turkey, which is the imaginary bridge between Europe and Asia, the candidate country of the European Union and currently the most important and influential Muslim country.

2.1 The Turkish cultural paradox - the oscillation between Islamism and secularism

In modern Turkey, there is a certain cultural pluralism and the individual ethnic groups coexist under the overarching element of Islam, which in many variations fulfills the role of a unifying religious ideology throughout the Middle East. In the case of multi-ethnic Turkey, the constant unifying element was the republic and the cult of the personality of its founder - Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk - 1881–1938)³⁵, whose ubiquitous halo, number of statues and monuments surpasses perhaps even Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin in the epoch of the epoch / . After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Kemalist government set itself the goal of creating a new national identity, statist and secular. Latin (before Atatürk's reform - Arabic script) became an instrument of unification, which was to break all ties in time and space with the Ottoman past and the Arab-Islamic legacy and support the creation of Turkish identity (Müller, 2010: 218), which we can take stock of over time as a successful but contradictory project.

In an effort to transform the Ottoman identity into a Turkish one that would be independent of Islam, Atatürk turned to the Turkish past in Central Asia and Anatolia.³⁶ The 1928 constitutional

³³ The Caliphate was destroyed by the death of Sultan Abdul' Majid II. in Turkey in 1924.

³⁴ The state of social consciousness represents an objectively formed, relatively stable configuration of compositional elements, but also of conflicting tendencies, by which its bearers reflect reality and express their focus on the conditions of their being. Social consciousness is thus taken in its dynamic complexity and activity, i. as a product and at the same time an active component of social processes (Zich, 1983: page 64).

³⁵ Atatürk is an adjective of Mustafa Kemal and means "father of all Turks" (Čáky, 2010: page 330).

³⁶ The effects of the amendment also affected traditional "Islamic" clothing, and Muslim men also had to stop wearing headdresses - a *fez*, which was replaced by a European type of hat. There was a reform of the law, the abolition of religious schools and courts (1924), the adoption of secular family law, including the Gregorian calendar (1925), (Sardar, 2010: page 152-153).

amendment deprived Islam of the role of the official state religion. *"All the changes adopted, together with the abolition of the Caliphate and the elimination of the Dervish (Sufi) orders after the Kurdish uprising in 1925, have dealt a crushing blow to Islam in society"* (Sardar, 2010: 152-153). However, the trend of secularism has improved the position of women who have won the right to vote and to run for parliament. Kemalism was initially embodied by military unity and pluralism, and its creator (Atatürk) is still a symbol of this unity in Turkey, glorified and revered because it has led the Turkish nation to survive. The iron fist of Kemalism eliminated the opposition in political struggles and severely suppressed all the disparate elements dangerous to the young state. However, beneath the surface of this often destructive force was the intention to elevate Turkey to democracy and prosperity (Müller, 2010: 221-222).

Although Turkey has undergone Atatürk's harsh secularization, the role of Islam in today's Turkey is far from marginalized. The transformation of the relationship between Islam and politics, which was coined by traditional Islamic movements towards the creation of an "Islamic state", is taking on a new dimension in Turkey. Here in the Turkish Republic, Islamic policy is adapting to the needs and demand of Turkish modern society, while retaining the character of a religious party with strong ties to the Islamic clergy. This current in Turkey is represented by the **Justice and Development Party** (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP - in power since 2002), which abandoned the utopian concept of an "Islamic state" but focused on creating a democratic society based on Islamic values. The arguments of the AKP leaders refer to the Islamic Shura principle (Islamic Consultative Council), which is supposed to mean that politics in Islam must be consensual and based on democratic principles (Sardar, 2010: 21). The AKP has rejected a strong state tradition of Kemalism, and its official line says they must pursue a policy that reflects society's demands. It plans to create a regime that aligns Turkey's existing principles with universal values.

On secularism, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan strictly opposes the use of religious values and ethnic issues for political purposes. According to the AKP, religion should dominate only in the private sphere, not in the political sphere, and the AKP describes secularism as a guarantee of religious freedom, because according to this concept, state authorities should be neutral towards all religious groups and act as an arbiter in exercising religious freedom (secularism does not mean "hostility against religion"). If it becomes a guarantee for religious freedom, democracy and Islam can be reconciled with the help of a new definition of secularism. The AKP claims the Ottoman heritage (from which Atatürk turned away), including its history,

culture and unity (Efegil, 2012). The new Islamic movements of the 1980s focused mainly on issues - political culture, lifestyle and identity - and secondarily focused on income distribution and state policy.

The main goal of these Islamic movements is not to create an Islamic state, but rather to re-influence everyday life through the transformation of personal identity and consciousness through micro-interactions in the context of social order, media, press, households. In a sense, it is the construction of an Islamic political identity, and it is the story of the transformation of the macro-system through a series of inputs from micro-interactions, so this change requires a long process. Pluralism is a major characteristic of Turkish Islam. This pluralism is the basis for the movement of democratization in Turkey. Old Republican Turkey as we know it is already passé, and New Turkey is at a turbulent and uncertain crossroads, as evidenced by recent events in Taksim Square (Yavuz, 2003: 270-274).³⁷

The military in Turkey has been a silent ally of the secular regime from the beginning and has acted as a traditional protector of plurality. In Muslim countries (Egypt, Syria, Turkey, etc.), the military and its generality play the irreplaceable role of the "guardian" of a given political establishment against powerful Islamists who rule in society with considerable influence. The Turkish military played a distinctive and irreplaceable role in Turkish society and, unlike the Arab armies, did not tend to intervene openly in politics, thus strengthening its position. The strength and strikingness of Kemalism lay in a combination of pluralism and the military. The Turkish military has always maintained a certain distance from religion and cultivated internal cohesion and solidarity (Müller, 2010: 215-216).

Should Islamist tendencies be feared today? However, the Slovak Arabist Jaro Drobný claims that: *“Turkish secularism is much stronger than secularism in Slovakia, for example. Separation from church to state has been a reality in Turkey for over eighty years. Muslim imams can only dream of teaching religion in public schools. However, this did not affect the faith of the population. Islam in Turkey is practiced by 95 percent of the population (if not more)”* (Drobný, 2007).

³⁷ Plans to convert Gezi Park in Istanbul into a complex with a new mosque and shopping center sparked a wave of protests inside and outside the Turkish city, which resulted in an internal political crisis and shook the government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan (AKP), online on: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-22753752>

From a confessional point of view, Turkey's population is made up of 95% Muslims, and since 1928, when Islam ceased to be the official state religion, the state has regularly come into conflict with religion. It was strong Turkish secularism that suppressed and restricted freedom of religion for a long time, and the armed forces held a protective hand over political secularism. Secularism is one of the most important aspects of Turkey's founding, and the military has repeatedly shown that it is ready to protect it. Furthermore, the existence of Article 301 deals with insults to the Turkish state and identity, while being of a very restrictive nature and constituting an obstacle to Turkey's accession to the EU (Sardar, 2010: 303-304).

Turkey's accession to the European Union is a current factor and an issue that influences political debate and, indirectly, political culture. According to a survey of several thousand respondents, in an effort to empirically and statistically assess which groups of the population support Turkey's accession to the EU and which do not (what they promise and what they fear) it shows that strong EU supporters in Turkey are mostly educated people who perceive themselves on non-religious or ethnic perspectives and vote primarily for left-wing and center-right political groups. On the other hand, supporters of the right and political Islam have the strongest relationship with the EU. The main bearers of Euroscepticism in Turkey are radical anti-democratic forces (Tunkrová - Šaradín, 2007: 62-65).

The EU is a key element in the development of an advanced civil society in Turkey. With deepening relations between Turkey and the EU, civil society in Turkey is becoming increasingly operational. However, Turkey's accession to the EU and its potential membership is not the only incentive to stabilize and support civil society. The transformation of political leaders' views towards the state, the weakening of a strong state and tradition, the increase in pluralism and tolerance of Turkish society may pave the way for a more developed civil society in Turkey.

On the sidelines of events in Taksim Square, which, with the flavor of the revolution, began to threaten the positions of the Islamist government. These multiple protests are characteristic and unprecedented in Turkey's recent history - the very fact that the broadest groups have traditionally come together against Erdogan's government: the right, the left, from anarchists to far-right groups, but what is no less important, they were more apolitically focused Turks. The exception is religiously oriented citizens, although their councils have recently become less uniform than usual. Unlike some moderate AKP politicians, Erdogan's rhetoric is clearly polarizing, and calls for his supporters to organize counter-demonstrations are dividing the Turkish nation. This is something

that goes against the spirit of Turkish nationalism, and its policy also goes against Atatürk's idea of "*peace at home, peace in the world*" (Turkey's motto). Given the entrenchedness of nationalism in Turkish society, Erdoğan's confrontational policy is a strategic mistake in the long run. Erdoğan's main concern is the fact that his party won the last parliamentary elections in 2011 with a gain of an incredible almost 50%. Behind it stands a strong and confident conservative class, whose 11-year-old AKP government has secured status and economic prosperity. On the other hand, it should be noted that Erdoğan's authoritarian tendencies do not like some AKP supporters, nor is his party as united as it may seem (Zenkner, 2013).

Turkish democracy has been a reflection of a historic compromise between officers who do not want political power and enlightened Muslims who do not want to curtail the legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the one hand by a pernicious authoritarian government and on the other by Islamic dogmas. Over time, political culture has changed, and so has Turkey. The traditional Kemalist political culture has changed or evolved. However, the evolutionary nature completely failed to push Kemalist principles out of circulation. Today, these principles are interpreted by political and economic elites in accordance with changing domestic and international conditions, as well as social, cultural, economic and political views for the new Turkish elites.

Creating an immortal legacy that will survive for generations without the erosion of the relentless flow of time has been and is the goal of every leader, ideologist and autocrat. In the history of mankind, we have several attempts that have cost too many lives, and their failure and desolate legacy are only a bitter memory of the last century (Hitler, Stalin). Resurrecting and elevating the nation and the state on the ruins of the former empire, modernizing and preventing imperialist tendencies, all this requires a personality with the attributes of a leader, a statesman and, last but not least, a symbol. At the end of the Ottoman caliphate, Turkey inevitably needed such a man to maintain its very existence. The person of the genius military strategist Mustafa Kemal Atatürk from Thessaloniki embodied all the prerequisites to become the president of the new state unit and change the trajectory of his homeland. His legacy is alive to this day, even though 21st-century Turkey is already a diametrically opposed country that has undergone 75 years of turbulent development and change since Atatürk's death (1938).

In 2014, Turkey was led by an Islamic-oriented government, which was pushing a new political line, and Turkey has strengthened greatly in many respects over the last decade - economically, politically, religiously, and the self-confidence of most Turks. The embodiment of

this rise was the moderate Islamist party AKP, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan (until the events in Taksim Square) and a number of other politicians. It should be noted, however, that even in this situation, Turkey's potential membership of the EU remains very uncertain. The accumulating Turkish power is thus gradually beginning to be realized elsewhere, and there is talk, among other things, of "neo-Ottomanism", a kind of revival of Turkish imperial ambitions in the Middle East in a modern guise (Čejka, 2011). The civil war in Syria also brings us new scenarios for the organization of the country, where Turkey is intervening significantly in its favor. From another perspective, Turkey is a key partner in protecting the Euro-Atlantic area. *"The country has definitely set out on its current position after 2000. Rapid economic growth, which was not fundamentally affected by the crisis in 2008. Political stability - Prime Minister Erdogan rules for the third term in a row - strengthening democratic principles and weakening at the same time the traditional position of the army"* (Tuček, 2011).

2.2. *The Arab Spring and its implications for society, politics and the realities of Turkey*

In May 2013, a group of activists staged a protest in Istanbul's Gezi Park against the Turkish government's plans to demolish the park in order to build a replica of the Ottoman-era Taksim military barracks, which would include a shopping mall. The forced eviction of protesters from the park and the excessive use of police force sparked an unprecedented wave of mass demonstrations. About 3 million people took to the streets across Turkey in three weeks to protest against the wide range of concerns that stemmed from the functioning of the state. Following the protests, the activists had to adapt to a complex political context. Many focused on local municipal and environmental issues, while some civil society organizations focused on the more general state of Turkey's democratic regression. However, most activists decided to adopt a lower profile as repression increased and the scope for activism narrowed.³⁸

However, a monumental turning point in Turkey's modern political history was a coup attempt in July 2016. The Turkish government accused Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish preacher and businessman who has been living in voluntary exile in the United States since 1999. Gülen is the leader of a widespread and influential religious movement known as "Hizmet" (Service), which

³⁸ <https://www.publicspace.org/works/-/project/h312-occupy-gezi>

owns foundations, associations, media organizations and schools in Turkey and abroad. Just days after the coup attempt, on July 22, the Turkish government declared a state of emergency *"so that it can quickly remove all elements of the terrorist organization involved in the coup attempt."* Thousands of military officials, pilots, police, civil servants, academics and even teachers have been fired for alleged links to the "terrorist" preacher and his movement. Dozens of media suspects of links to the Hizmet movement have also been closed. To date, more than 100,000 people have been released or suspended and 50,000 arrested during the unprecedented intervention. The government considered the intervention necessary to *"eradicate all supporters of the coup from the state apparatus."* The next step also abolished the possibility for universities to elect their own rectors.³⁹ The state has been literally purged in all areas of society.

The coup attempt forced Erdogan to redefine the country's interests, as the president was convinced that the events on the night of July 15-16 were the overthrow of the Western powers. Proerdoganv media have often complained about the lack of support from Western leaders, although the EU immediately issued two statements (by the European Commission and on behalf of member states) condemning the coup attempt and stressing the need for a speedy restoration of Turkey's constitutional order (TOYGÜR et al. 2022: 11).

In 2017, a large number of people mobilized before the constitutional referendum, which gave the Turkish president completely new powers. In parallel with a series of "No" campaigns led by opposition parties, groups of civic activists have led a number of civic initiatives. The United Movement launched the No campaign in June and called for election monitoring. Other initiatives did not emerge from the post-Gezi groups, but nevertheless enjoyed their support. Following a controversial decision by the Verkhovna Rada to approve approximately 1.5 million unmarked referendums (a number that could have reversed the voting result), allegations of fraud and mass protests have been made valid. Thousands of people took to the streets of Istanbul and several other cities in the following days to demonstrate against the decision and the results.⁴⁰

The outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions posed an unprecedented challenge for the EU, in addition to resolving national and regional crises at its very center. The Arab Spring has also effectively highlighted several key imbalances in the Union's foreign policy. Addressing each

³⁹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/7/15/turkeys-failed-coup-attempt-all-you-need-to-know>

⁴⁰ <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2019/10/24/legacy-of-gezi-protests-in-turkey-pub-80142>

country diplomatically using a tactical approach to *maximize potential profits and minimize losses*, the EU has taken a variety of positions, causing its Member States to often act inconsistently and uncoordinated. Undoubtedly, the uprisings have brought about great changes in Turkey's position in the region, as has been seen by the EU. In this regard, one of the most prominent examples was the redefining relations with Syria, where the ongoing crisis posed a direct threat to Turkey's internal stability. Although Turkey initially sought to encourage the Syrian government to reform through diplomatic means. However, President Bashar al-Assad's ignorance and the subsequent influx of refugees into Turkey led the Turkish government to sever relations with Syria and later to support the Syrian opposition to the Damascus regime. As regards Libya, Turkey initially took a cautious approach and abstained from its official position due to its strong economic ties with the country. Although Turkey has disagreed with NATO's intervention in Libya by describing the no-fly zone as "useless and full of risk" (Görgülü, 2020). Turkey later changed its position and called on former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to step down "in the interests of the country's future" (BBC 2011). At this point, it is also important to mention Turkey's position on democracy support in the Middle East, as emphasized in Erdoğan's speech on winning the elections in July 2011, during which he "supported the democratic efforts of the nations in the Middle East" (Tocci 2012). Similarly, Erdoğan indicated that Turkey recognized regional shifts with an indication of Turkey's role during the uprisings, i. stands on the side of people demanding political and economic change. In this context, it could be argued that Turkish policymakers have sided with the forces of change and have continued to adapt policies on a case-by-case basis, maintaining political and economic relations with post-regime countries, including Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen (Özcan 2013: 3).

However, the future of EU-Turkey relations seems bleak and there is a growing risk that Turkey's accession process will collapse. If Turkey's membership process is suspended, it is quite likely that, in the context of the Mediterranean, we will see less cooperation between the two countries. The EU would already have a reduced impact on Turkey and regional crises that require immediate solutions, such as the refugee crisis, which would become even more complicated in the absence of cooperative relations between Turkey and the EU. Therefore, the EU-Turkey dialogue is very valuable and should not be left at the mercy of everyday politics and populism on both sides if we are to achieve a safer and more balanced regional order (Görgülü, 2020).

3. THE FUTURE OF EU-LIBYA, SYRIA AND TURKEY RELATIONS

3.1 Political Islam and democracy

The time when Arab nationalism, pan-Arabism, or socialism was overwhelming was overcome, and now the political course is shifting toward political Islam and "democracy." Today's trend in the Middle East after the events of the Arab Spring is the awakening and growing political awareness of a large part of the population, as greater openness in society evokes the birth of a mass political public that tends to seek new political doctrines and convincing legitimacy of the order of power (Černý, 2012: 394- 395; Zakaria, 2011). Egypt is the cradle of the two greatest political ideas of the modern Arab world. The first is Arab nationalism or pan-Arabism - the idea of political unification of Arab countries. The second is Islamic fundamentalism and the general idea of political Islam, which arose from the Muslim Brotherhood and the "heritage" of Sajjid Qutb.⁴¹

In 1991, the French Arabist Gilles Kepel stated in the book *La revanche de Dieu: "The contemporary Islamic world, deeply marked by inequality, provides few opportunities for a democratic alternative that could stand up to re-Islamization. When the perspective of most young people is unemployment, jihad is more attractive to them than civil liberties"* (Kepel, 1996: 165). Twenty years after Kepel's statement, which paradoxically claims today that the jihadist variant of the struggle with the status quo has run out politically. In the events of the Arab Spring (2011), we witnessed an uprising of the Egyptian people, who in law have resisted the fight against their civil rights and freedoms by the immoral government. Disillusionment of Muslim societies with economic and social problems, decomposition of values, despotic and inattentive policies of authoritarian leaders created a kind of (ideological) vacuum and the dissatisfied part of the public more easily accepted the call for change from the ever-present and stable confession (respectively religious parties and movements) even after the revolution it re-emerged as an important unifying substance after the revolution.

⁴¹ **Sajjid Qutb** (1906-1966) was a prominent Egyptian Islamist activist and one of the spiritual fathers of contemporary radical Islamism. He became a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and one of its most important ideologues (Čejka, 2007: page 110).

Right today, political Islam has enormous power over the people, which has not been seen for decades when the military dictatorship sought to isolate the true face and identity of Egypt (Zakaria .: The real obstacle to democracy in Egypt. 2012). As early as 2007, a Gallup poll was conducted in Egypt, where 64 percent of Egyptians surveyed said Sharia (Islamic law) should be the only source of law in the country, and another 24 percent said it should be the source of legislation. Nevertheless, Egypt's desire for sharia is given by the strong demand for modernization and change, but also a reluctance to theocracy (Council on Foreign relations, 2011: 244), which will be a defining aspect of developments in Egypt. Despite fears of the Muslim Brotherhood that the West holds toward this established Islamic political power, a clear vision is opening up that strong religiosity will be a defining transformation for Egypt's future development.

Recently, some representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood have rejected the idea of an Islamic state and have expressed determination to cooperate with other secular and liberal parties in Egypt. However, human rights defenders and secular political opponents have expressed concern about the recently drafted constitution, arguing that it is an attempt to create a religious state. "If this constitution passes, it will be the first Egyptian constitution to adopt a specific religious doctrine for the state," writes Ragab Saad of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights and Studies, adding that some provisions could allow the establishment of a "**religious autocracy**" (Johnson, 2012).

The very perception and evaluation of political Islam as a researched phenomenon by Western authors, and especially domestic (Eastern) experts on Islam, has undergone a major debate in recent decades, which has brought considerable discourse in the perception of this multifaceted political-ideological trend.

3.2 Perception of political Islam - a split between West and East

To understand political Islam, we must detach ourselves from the groundbreaking by Western intellectuals and (non) experts. Understanding and embracing the issue of political Islam in all its complexity is a great challenge that has been the subject of much analysis and discussion. We would like to mention one that is closely related and correlated with the issue of perception of Islamism. This historical discourse (split) of understanding the Middle East has been going on for several decades and the "big debate" of two intellectual giants in the field of Middle Eastern studies in the era of postcolonialism, namely Edward Said and Bernard Lewis, cannot be overlooked. The

Palestinian Edward Said presents an authentic statement and accusation of the West in his book *Orientalism* (1978), where he examines the West's view of the Middle East, considering "Orientalism" (understood pejoratively) as a powerful European creation - control. He argued that the long tradition of false and romantic notions of Asia and the Middle East served as a tool and implicit justification for European colonial and imperial ambitions (Said, 2003). One of its greatest Western historians, the Middle East, Bernard Lewis, who criticizes Said's concept as sufficiently unworked, stood out from his position as a counterpart. On the other hand, he does not even advocate "impressive freedom and democracy" applied to Islamic nations. He claimed that there were things that could not be introduced. For example, he says that "*democracy, which is a very powerful medicine, should be given to the patient in small, gradually increasing doses. Otherwise, let's risk killing the patient. He emphasizes that Muslims must do it themselves*" (Lewis, 2002).

Opinions on political Islam vary from author to author, but the basic discourse is the East-West line. Western academics and authors often overlook the historical-political, religious, and ethnic-cultural determinants of the Middle East countries studied, which greatly distorts their conclusions.

The reasons for the creation of "purposeful" postulates by the West and the efforts to convince the locals and themselves of the correctness of Western optics lie deeper in the past. Already after Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, modernization arrived at the Arabs through colonialism, which created a complex cultural reaction and shock, which in turn led to the absorption of some parts of Western modernity. While the material component of modernization (science, military, and organization) was often enthusiastically accepted, the cultural and ethical foundations of modernity and concepts such as citizenship, liberalism, secularization were often underestimated or explicitly rejected as unnecessary additions or undesirable (mainly incoherent) innovations (Guazzone, 1995).

Fundamentalism, and even more so Islamism (political Islam), are not natural shoots of true Islam, but the fruits of unequal interaction with a stronger geopolitical adversary - the West. They are a defense response to the destabilizing impact of European modernity. Islamism can therefore also be understood as an unmanageable pathological offshoot of European colonialism and the modernization of Islamic countries. It is no coincidence that political Islam first appeared in Egypt, the center of the Arab world, painfully affected by European colonialism, imperialism and Western expansion (Brtnický, 2008).

French orientalist Olivier Roy says Islamism is taking on a whole new dimension in inspiration from Western political ideologies. Beneath the ballast and outer envelope of Islamic rhetoric and symbolism are some elements and tools of nationalism and communism, more or less subconscious. This inspiration is so obvious that it leads Roy to paraphrase Lenin's motto - "*Islamism, this is Shari'a plus electricity*" (Roy, 1992: 90) and further compares Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood to the political forces on the left of the spectrum: "*their the organization is very similar to the revolutionary left in both its functioning and phraseology. The Leninist structure intersects with a mystical order based on personal initiation under the auspices of a leader. The dictionary is subject to double reading: leader (emir) - secretary general, brother - comrade, council (shura) - central committee, duty of counseling and obedience (ba'yat) - democratic centralism, etc.*" (Roy, 1992: 62).

This resemblance to the revolutionary left takes on another dimension in finding out where Islamists are taking their membership and support. They do not acquire it to such an extent in the countryside, but in the suburbs of metropolises such as Cairo, where social problems are present in their sharpest form. Overcrowded agglomerations full of expelled villagers are the most suitable ground for Islamists to gain sympathy and members for their movement (Barša, 2001: 76, Brtnický: 2008).

3.3 Levels of compatibility of (political) Islam and democracy

The Arab-Muslim identity is different and the civilization of "Islam" is based on diametrically different determinants than Western civilization. Western theorizing without support in empirical data is often deeply detached from the reality of Middle Eastern regimes because the nature of individual countries varies. Therefore, we will try a set of assumptions and arguments that will define the compatibility of political Islam and democracy divided into positive and negative variants (approach):

A. Positive: The future of political Islam is closely linked to the future of democracy in the Islamic world. Political openness encourages the emergence of several competing Islamist movements within a country. Democracy not only creates political space for Islamist parties, but also neutralizes more extreme and rigid manifestations of Islamism, which in turn benefits the environment of authoritarian regimes. Islamists on the political scene have to compete with other non-Islamist political groups (commonly suppressed by authoritarian regimes) and are thus forced to moderate their Islamic agenda and rhetoric and give up ambitions such as

the establishment of Islamic law or the establishment of an Islamic state. If there is a recognizable long-term trend in Islamism, it is moderate orientation and constitutionalism, ie the creation of the constitution as a law standing above the rule of law, the state and state bodies, and thus above public power (Kouřilová, 2008). John L. Esposito (founder and director of the Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University) and author of more than thirty books on Islam and Islamist movements are among the best-known proponents of the idea that Islam is compatible and supports democracy. J. Esposito bases his arguments on biased assumptions and phrases such as "democracy has many different forms and meanings", with each culture forming its own model of democratic government, and there is the possibility of religious democracy.

In fact, Islamic movements are governed by the terms shura [consul], ijma [consensus], and ijtihad [adaptation], concluding that democracy already exists in the Muslim world, či whether or not the word democracy is used '(Bukay, 2007). Graham E. Fuller accepts political Islam as a type of alternative in *The Future of Political Islam*. Fuller argues that political Islam can be accepted as a real alternative to democratic development in the sense that many of the Islamist groups have the support of domestic voters and come up with solutions that do not necessarily conflict with what we know from political and social life in the West. . In other words, according to Fuller, representatives of political Islam solve similar problems as politicians in Western-type democracies, and a meaningful discussion with them is possible and necessary, even if both sides start from different starting points and move within a different ideological framework (Fuller, 2003; Uhde, 2008).

- B. **The negative variant** in the submission of the Muslim Brotherhood: Hasan al-Bannáa himself (1906-1949), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, tried to cleanse Egypt of Western influences. On the sidelines of the concept of democracy, Hasana al-Bannáa stated that he partially sympathized with the concept of democracy, but rejected the plurality of political parties (the basic democratic principle), (Ikhwanweb, 2010). Sajjid Qutb (1906-1966), a leading theorist of the Muslim Brotherhood, objected to the idea of popular sovereignty and believed that the Islamic State must be based on the Qur'an, which provides a sufficient moral system without the need for secular legislation (Buka, 2007). Ma' mún Hudajbí (general leader in the later years 2002–2004) has adopted and accepted the term and meaning of the word

“democracy”, claiming that it is not in conflict with Islam. It declares that the democratic principle was enshrined in the Islamic principle of the Shura - the Advisory Council ulama, who are elected by the representatives of the ummah, i. before that, it was arrogantly appropriated by European capitalism (Mendel, 1994: 173, 175). Bernard Lewis, an emeritus historian, explains that the term democracy is often misused. Islam may be compatible with democracy, but it depends on what is understood as Islam. But the political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists is difficult to reconcile with Western-type liberal democracy. The basic problem is that the view of democracy among Islamic ulama is far from uniform. Imam Ali Belhaj (tribune of Algerian Islamism) claims: the term demos, i. sovereign people, has no Qur'anic background, on the contrary, it contradicts the only legitimate sovereignty of Allah over the ummah - the Muslim community of believers (Kepel, 1996: 164).

Throughout history, we can trace several prominent clergy and scholars who perceive democracy as a Western disparate element that is difficult to implement in Muslim society. The well-known Islamic theologian of Egyptian origin, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, emphasized and preferred the concept of al-hall al-Islam (Islamic solution), which he put into contradiction with the imported solution (al-hulul mustawrada). The already deceased Pakistani Islamist Abu Ala Maududi and one of the most prominent and at the same time most radical figures of political Islam Egyptian Sajjid Qutb agree that democracy is a foreign element to Islam, an imported solution instead of an Islamic solution and a gradual decline of democracy will no longer have the West Qutb 1951). Islamists often look to liberal democracy with contempt. They are willing to adapt to it, but only if it leads in one direction and that is towards power (Lewis, 1996).

Even after a deeper analysis, answering the question of possible compatibility of political Islam is quite problematic (authors differ on this issue and did not reach a clear consensus), although Islamist parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood have shown some adaptability and pragmatism in adopting democratic principles (elections, political institutions and parties) and rhetoric. However, this fact does not guarantee the full acceptance of Western-type liberal democracy (minority rights, acceptance of pluralism at the highest level and the emergence of a hybrid Islamist autocracy).

"Islamic doctrine contains elements that suit democracy, but also those that are difficult to unite with it" (Huntington, 2008: 294).

A look at the relationship between religion and political systems in the world shows that Islam and democracy are not entirely reprehensible concepts and that to some extent their synthesis is not possible. Almost half of the world's Muslim population lives in a democratic establishment or in a hybrid electoral system with non-democratic elements. Thus, the problem is not primarily in the Islamic, but rather in the Arab democratic deficit and in the authoritarian regimes themselves that dominate the Arab states. Under the influence of external stimuli (the Arab Spring, the demand of society and its transformation, etc.), the Islamists themselves overcame prejudices and developmental discourse and partly adopted the democratic idea (eg the Tunisian party an-Nahda or the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood). But the basic difference remains the understanding of this type of democracy - it is necessary to distinguish between "Middle Eastern-type" democracy and liberal democracy in the Western context. Moderate Islamists generally accept democracy as a political establishment, but civil rights and freedoms and their regulation remain the domain of Islam, which is perceived as a major social and moralizing force, and so Islamist notions may appear democratic but ultimately illiberal (Hesová, 2012 : 5).

3.4 Political implications and consequences of the Arab Spring for the EU

Today, it is not yet possible to clearly anticipate all the consequences and effects of the Arab Spring, but it is possible to observe a growing trend of civil society revival (positive indicator) and the rise of political Islam, which has taken a dominant position in post-revolutionary chaos. But taking stock of the successes of the Arab Spring and its impact on the region in the post-revolutionary period, the evaluation of the processes seems at least hasty. These ever-turbulent events are far from over and the last sentences of this story, which began so hopefully but continue to be too illegible and even dramatic, with each new entry being able to galvanize and redirect development in a whole new direction. The positive expectations of the West to achieve the continuity of the "democratic" nature of the revolution in Egypt are almost irrelevant today. But on the margin of stability of the region as such, we would like to bring a thesis: The vigilant attention of Western powers over the politics and

development of post-revolutionary countries (mostly Egypt, Tunis, Libya) and investment flows (also foreign capital) will be vital to maintaining the stability and prosperity of Muslim North Africa.⁴²

Slovak Arabist Jaroslav Drobný brings a testimony from Egypt summarized in the following lines, which concisely describe today's Egypt: *“Winter comes after every spring. In Prague and in Arabic. Normalization is the right word to best describe today's situation. A return to normalcy, to the normal Mubarak Egypt that everyone liked. Muslim fraternity in illegality, liberal opposition marginalized, civic protests suppressed. Normalcy with everything that goes with it: the police state, the state of emergency and also with terrorist attacks. Although the threat of terrorist attacks is growing, ordinary Egyptians are statistically even more likely to be killed by the police during a banned demonstration ”*(Drobný, 2014).

In the case of Egypt and the effects of the Arab Spring on this largest Arab country, its short-term development can only be predicted exactly on the basis of economic indicators that predict a negative trend in the Egyptian economy⁴³, which generates a number of future problems and is likely to trigger further unrest. The combination of economic factors (including others) further contributes to rising inflation and a paralyzing unemployment rate. While the inflation rate is around 10 percent, unemployment reached almost 13% in 2012. The fact is further complicated by the fact that Egyptian society is relatively extremely young. In 2006, Egyptian youth (15-24 years) accounted for 80% of Egypt's total population. At present, this percentage has been reduced to 60% of the population of 84 million, and unemployment in this age group has risen to 33% last year. And it is precisely this young Egyptian generation that is unemployed and frustrated, facing a bleak vision of the future and a degrading political-economic situation, is the main catalyst and mover of modern Egyptian revolutions, including the current one, supported by the Egyptian army (Weinfurter, 2013).

⁴² It is North Africa that has become a high-risk area with the possibility of destabilization and the rise of Islamic extremism in 2013 (events in Mali). Migrant groups of extremists (associated rebel Tuareg tribes, arms smugglers), as well as al-Qaeda "veterans" from Yemen and Afghanistan, have found refuge in areas of Northwest Africa (Mali and Western Sahara). Today, the areas of southern Libya (after the fall of Colonel Gaddafi), as well as Algeria, are facing an increase in extremist violence (August, 2013).

⁴³ GDP growth, which in the Mubarak years reached up to 6%, is now around 2%. The repayment of high foreign debt will thus be further complicated, also due to the international decline in the value of the domestic currency (Egyptian pound). Second, the country's precarious financial stability has led to a marked outflow of foreign investors on which the country has depended. The (key) tourism sector itself, which employs almost one in nine Egyptians and contributed about 11% of GDP in the pre-revolutionary period, suffered a severe blow of 20% -30% decline and a loss of around 2 million jobs (Weinfurter, 2013).

Last but not least, although many members of the Muslim Brotherhood survived the military's counter-revolution almost unscathed, some of the Brotherhood's leaders were imprisoned and some would even be executed on death row. The following years may lead to an escalation of tensions between the military regime and the Brotherhood's sympathizers, which, under pressure from persecution and reprisals, may split and regroup into more radical groups than we saw in the 1970s. With this political-ideological adversary, the military must calculate at every step it takes into the regime, because political Islam remains in the consciousness of Egyptian society as one of the few constructive alternatives able to compete with the ruling army.

On the Syrian issue, it is safe to say today that the Arab Spring has turned into a Syrian winter, bringing not only the rise of Islamists in Syria but also a destructive civil war, the dreaded consequences of which even the most courageous analysts and experts in the Middle East dare not. As for the survival of the Bashar al-Assad regime, each coin has two sides, as is the case with Syria. One side of the story has to do with the fact that the insurgents' uprising "has spread rapidly and has deep roots." The opposition and society suffer from diversity and fragmentation based on ethnic, religious, regional, socio-economic and other differences, and the international community's lack of will or ability to intervene. The third explanation points out that the regime's resources are still quite strong, and if the regime survives, not only because of the weakness of its adversaries, but also because the climate is not currently being created to eliminate it. which draws on the advice of members of minority communities that serve as its social base.

These include Alawites (12% of the population), Druze (5%) and most Christians (13%). Kurds (10%), including those living in areas bordering Turkey and Iraq, have largely not turned against the government (Zaisser, 2013). However, the partial division of Syria will be inevitable, as al-Assad, weakened by the protracted revolution, is unlikely to be able to control and take over the regime's original borders. Like Egypt, Syria saw an increase in Islamist activity and their withdrawal from the shadow of the oppressed opposition at the beginning of the Arab revival. But today, the situation in Syria is so confusing that it is very difficult to identify and distinguish between the various factions of the fighting Islamists who follow various particular interests. However, to a large extent, we can appreciate that the revolution in Syria has also brought about the rise of political Islam, which, however, is heavily discredited by radical Islamist groups fighting drastically against the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

A by-product of the recent chemical attack, it has pushed forward the resumption of diplomatic efforts to end the war. This summer, the Russians agreed with the United States to resume talks on the future of Syria - Geneva II. and, in addition, the United States is negotiating with a faction of the Syrian rebel leadership, just as it has long pressured the al-Assad regime to take part in peace talks. The political transition to an inclusive caretaker government, as outlined in Geneva II last year, remains the country's faint hope as the death toll rises and the number of refugees exceeds two million (Lemmon, 3013). The Arab revival has not only aroused the oppressed part of society, but also Syria's "sleeping" and repressed problems, which today are manifested in their terrifying nature, and often in the fratricidal struggle. Today, Syria is on the brink of humanitarian cataclysm and genocide, which is already far beyond its borders and will have disastrous consequences for neighboring states and the region as a whole.

After the outbreak of the revolution, Bashar al-Assad called for an end to the state of emergency, as was the case in Egypt, but repression against the opposition escalated. A Libyan scenario of "covert" military intervention in support of opposition forces from the West was not possible. The protective hand of Iran, but also of China and especially Russia, which considers Syria to be its exclusive sphere of influence (military base in the Syrian port of Tartus), has been a sufficient "retention" factor to maintain the status quo despite arms supplies (from both imaginary alliances).

As the conflict escalated, public and professional debate focused on finding available solutions to help resolve the conflict (open rebel aid, no-fly zone over Syria), but Americans have learned very painfully in Iraq and open intervention must be preceded by a wider range of possible impacts (Dalton, 2012: 1). On the other hand, there are many reasons for US intervention, and the number one would certainly be to reduce Iran's influence in the Arab world. But Iran knows that if the Assad regime fell, it would mean losing the most important base and ally in the Middle East and the supply artery for Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon. However, President Assad sees Syria as the last bastion of secularism and doubts the open intervention of a foreign power. He strictly refused to leave, saying: "*I don't think the West will strike, but if they do, no one can say what will happen next,*" Assad said. "*I think the price for an invasion, if it happened, could be higher than the whole world can afford*" (Russia Today, 2012). Syria's problem is not just ethnic and religious divisions, but external and internal political forces that intervene not in favor of the suffering Syrian people, but to secure its political-power dominance in the country.

Geneva II Conference. has become a UN toothless effort for reconciliation in Syria, and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said it would be "unforgivable" not to take this opportunity to end a conflict that has cost more than half a million people and expelled more than ten million Syrians. from their homes. US Secretary of State John Kerry and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov have taken a heightened initiative following the chemical weapons attack on the suburbs of Damascus. On 27 September 2013, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2118 calling for the destruction or elimination of Syrian chemical supplies (BBC: News Middle East, 2014).

The conflict in Syria has been going on for more than ten years. This is long enough for the international community to desensitize any negative news from the country. As has been the case for several years, pro-government forces control most of the territory except the areas in the north, and the question of the future of the Syrian state and its relations with the rest of the world is increasingly emerging. This applies equally to the European Union (EU) and other major international players.

Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy since December 2019, is of the opinion that only the Syrians should negotiate the terms of the peace agreement and has opposed initiatives by other countries, in particular those seeking to circumvent the United Nations (UN). As the High Representative wrote in his recent book: *"Syria must decide on the future of Syria. Political negotiations on Syria's future must be owned by Syria and led by Syria. What Syria will look like in a year will depend on the regime's commitment to implementing UN Security Council Resolution. 2254. Not for our benefit, not for their benefit, or for the benefit of their supporters, but for the benefit of all the Syrians "*(Borrell, 2021: 195).

The EU should seek an agreement with key external players who support Assad to put more political pressure on it in terms of respect for human rights and the creation of a compromise transitional government. This applies in particular to the countries that support the peace process in Astana. However, with Russia, as an active player in Syria, the diplomatic solution is dramatically complicated if we take into account the situation in Ukraine. However, in the case of Iran, the EU has a significant investment and economic impact. With US support for these initiatives in exchange for Iran's security guarantees in the wider Middle East region, the EU could play a major role as a mediator and mediator. However, the most serious obstacle may be Assad's future. It is highly unlikely that the EU will stop enforcing responsibility for war crimes, human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law, including the confirmed use of chemical weapons, as set

out in its strategy for Syria for 2017. However, Assad's foreign supporters would not have to defend it if their wider geopolitical and economic interests have been secured.

In Syria's intentions, these steps appear in the daily reports of deaths as empty gestures, which should only be a signal from the outside, indicating that international institutions and organizations are working and the conventions are in force. However, the truth is that decades of inattentive "neocolonialism," unreadable, unfounded, and even controversial foreign policy, have disqualified the West from playing a mediator and policy-maker in the Middle East. Inaction and oversight of the catastrophic conflict in Syria can have drastic and devastating consequences and international transcendence in the long run. The humanitarian crisis, the accumulating problems of the influx of refugees, the establishment of safe havens for radical Islamists are so far only the first signs of this sick region. Syria can become another "pandora's box" in the region (after Afghanistan, Iraq), where the United States has chosen the wrong strategy and supported the unpredictable forces of the radicals. The current lack of "will" to resolve the conflict could result in a worse war than we have seen in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The shifting sands of the Middle East are too changeable to predict developments, which even a month in advance would be at least "hasty." Therefore, based on the determinants presented, this article attempts to soberly identify Syria's current and past problems that threaten the authoritarian Assad dynasty. All the factors mentioned, such as religious and ethnic heterogeneity, corruption and clientelism, as well as historical wrongs that have revived in the memory of the oppressed, have been the trigger for the revolution. Equally important was the inspiration from the success of the revolutions in other Arab countries, which gained momentum. The biggest expectations of the demonstrators were in the economic strengthening of the country, the removal of the layer of privileged, but mainly the overthrow of the secular regime and the return to traditional values, the return to Islam. The Alawit regime in Syria is perceived by the radical jihadists as heretical, and religious diversity is widening the gap between the various actors in the conflict. But the Syrian reality today is that within the country itself, processes are taking place that run counter to our expectations and our perceptions. There are still large numbers of Syrians who prefer a dictatorial and tyrannical regime to an opposition that fights among itself and commits similar crimes as Assad himself. The hateful and xenophobic rhetoric of radical Islamists and the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood towards Christians, Shiites and other minorities, as well as al Qaeda operating close to civilians, evoke fear of

the future in the Syrians. The regime is falling slowly, civil wars often last for years, and its casualties are unstoppable, but the ancient Syrian nation is waiting for a vision of Syria that someone must create. Syria one that will not devour its own children, and perhaps one where the often-washed word democracy will ensure the coexistence and coexistence of "all" in peace.

The challenges facing Libya today are even greater and more devastating due to the influence of Gaddafi's forty-year dictatorship, with negative effects on society and the population. The Gaddafi regime left Libya with a weak national identity, a very low level of education, no meaningful state institutions without an alternative political class that could govern the country after its fall. The post-revolutionary elites were therefore unable to face these challenges and made one mistake after another. The uprising in 2011 was carried out by local disintegrated militias without a single command. When the regime fell, most militias kept their weapons and fortified their positions.

The new political elites understood the need to create a national army and national police, but they failed to defeat and persuade the leaders of various opposition militias who refused orders to dissolve them. Militias did not pursue their own particular interests, which were often at odds with the interests of legitimate institutions. Moreover, it quickly became clear that the revolution against Gaddafi was not a revolt of the whole people against the dictator and several mercenaries, but rather a civil war between those who still believed the Jamahiriya project and those who wanted a complete change in the system.

However, new political leaders decided to move quickly to national elections before creating a national dialogue forum that could lead to reconciling the country's vision and approach to consensually defining national identity and the national project as such. The elections held in July 2012 proved to be balanced, which further divided and polarized political actors and society. In 2014, rivalry between pro-Islamist and anti-Islamist factions led to the division of the country into two spheres of influence. The first is centered around the former capital of Tripoli and the second is to the east around the city of Tobruk. This rivalry has de facto paralyzed all economic activities and allowed the spread of criminal and terrorist organizations, the most dangerous of which is the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Libya is thus becoming a safe haven for terrorist cells, which poses a threat to neighboring countries and the European Union (KHAN M. - MEZLAN K., 2016: 9-10).

Although tribal loyalty no longer has the institutional structure and importance it had in Libya, it still retains great social influence, even after the fall of Gaddafi. Historically, tribalism

has contributed to the formation of political structures in Libya. Libya after Gaddafi means a return to tribalism (Libya's tribal structure is very heterogeneous and represents over 140 tribes, but only 30 have real political significance⁴⁴) as a major political player in the heart of Libyan society in the turbulent and turbulent times the state is currently experiencing. It turns out that tribalism has never disappeared from the collective consciousness of Libyan society. Although it is true that demographic development, urbanization and landscape development have partially eroded this tribal character. In the context of uncertainty and the realities of a collapsed state, they force the population to turn to primary affiliates that are close to it. During the conflict, tribes in particular played a huge role in protecting lives, mediating and mitigating conflicts in the period after 2014, when the state returned to civil war. Nevertheless, tribal structures continued to organize the people into coherent militias in order to build a united front against the creation of a new state on the remains of Gaddafi Libya and to exercise veto power at the national level. The tribes are facing attempts to extend central government control through autonomous alliances. In addition, tribal and self-proclaimed regional militias still refuse to integrate their fighters into the official army and police.

Foreign actors such as Russia and Turkey have become a driving force in the Libyan conflict at the expense of European and UN policies to support a political solution in that country. These actors are making it easier for their Libyan client groups to show aggression and are escalating the conflict through financial, media and military support. As a soft power in the region, the EU must understand the role of other foreign actors in Libya if it is to prevent the conflict from turning into an insurmountable proxy war similar to that in Syria or Yemen (Megerisi, 2019). Such a war would destabilize Libya's neighborhood and directly threaten European security interests and global energy markets. Powers such as the United States and Russia are unwilling or unable to play a constructive or unifying role in Libya, putting Libya a burden on the EU, which must take the lead in declassifying the conflict and working for a solution. The EU should set up an inclusive international task force for Libya, using a combination of incentives and disincentives to prevent escalation.

⁴⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-tribes-idUSTRE77O43R20110825>

With around three million Syrian refugees, Turkey has become one of the largest recipients of refugees in the world, a development that supports Turkey's transformation towards multiculturalism. In addition, the self-identification of the Turkish public as a democratic establishment with faith in the right of the majority to run its country through regular elections is likely to retain public support and sympathy for anti-authoritarian uprisings against military dictatorships in countries such as Egypt and Syria. Thus, Turkey's geopolitical rapprochement with Egypt, Iran or Russia is unlikely to reverse the popular antipathy of al-Sisi's military dictatorships in Egypt and Assad in Syria. This is even more true after the failed coup attempt in July 2016, where hundreds of civilians perished in the fight against the coup, and are therefore widely worshiped in Turkey as "martyrs of democracy". The failure of the military coup has strengthened Turkey's self-identification as a beacon of democracy, however isolated and lonely, in a region inhabited by military dictatorships that support the external powers⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ <http://turkishpolicy.com/article/844/turkeys-role-in-the-arab-spring-and-the-syrian-conflict>

CONCLUSION

This publication modestly tried to analyze and approach the phenomenon of the Arab Spring and at least partially clarify, imply and connect the complex mosaic it represents in individual countries. We would like to demonstrate the fact that the context and complexity of the phenomenon under study must not be forgotten, because it is too short-sighted to look at the Arab Spring only from a European perspective.

The work works on the assumption that political Islam, which is not compatible with the Western form of democracy. However, it was one of the driving forces of the revolution. It is necessary to ask questions about what developments will follow. In this regard, Graham Fuller suggests that if Islamists are not to remain the target of criticism of the current state of Muslim societies and heralds of various bans, and if they want to become real bearers of a positive political agenda, they must seek alliances with those political forces that support change in specific conditions. to make the system more open, although these forces would not share religiously motivated approaches, which is not always feasible in practice. In other words, the future is just a synthesis of some aspects of Western political thought with authentic Islamic principles of social life. In this context, Fuller cites Turkey, where moderate Islamists seeking to reintegrate religiously motivated public life, which have been eliminated as part of Attaturk's project of a violent rapprochement with the West, are currently the strongest political force (Fuller, 2003).

Oxford professor Tariq Ramadan, who is the intellectual authority of Islam in the West, claims that Islamists today have a selective approach to democracy. Ramadan sees the Arab Spring not only from its political point of view, but also raises questions about the economic aspects and actors of the revolution, and says that these events did not start by accident, but everything took place for deeper reasons. He points to the existence of a "deep state" - an army that has worked against the Brotherhood from the beginning, which naively succumbed to this "game" and should never have sought the presidency because it fell into the trap. The military easily exploited the media and Egyptians living in poor living conditions in a regime that had long struggled with poor economic condition. The result of the army's counter-revolution (coup) is even greater polarization between secularists and Islamists. The Muslim Brotherhood struggled with the main problems: corruption, the nature of the state (a civilian state with Islamic references such as Egypt is difficult to identify in political theory), the role of the military, the economic system and social injustice, and last but not least human rights and women's status. Ramadan further argues that today it is important to reform the minds of Muslims,

not to reform Islam itself, which is rigid. The collision does not occur between the Western liberal concept on the one hand and Islam and its principles on the other, but between uncompromising dogmatic thinking on both sides. The fundamental statement is the understanding of the secular state: *“let us not idealize the secular state. Secularists in the Middle East have nothing to do with secularists in the West, because all secularists in the Middle East have been and are dictators”* (Ramadan, 2014).

Today, therefore, we can confirm with certainty that the Arab Spring has indeed brought political Islam back into competition and a major political debate about the future and direction of countries such as Turkey, Libya and Syria, and revitalized its potential as a dominant political player fighting for a place in Middle East political systems.

The democratic fever immediately after Gaddafi's death has dissipated, and it seems that Libya will not have a Tunisian model for the time being, but rather a Syrian or Yemeni one. The open operation of criminal and smuggling gangs complicates the situation for the creation of a security environment and, on the contrary, creates threats externally for neighboring states and the European Union. The solution may be tribalism, which may be a key factor in Libya's future in reconciling the various factions. Today, Libya is trying to rebuild and step out of the shadows of its own history of colonialism, conflicts and coups, as well as reform efforts, while in the short term it has the opportunity to use the expertise of tribes and their territorial administration to restore peace, negotiation and reconciliation. Tribal loyalty and identity may prove to be a suitable tool for building consensus in order to create a platform for legitimate country governance (LAMMA, 2017: 57-58).

Looking back, the uprisings known as the Arab Spring have brought some people in the region modest political, social and economic gains. But they have also provoked terrible and persistent violence, mass displacement and worsening repression in all three countries surveyed - Libya, Syria and Turkey. The protesters were motivated by many factors, but analysts say the common theme was the promotion of dignity and human rights.

However, the changing paradigm of Middle East policies has paved the way for Turkey, which has felt a chance to change its traditional role as a "balancer" between Europe and Asia. Today, its geopolitical compass tends to take on the role of "mover".

This Muslim country, a descendant of the Ottoman Empire, is today a growing geopolitical player, whose current course is more towards former dominions in the Middle East than the European Union. Although the country is currently struggling with its own national problems and huge inflation, its international importance is not declining, but on the contrary is growing.

Religious tensions have also played an important role in many countries. For example, Islamist parties gained power in the former secular Tunisia and Egypt (albeit only temporarily in Egypt). In Turkey, there is a significant shift away from secularism towards an Islamic form of government by the AKP. Only Tunisia has made a lasting shift to democracy, while Libya, Syria and Yemen have gone into protracted civil wars. Civil wars caused mass displacement after the uprisings in Libya, Syria and Yemen. In many cases, foreign military intervention has exacerbated the status quo. The conflict in Syria alone has created more than five million registered refugees and more than six million internally displaced people. Some countries, such as Tunisia, have tried to respond to the demonstrators' calls for better governance, including by creating anti-corruption agencies and new laws to protect whistleblowers. However, corruption persists and is worsening throughout the region. This is particularly discouraging in countries ravaged by civil war⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ <https://www.cfr.org/article/arab-spring-ten-years-whats-legacy-uprisings>

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Ludo Goga

Unikátna historicko-vojenská publikácia, aká na Slovensku nebola 30 rokov, je zameraná na významnú etapu novovekých slovenských dejín 16. – 17. storočia, turecko-uhorských vojen.

Práve toto obdobie je podstatné pre pochopenie rozsahu a hĺbky stretu európskej kultúry, založenej na gréckej civilizácii, rímskom práve a kresťanských hodnotách, a moslimského sveta, založeného predovšetkým na absolútnej subordinácii islamu vo všetkých oblastiach života (vojenskej, politickej, spoločenskej a kultúrnej).

Okrem vojenskej histórie a základov moderného vojenstva na Slovensku publikácia príkladmi a citáciami z dobových listín prináša ponaučenia aj pre súčasnosť, keďže mnohé z aspektov islamu prenikajú v posledných rokoch do celej Európy a prinášajú okrem oživenia historických sentimentov aj nové konfrontačné línie, o ktorých je potrebné diskutovať.

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DECADE AFTER
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