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INTRODUCTION

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This is a quarterly debriefing on the most important developments in the geopolitical arena of the middle east. The authors have chosen to present highlights and commentary meant to provide with a general overview of what is happening in the region. Every information presented is properly cited and accompanied with the list of sources.



THE IMPACT OF THE AZERBAIJANI-ARMENIAN WAR ON IRAN

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Iran has been boosting the northwestern border defense. The most important reason behind these border interventions is the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. According to Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, Iran's Army has strengthened the Air Defense units in the country's northwest and may even deploy more forces to the region to the region if necessary in order to preserve peace for residents of the border areas". The second and third issue has to do with the Daesh Takfiri terrorists and the Zionists, which the Major General states are spread around the world causing hatred and insecurity Mousavi stated (Global Security, 2020).

Since the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia started, it has been reported there have been shells and projectiles that crossed the Iranian border, which has caused damage in a number of villages. (News Week, Tom O'Connor, 2020)

The commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard has stated that Iran's national interest and security of its people are red lines for the IRGC. (News Week, Tom O'Connor, 2020) This means that if the situation continues with the shells and projectiles landing into the Iranian territory, Iran might consider escalating into more direct perceptions. It is something that does not concern only the territory of Iran. It goes further to region and left unchecked might cause more chaos and tensions between all the countries of this region.

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G20 SUMMIT IN SAUDI ARABIA

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This year's G20 summit was hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Unlike other summits of this format the current one was characterized by a global pandemic; hence it was hosted virtually. 50 meetings were organized and enhanced by work groups and concluded with the meeting of the world's most powerful countries' leaders. Another characteristic of this summit was its organization by the main Arab state at a time, in which serious negotiations have been carried out and some of them concluded with agreements such as the peaceful agreement between Israel and United Arab Emirates. As one of the biggest oil producers Arabia represents a big challenge on today's issues with the environment. According to Aljazeera reports the kingdom needs to diversify its economy. This diversification of the economy is part of MBS (Mohamad Bin Salman) goals for the next 10 years (Al Jazeera, 2020; Sabga, 2020). His goals are focused on three main aims:

1. Empowerment of people focusing on issues that concern women. This also goes in favor of the reform to empower and put into practice woman's rights such as the right to drive cars (India Today, 2020).
2. Safeguarding the Planet by fostering collective efforts to protect our global commons (India Today, 2020). With the withdrawal of the US from the Paris accord, this G20 will be one of the last multilateral events in which US is being represented by the Trump administration (James, 2020).
3. Shaping New Frontiers by adopting long-term and bold strategies to share benefits of innovation and technological advancement. The summit aims to restore growth, building a more sustainable and inclusive world using innovation and digital technology (India Today, 2020).

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THE CIVIL WAR IN YEMEN

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The conflict began when the internationally recognized Yemen elected government was found in an open conflict with the movement Ansar Allah. Saudi Arabia and Iran are also involved in the conflict, creating a different dimension and making the conflict a regional one. These two countries gather around themselves countries and Islamic groups from the two biggest Islamic sects such as Shija and Suni (International Rescue Committee, 2020).

Geographically speaking the Yemen civil war is divided into southern part which includes, the city of Aden this part of the country is under the control of the government and is backed by Saudi Arabia due to the common interests as a Suni power on the region, on the other side of the country we have the Houthis who are backed by the Iranian state as a Shia group (Pacific Council on international Policy, 2017).

The use of the war in Yemen is primarily in mobilizing and agitating against Iran. The main beneficiary group of this strategizing, Ansar Allah or as it is officially called Houthi movement it is an Islamic political and armed movement that is emerged from Sad'ah in northern Yemen in the 1990s (Adam, 2019). Due to the economic perspectives Ansar Allah or Houthi are making efforts to maintain a more neutral relationship towards Iran. The aim seems to be the economic dependence that Yemen is having from Saudi Arabia (The Global Observatory, 2020).

The attempt to divide the country into two major parts by using the religious difference and ancient disputes of two different countries seems obvious, however, the impact that this has on the future of Yemen raises the question if the conflict for a legitimacy on governing Yemen has to do with legitimacy at all at the end.

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COMMENTARY: 10 YEARS AFTER THE ARAB SPRING

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Arab Spring broke out in 2010 in the Arab states of Arab peninsula, North Africa and her echoes are still felt in present days of the year 2021. The term has been popularized by the world / regional media as a desire for change and the begging of a new era. The motives for launching the protests vary from the country to country, but the common theme remains fight against poverty, unemployment and the improvement of the poor living conditions. However, the majority of the aspirations were not achieved. Millions of people became refugees and the rise of the radical Islamic State became a great subject of anxiety for the world (Simon, 2021).

People have found themselves in worse circumstances ranging from higher levels of unemployment to imprisonment for their political beliefs. The Arab spring is often labelled as the failure of a great attempt to democratize regimes in the Arabic Peninsula and the North Africa. In this commentary, I will examine the impacts of the Arab Spring along with the potential changes and new issues it has caused in the impacted countries- Tunisia, Oman, Egypt and Yemen (Washington Post, 2021).

The national protests brought on the table new challenges that have been ignored by the governments of mentioned countries. One of the contemporary emerging issues has been represented by the sudden rise of population (70 million since the Arab Spring) across the Arab world, and the incapacity of the current government systems to ensure a growing economic order to redistribute the economic resources evenly across the nations. The Middle East has been hit by the highest level of youth unemployment rate in the world. One of the reasons could be a low incentive to innovate in the already small private sector industry because of the persistent bureaucracy, corruption, and unstable situation in the country. The whole region balances between the instability and high risk of economic collapsing (Mabon, 2021). Another alarming issue is the raise of radical Islamism in the region, especially in countries like Syria, Yemen and Iran. Many terrorist groups have been motivated to take all sorts of actions and as protest has escalated, when governments addressed the issue of growing extremism falsely labelled the protesters of the Arab Spring. Labelling this activism of civil society, as a struggle against extremism justified its violent use of power on the civil society. Because of the vicious polarization of the population, extremism has taken an advantage and seeks to cooperate with institutional politics (Hamid, McCants & Dar, 2017).

The following effects taken by the governments in the countries after the Arab Spring can be described by using a metaphor “Divide and rule”. Countries have adopted different means of manipulating with their own population in order to ensure the “stability”. For instance, Oman has taken new reforms, which include removal of the unpopular ministers or dynamic incentives to modernize economy. However, the state still remains an absolute monarchy, where the sultan has complete power over the state affairs. Even a step towards liberalization, did not erase the imbalance between state and people. Further repressions, police brutality and restriction on freedom among civil society cannot be considered as a step forward to the transition but yet as a computing move of local politicians to suppress additional waves of protests (Abouzzohour, 2021).

The cradle of Arab Spring, Tunisia who has undergone the most successful transition, has been facing significant post-revolutionary division of society riven into ultra-conservative and liberal groups. After Muhammad Bouazizi lit himself on fire, the country has experienced a wave of anti-regime protests, which resulted in elections in October 2011. Despite the fact that Tunisia ratified one of the most progressive constitutions, the country is unable to proceed the national reconciliation and the civil society stays divided. Polarisation between Islamism and secularism will furthermore have a great place in this process of the national reconciliation (Fraihat, 2017).

It has been ten years since the Arab Spring and Yemen finds itself facing a humanitarian crisis, collapsed economy and growing corruption. As the poorest and most populated country of the Arabic world, it has to deal with Shiite-Sunni tensions, challenges like reconstruction of safety and the fight against al- Qaeda affiliates. The country is unable to find a balance between war and peace or to create an effective constitution and sovereignty. These problems are rooted in the Saleh's unbalanced and corrupted regime where elites benefited from assets in order to maintain the loyalty towards the regime. However, Yemen has always been both politically and socially torn apart by its numerous ethnic, religious and cultural heterogeneity. It has to deal with domestic challenges from competing elites, economic hardship, the threat of contagious diseases and with international challenges as the expansion of global jihad, and the US war on terrorism (Kronenfeld and Guzansky, 2014).

Citizens of Egypt, on the other hand, had experienced mostly nonviolent resistance fighting for an improvement in living conditions, an end to police brutality and corruption. They requested the fall of Mubarak regime, which led to Egyptian Revolution and bringing the president- Mubarak before the court to face a trial. However, with new regime of Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, the country experiences a poor situation of human and civil rights, a "horrificing execution spree" in the country and growing inequality between the middle class and the rest of the population (Korany, 2012).

The tsunami of protests spread across the Arab world. The position and use of foreign armed forces influence the process of transition and the control of the forces by government is dependent on financial resources derived from oil production. However, even the immediate cash flow cannot prevent the growing regional spillover and riots. The situation in Arab world is unpredictable and still far from democracy. Only time will tell if the Arab Spring has really led to successful transitions (Korany, 2012).

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