

## FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

This issue of TPQ takes up a myriad of issues that the Middle East is grappling with today: from protracted conflicts and the increasing complexity of proxy wars, to changing regional blocs and emerging powers. The Arab uprisings of 2011 remain an important fulcrum for the changing political landscape of the Middle East, and as many of our authors contend, the underlying problems and basic drivers of the revolutions still exist today.

The Syrian conflict – a hotbed of competing interests for the past six years – has entered a new phase defined by a political battle over the country’s future. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s regime, with Russian and Iranian backers, has maintained its foothold in the country, while Russian President Vladimir Putin holds the upper hand on the international stage as a power broker in the conflict. Changing dynamics in Syria and the vacuum left by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) raise the specter of new sources of instability in the region. At the same time, Syria’s refugee crisis continues to overwhelm its neighbors – Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.

Amid changing power paradigms, a dominant trend is Saudi-Iranian regional rivalry, which has been playing out in proxy wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. It recently reached a boiling point with the surprise resignation of Lebanon’s President Saad Hariri on 4 November 2017 – announced from Saudi Arabia’s capital Riyadh. Hariri’s resignation was a result of Saudi Arabia’s increasing ire towards Hezbollah’s expanding regional influence – through powerful Shiites proxies in key countries. With Hariri now having withdrawn his resignation and returned to Lebanon, there is speculation about what will come next for internal dynamics in the country and its possible implications for the region.

The unresolved Qatar-Gulf crisis is another flashpoint that is upending political equilibriums. Saudi Arabia is asserting its muscle in the conflict, which many argue is reflective of its need to maintain a grip on the Gulf in the face of Tehran’s emerging regional hegemony. The impasse is impairing the Gulf Cooperation Council’s (GCC) ability to function, which may lead it to lapse into a purely a symbolic role.

Tensions are on the rise in Palestine/Israel as well. The recent decision of President Donald Trump to reverse decades of US diplomacy by declaring Jerusalem the capital of Israel and moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem, is unleashing fresh violence and further destabilizing an already fragile region. Winning major points from his base, Trump hopes to parlay his concession to Israel into more leverage in future Middle East peace talks. Apart from the Israeli government, however, the

international community is roundly united in its condemnation of Trump's Jerusalem decision. One of its important implications is that it discredits the US' credibility as an honest peace broker between Israel and Palestine.

Situating Turkey amid the turbulent kaleidoscope of change in the Middle East is increasingly complex. Ankara's jumbled regional foreign policy – particularly since 2011 – has been wrought with miscalculations and contradictions. Once on the fringe of the region, Turkey now has a stake in many of MENA's conflicts, and is incurring spillover costs: an escalating conflict with the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), the burden of hosting around three million refugees, and the threat of returning jihadists from Syria.

In an exclusive interview conducted at the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) Headquarters in Ramallah in October, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, Executive Committee Member and Head of the Department of Culture and Information of the PLO, relayed the painful realities of Palestinians and her deep concerns about the prospects for peace. She asserted the right for Palestinians to live in freedom, dignity, and sovereignty on their own land, and the imperative of ending Israeli occupation. Dr. Ashrawi, a key negotiator for the Palestinians during the Madrid Peace Conference and the Oslo Accords, explained how the Middle East "peace process" has become coopted by the US and is ultimately driven by Israeli interests. The pro-Israel lobby wields tremendous influence over US decision-making, pointed out Ashrawi, and the coalition has expanded to include the extreme Christian right, Evangelicals, the private sector, and powerful interest groups in the US Congress. This bias is also reflected in the US' punitive attitude toward the PLO joining international treaties and conventions – which is its right as a non-member observer state of the UN. Touching on internal Palestinian dynamics and the reconciliation deal between rival Palestinian factions – Fatah and Hamas – Ashrawi asserted that it signals a positive step forward for Palestinian democracy and its ability to engage the world as a unified political entity. However, the erosion of the two-state solution, the culture of impunity that is reserved for Israel, and the US' eroding credibility as an honest peace broker, continue to raise doubts over what a future framework for negotiations could look like.

Providing an overall picture of the Trump administration's approach to global security, Ambassador James F. Jeffrey's article contextualizes our Fall 2017 issue in terms of the US' international role. Ambassador Jeffrey, who is also on TPQ's Advisory Board, argues that while Trump's improvisational style and "off-the-cuff" comments about diplomatic and security issues are unique unto themselves and cause alarm, they are rarely followed up with equivalent policy approaches. According to Ambassador Jeffrey, this is because Trump has surrounded himself

with a seasoned national and foreign policy team that regularly correct him and “prevail with more thoughtful policies.” Furthermore, Jeffrey posits that the Trump administration has not strayed from the broad outlines of post-1940 US foreign policy, albeit with a few exceptions. These include the Pacific Trade Pact (TPP) and the Paris Climate Accords, which Jeffrey notes are less than meets the eye upon closer examination. While mainly for public consumption, Trump’s “America First” rhetoric is a genuine reflection of the American peoples’ increasing disillusionment with Washington’s foreign policy direction, maintains Jeffrey. Despite the fact that Trump’s team of seasoned professionals have managed to contain his more impulsive instincts, Jeffrey warns that this is only a short-term fix, which raises the possibility of more foreign policy blunders down the line.

One of the most seminal events in modern Middle Eastern history – the Arab Revolutions of 2011 – is the focus of Koert Debeuf’s article. Conceptualizing the wave as one revolution, Debeuf, who is the Director of the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) Europe, draws parallels between the French Revolution of 1789 and the Arab Revolution of 2011. He argues that they similarly follow four revolutionary phases that historian Crane Brinton identified in his book, *The Anatomy of Revolution*. These are: the rule of the moderates; the reign of terror and virtue; Thermidor; and the end of the revolution. Debeuf identifies Egypt as a particularly fitting case study. The rule of the moderates can be equated to the Supreme Council of Armed Forces’ (SCAF) ousting of the autocratic President Hosni Mubarak; the reign of terror and virtue can be associated with the Muslim Brotherhood’s assumption of power in the 2011 and 2012 elections; Thermidor can be associated with the backlash revolution of 30 June 2013 and the coup of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi; while the end of the revolution period is parallel to the election of el Sisi, who won with an overwhelming majority. Debeuf makes the comparison that just like the French Revolution, the Arab Revolution in Egypt has corresponding constitutions for each phase. Another striking similarity, according to Debeuf, is that both revolutions share similar root causes: a younger generation aspiring for more political freedom and rights, social and economic injustices, and the repression of free speech. Given that France took 86 years and 14 different constitutions to throw off the yoke of revolution, there is still reason to hope for the Arab world, concludes Debeuf.

Also taking up the topic of the Arab uprisings is Dr. Nur Köprülü, Associate Professor at Near East University in Nicosia, Northern Cyprus. In her article, the author examines at the role of Islamist actors in the post-2011 era in Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan. The Arab uprisings – which had more reverberations for the Arab republics than for the monarchies – provided Islamist groups with a platform to emerge as key players. However, the endurance of Islamist groups played out differently in each case in the

aftermath of the Arab Spring, argues Köprülü. Tunisia stands out at an exception in the Middle East in the sense that democratization integrated Islamists into the emerging political system, asserts from Köprülü. Furthermore, the pragmatism and moderate character of Tunisia's main Islamist party – The Ennahda (Renaissance) Party – has contributed to the country's balanced political system. According to Köprülü, the resilience of monarchies in Morocco and Jordan exemplify cases of “controlled political liberalization,” while Egypt turned into a case of “reformist authoritarianism” since the ousting of the Muslim Brotherhood. Köprülü contends that the success of Islamist groups within the political system is directly related to the structural foundations of the various states.

In a co-written article, Dr. Dimitar Bechev and Dr. Joost Hiltermann, delve into Turkey's forays into the Middle East before and after the Arab Spring. The Justice and Development Party's (AKP) reengagement with the Middle East after coming to power in 2002 was part of an implicit “neo-Ottoman” agenda to position Turkey as a powerful regional player and a mediator state, argue the authors. However, the authors assert that Ankara's “Muslim-Brotherhood infused ideological outlook” – an important component of its foreign policy philosophy “zero problems with neighbors” – created contradictions in its peacemaking efforts. In the wake of the Arab Awakenings in 2011 – during which Turkey's full support for the Brotherhood backfired – this policy began to unravel, which was no more apparent than in Iraq and Syria, as well as in the Gulf. In the context of the ongoing Gulf crisis, this has manifested itself in Ankara's support for Qatar, itself a sponsor of the Muslim Brotherhood. Bechev and Hiltermann argue that the resulting tension between Turkey's patchwork foreign policy in the Middle East and deeply-rooted internal problems – particularly the Turkey-PKK conflict – is putting Ankara into crisis-management mode while it attempts to regain balance both at home and along its borders.

Focusing in on the thorny GCC crisis, Ola Salem, Head of Communications at the Arabia Foundation in Washington D.C., posits that Qatar's support for Islamic movements was the driving factor behind the anti-Qatar quartet's decision to impose a blockade on the country. The author explains that while Saudi analysts trace the origins of the crisis to the 1995 coup in Qatar which brought about “regime change,” Qataris gloss over this fact. However, it was after this palace coup that the *Al Jazeera* media network in Qatar was spawned, and its coverage of domestic and regional affairs has become a thorn for the other GCC states ever since, points out Salem. According to the author, skepticism over Doha's motivations increased both during and after the Arab Spring, as it threw its weight behind ascendant Islamist political parties in countries being engulfed by revolution. Doha employed the controversial *Al Jazeera* as a platform to shape the narrative of the uprisings, as well

as a tool for mobilization – much to the chagrin of the other GCC countries. Salem asserts that resolution of the current crisis ultimately hinges upon Qatar ending its support for Islamist movements, and a prolongation of the impasse may lead to the dissolution of the GCC itself.

Also addressing Qatar's diplomatic standoff with the Gulf is Dr. Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Research Fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy in Houston and an Associate Fellow at Chatham House in London. Dr. Coates, who is also author of four books on the Gulf, draws attention to a convergence of several factors that led to the outbreak of the latest crisis. Chief among them are long-rooted tensions in the Gulf over Qatar's independent regional policies, Doha's support of Islamists, and shifting US policy towards the Gulf. Reflecting the judgment of several of our authors, Ulrichsen traces much of the anger between Qatar and its GCC neighbors to the palace coup of 1995. Qatar's post-1995 leadership adopted a strategy of raising the country's profile on the international scene, which was largely fueled by leveraging its LNG reserves. This drew consternation from its larger neighbors in the GCC, argues Ulrichsen. Doha's explicit support for Islamist factions in the run-up to and after the Arab Spring only fanned preexisting tensions. Regarding US policy in the region, Ulrichsen points to the fact that whereas Obama's administration sought engagement with the GCC as a bloc, the Trump administration has focused on Riyadh and Abu Dhabi as "twin pillars" of its approach. Dr. Ulrichsen asserts that the anti-Qatar bloc was ultimately emboldened by this shift in the US' approach. Therefore, the resulting media campaign against Qatar was designed to influence Washington's position on the crisis and appeal to the Trump administration's "hawkish views" on Islamist extremists. Whether the GCC remains intact or lapses into paralysis, it is clear that the Qatar standoff will realign the GCC around a "hawkish inner core" of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain, concludes Ulrichsen.

Dr. Silvia Colombo, Head of the Mediterranean and Middle East Programme at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in Rome approaches the Gulf crisis from a bilateral perspective. The author makes the case that EU-GCC relations, despite the need for a revamp, risk becoming irrelevant. The framework for economic and political interdependence between the two regions is still based on the Cooperation Agreement with the European Economic Community (EEC) of 1989, however the desired objectives have not come to pass for a number of reasons, argues Colombo. Some of these include the failed EU-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA), and the mismatch between individual EU Member states' bilateral foreign policies toward the Gulf and the multilateral EU-GCC cooperation framework. A stalled attempt to update the 1998 Agreement in 2010 similarly runs the risk of becoming forgotten.

With regard to current EU-GCC cooperation, Dr. Colombo highlights two significant obstacles: the Saudi Arabia/UAE-Qatar rift and the emergence of Iran as a regional power. Calling the JCPOA a “watershed” for the MENA region as well as for EU-GCC relations, Colombo argues that waxing Iranian influence could tip the balance in favor of improved EU-Iran relations, while the dynamics between the EU and the GCC continue on a downward trend.

Taking stock of Iran’s regional strategy in the post-ISIS era is Ali Hashem, *Al-Monitor* columnist and *Al-Mayadeen*’s Iran Bureau Chief. According to Hashem, Iran’s activist involvement in Syria after the 2011 revolution and Iraq after the fall of Mosul in 2014 is part and parcel of its aspiration to gain more leverage in the region. Packaged as a “sacred war” to defend Shia Islam, Tehran primarily intervened in Syria to keep Assad in place, which was crucial for maintaining Tehran’s influence in Syria and Lebanon. Hashem identifies the fall of Mosul to ISIS as an important turning point for Tehran in gaining a foothold in Iraq. This development led to the formation of the predominantly Shia Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), which was backed by Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah. By carving out a vital corridor linking Syria with Tehran, the PMU played a key role in the Iraqi patchwork by solidifying the Shia militias’ influence. Furthermore, viewing the Iraqi Kurdistan independence referendum on 25 September 2017 as an opportunity to become a “decisive decision maker” in Iraq, Iran aligned itself with Turkey in opposing the motion. The revival of the Ankara-Tehran alliance may bridge sectarian divides in the region, posits Hashem.

In his article, Saied Jafari, a contributor to *Al-Monitor*, analyzes Iran’s role in the regional and international context. Jafari breaks down the consequences of a possible US withdrawal from the July 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), focusing on three levels of analysis: national, regional, and international. On a national scale, in the face of a possible US withdrawal and losing popularity, President Hassan Rouhani may bend to hard-line opponents and radicalize Iran’s foreign policy. On the regional level, the author evaluates the implications of a US withdrawal for three countries in particular – Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. Jafari argues that a US withdrawal may entice Saudi Arabia to work on its own nuclear capabilities, while Turkey will not passively observe Iran’s rising influence nor the regional arms. Meanwhile, Israel will continue to lobby the US to put increased pressure on Iran, posits the author. Pivoting to the international level, Jafari asserts that the JCPOA could have set a global example on how to deal with similar crises – such as North Korea – although the US’ wavering on the agreement puts this at jeopardy. Ultimately, Jafari contends that a US withdrawal from the nuclear deal would embolden hard-liners within Iran, lead to an atmosphere of uncertainty, and diminish the

possibility for dialogue and reconciliation in the region.

Since the pivotal Arab uprisings of 2011 and the failure to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian conflict has snowballed into a constellation of overlapping crises with regional and international dimensions. In his article, Senior Diplomatic Editor at *Ashar Awsat* Ibrahim Hamidi, questions whether the conflict is finally approaching a conclusion, and if so, what the endgame would look like. The author provides an in-depth picture of the complexity of the dynamics in Syria, the opposition factions fighting, and the contradictory interests of outside stakeholders. Hamidi expresses the conviction that reaching a permanent solution must entail the launching of a political process that is led by Syrians, as envisaged by UN Resolution 2254. The US' support of the Geneva process is a positive step towards a peaceful solution, argues Hamidi, but it is predicated on continued US-Russia sponsorship, political will to push negotiations along, and the participation of regional countries like Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Stressing that Syria must not become another Iraq or Afghanistan, Hamidi warns against short-term solutions which will only bring about more instability and ruin for the Syrian people.

Since the release of our last issue, we featured on our website a special contribution by Sweden's Minister of Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström on the "No New Names" campaign. This draws much-needed attention to the violence and crimes against humanity around the world, and stresses the importance of regional cooperation in maintaining peace and avoiding more humanitarian disasters in the future.

On 23 October 2017, Turkish Policy Quarterly (TPQ) convened a discussion on cybersecurity titled, "Navigating the Cyber Storm: Implications for Governments and Businesses." The event was sponsored by NATO's Public Diplomacy Division, and hosted by partners Conrad Istanbul Bosphorus and Turcas. The Consulate General of Israel in Istanbul was also a co-partner. We would like thank all of our supporters for making this event possible. An in-depth analysis of our discussion is featured in this issue of TPQ.

Under the umbrella of our cybersecurity event, two cyber-related articles are included in this issue. One of our speakers from the event, Neil Robinson, a Policy Officer for Cyber Defense at NATO Headquarters, elaborated on his remarks in an article that touched upon the Alliance's evolutionary approach to cybersecurity amidst an increasingly challenging threat landscape. While NATO's approach has not strayed from a defensive one – i.e., protecting its own networks and systems – Robinson notes that the Alliance has built upon that strong foundation to adopt a more outward model that focuses on bolstering NATO-wide resilience. Both the Wales Summit in

2014 and the Warsaw Summit in 2016 led to several instrumental outcomes in that regard, explains Robinson. Principal among them are the decision to bring cyber defense under the umbrella of Article 5, the recognition that international law applies in cyberspace, the recognition of cyberspace as a domain of operations, and the Cyber Defense Pledge. These resolutions combined contribute to strengthening and enhancing NATO's cybersecurity approach. Looking ahead to 2018, Robinson opines that we will see the continued integration of cyber defense into NATO's broader goals of securing Euro-Atlantic stability.

Another component of our special feature on cybersecurity is a revised policy paper originally published by the Young Academics Program of Global Relations Forum (GRF) and authored by Dr. François Delerue. Dr. Delerue, a researcher in cyber defense and international law at the Institute of Strategic Research and a visiting researcher at the Sciences Po Law School, provides several noteworthy examples of alleged state-sponsored attacks. These include the 2007 attacks against Estonia, 2008 against Georgia, Stuxnet in 2010, the Sony Hack in 2014, and the DNC Hack in 2016. Delerue contends that as nations are developing more robust cyber defense strategies they need to better integrate those responses into their national strategies.

On behalf of TPQ, I was delighted to attend the annual Halifax International Security Forum this November, which provided TPQ with an opportunity to form enduring working relationships with experts in their field and learn more about the complex issues that we take up in our journal. We are particularly grateful to the President of the Forum, Peter Van Praagh, for the invitation and opportunity to distribute our journals at the event.

On an editorial note, the TPQ team wishes to express our collective relief over the release of our friend and Advisory Board member, Kadri Gürsel, after almost a year in prison. TPQ remains staunchly committed to upholding freedom of expression, encouraging critical opinions, and pushing the boundaries of discussion. We send our support to Kadri and his family, and appreciate the enrichment he brings to our journal.

We would like to extend a special thanks to Tüpraş, the premium corporate sponsor of this issue. In addition, we would like to thank our online sponsor, Garanti Bank. We also appreciate the continuing support from our other sponsors: BP Turkey, Halifax International Security Forum, Monaco Tourism Authority, Odeabank, QNB Finansbank, TEB, and Turcas Petrol.



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TURKISH POLICY  
QUARTERLY 

A very special acknowledgment goes to our long-standing media partner, *Hürriyet Daily News*, for the outreach they continue to provide.

As always, we are indebted to the authors of this issue for sharing their expertise and opinions. As our readers, please share your feedback.

Süreya Martha Köprülü