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Challenging the U.S. Arab countries and the Arab Spring. The Bahrain case.

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Sintesi Introduttiva

Una volta compiuto un rapido excursus sui Paesi in cui le recenti rivolte popolari che vanno sotto il nome di “Primavera Araba” hanno portato al rovesciamento dei preesistenti regimi, il lavoro di tesi si propone di analizzare più nel dettaglio come i cinque più importanti Paesi dell’area mediorientale, ovvero l’Arabia Saudita, lo Stato del Qatar, lo Stato d’Israele, la Repubblica Islamica d’Iran ed il Regno del Bahrain stanno affrontando le sfide che il XXI secolo pone loro. Questi paesi non sono esenti da richieste popolari di maggiore rappresentazione politica, dove le minoranze (in particolare quelle religiose) sono fortemente discriminate e le enormi ricchezze derivanti dalle entrate delle risorse naturali sono redistribuite in maniera a dir poco iniqua; tuttavia, la solidità degli establishment locali non sembra, per il momento, correre gli stessi rischi. La stabilità di questi Paesi è assolutamente fondamentale per gli USA, che hanno nell’area enormi interessi di natura militare, strategica ed economica, ed è dalla solidità di questi legami che dipende in gran parte il mantenimento del potere da parte dei governi locali.

È innegabile che l’intera area Medio Orientale stia attualmente attraversando una fase storica assai delicata. La portata del messaggio dei movimenti di opposizione che hanno portato al rovesciamento in Tunisia, Egitto, Yemen e Libia di regimi pluridecennali si sta infatti estendendo anche ai paesi del Golfo, caratterizzati anch’essi da antagonismi settari. La possibilità che, ispirate dal successo dei movimenti del Maghreb, le minoranze sciite ed i gruppi di opposizione locali approfittino dell’attuale crisi per riproporre le loro richieste preoccupa molto soprattutto le grandi petro-monarchie, l’Arabia Saudita in testa. Inoltre, la rinnovata aggressività dell’Iran e la sua determinazione a porsi come nuovo leader regionale non fanno che alimentare la convinzione delle monarchie sunnite dell’esistenza di un “complotto sciita” guidato da Teheran ai loro danni.

Anche se tutti i paesi presi in esame hanno o hanno avuto in passato importanti rapporti con gli Stati Uniti si possono identificare due macro gruppi, a seconda che essi ribadiscano la validità di tale cooperazione seppur rivedendone le tradizionali modalità oppure rivendichino maggiori facoltà decisionali sulle questioni interne.

Il primo gruppo è composto dall’Arabia Saudita e dal Qatar. In entrambi i Paesi il potere statale è saldamente in mano alle rispettive famiglie reali, i cui numerosissimi membri (siamo nell’ordine del migliaio, se consideriamo l’esiguità della popolazione del Qatar si arriva alla situazione in cui quasi il 40% dei detentori della cittadinanza è un membro della famiglia reale) non solo sono i responsabili dei ministeri, ma siedono anche nei consigli di amministrazione di importanti compagnie a controllo sia statale che privato; le entrate statali dipendono quasi interamente – per

più dell'80% - dai proventi del settore petrolifero e del gas naturale: ne deriva, quindi, che chi controlla il settore pubblico ha in mano un'arma potentissima. Tuttavia, le sfide che vengono poste ai due paesi sono di natura differente.

L'attenzione dell'Arabia Saudita è rivolta al piano interno. La maggioranza sciita della Provincia Orientale del regno, la più ricca di giacimenti petroliferi, è da sempre fonte di preoccupazione per la famiglia Al Saud, che si trova periodicamente a soffocare le richieste di libertà religiosa ed eguaglianza sociale. Il rischio per la monarchia è che il movimento di opposizione tragga esempio dai recenti avvenimenti, facendosi più deciso ed assumendo visibilità. Il controllo statale dei media e dei mezzi di comunicazione non gioca a favore del fronte di opposizione, che si vede negata la capacità di mettere in contatto le sue diverse anime non solo con gli omologhi esteri ma anche a livello nazionale; mantenere il fronte frammentato e non coordinato si sta rivelando, per il momento, un punto a favore del regime. L'unità nazionale è infatti indispensabile al fine di continuare ad assicurarsi l'aiuto degli USA, assai munifici nei confronti del regno soprattutto per quanto riguarda la cooperazione in ambito di sicurezza. Le forniture e gli investimenti militari statunitensi sono infatti vitali al fine di mantenere lo status di prima potenza militare della regione.

Il Qatar, al contrario, guarda all'estero. Già sede dei Giochi Arabi del 2011, Doha ospiterà i Campionati Mondiali di calcio del 2022, catalizzando l'attenzione del mondo su strutture all'avanguardia e su un Paese che ha fatto di "modernità" la sua parola d'ordine. Instancabile promotrice di un'immagine di Paese moderno e all'avanguardia, la famiglia Al Thani investe cifre astronomiche in programmi statali riguardanti l'educazione, la sanità, lo sport, la formazione professionale e la diversificazione dell'economia, attirando ingenti capitali dall'estero. Da questi benefici, tuttavia, rimane esclusa gran parte della popolazione: i programmi di welfare sono infatti destinati solo a quanti detengono la cittadinanza, vale a dire a malapena il 40% della popolazione totale che ha avuto la fortuna di nascere in Qatar, essendo pressoché impossibile ottenere la naturalizzazione. Queste contraddizioni vengono oscurate da quella che negli ultimi anni si è posta come l'ultimo baluardo della libera informazione in lingua araba, l'emittente televisiva *Al Jazeera*. Nata nel 1996 grazie ad un generoso finanziamento iniziale da parte dell'Emiro, l'emittente si è imposta all'attenzione internazionale per la sua ampia copertura dei principali eventi che hanno caratterizzato il mondo arabo, come la Seconda Intifada e l'Operazione Desert Fox, guadagnandosi da subito un ampio seguito di spettatori, che per la prima volta avevano accesso ad una fonte di informazioni i cui contenuti non fossero edulcorati dal regime. La fama di obiettività della quale *Al Jazeera* gode è attualmente messa in discussione. Per la a dir poco sbilanciata copertura fornita, ad esempio, alla guerra civile in Siria piuttosto che alla brutale repressione del dissenso che la

monarchia Al Khalifa sta esercitando in Bahrain da più di due anni, l'immagine che l'emittente da di sé è sempre meno quella dell'ultima frontiera dell'informazione indipendente e sempre più quella di una TV di Stato. Questa ambivalenza si riflette nel pragmatismo che l'Emiro dimostra di avere quando si tratta di politica estera. I legami di natura economica e militare che legano Doha a Washington non impediscono di intrattenere discreti rapporti con l'Iran, con il quale condivide il ricchissimo giacimento di gas naturale South Pars/North Dome; il Qatar ha ospitato fino al 2009 un ufficio commerciale israeliano, nonostante il governo si sia proposto come mediatore tra Fatah e Hamas all'indomani della vittoria elettorale di quest'ultima nel 2006.

A costituire il secondo gruppo sono due paesi le cui rivalità, se dovessero esplodere, avrebbero ripercussioni di portata globale. Entrambi stati confessionali in cui le divisioni tra ultraortodossi e laici sono oggetto di vivace dibattito interno, Israele ed Iran sono a tal punto concentrati sulle loro rivalità da essere spesso sordi ai richiami di Washington al dialogo.

Grande beneficiario del sostegno statunitense in campo economico, militare e diplomatico, lo Stato d'Israele non solo è l'unico stato ebraico al mondo, ma si trova nel cuore del mondo arabo. Il rovesciamento dei regimi filoccidentali dell'area a favore di movimenti di matrice islamista sono fonte di enorme preoccupazione per Tel Aviv, che vede la sua sopravvivenza e la sua sicurezza messe sempre più a rischio. Inoltre, il sostegno dato in forma più o meno ufficiale alla causa palestinese da gran parte dei paesi limitrofi non fa che aumentare questa percezione. A questo si somma la rinnovata aggressività dell'Iran, ora apparentemente in possesso dell'atomica e fermamente avverso all'esistenza stessa d'Israele; la sensazione del governo israeliano che Washington abbia "deciso di non decidere" se dare o meno sostegno ad un'eventuale azione di forza da condurre contro Teheran sta portando i rapporti tra i due paesi ad essere sempre più tesi.

Dal canto suo l'Iran sembra essere solo contro tutti: contro le monarchie sunnite che lo accusano di sostenere e manovrare le loro minoranze sciite, contro Israele e gli USA e contro l'intera comunità internazionale che lo ha pesantemente sanzionato per i suoi tentativi di dotarsi dell'energia atomica. La determinazione di Teheran nel portare comunque al compimento i suoi piani è da ricercare nella natura stessa del popolo iraniano, fiero e nostalgico promotore dei fasti dell'antico impero persiano. È in quest'ottica di orgoglio nazionale che va in parte vista la determinazione di proseguire con il programma nucleare, necessario per potersi porre come valido leader regionale, oltre che per ragioni di difesa e alla necessità di far fronte alla sempre più crescente domanda di energia determinata dall'incremento della popolazione urbana, che andrebbe altrimenti ricavata da fonti preziose per l'esportazione.

Un caso a sé stante è rappresentato dal Regno del Bahrain, un'isola al largo dell'Arabia Saudita dal cui destino sembrano dipendere gli equilibri dell'intera regione. Nonostante rappresenti il 70% della popolazione la componente sciita è fortemente discriminata dal regime della famiglia Al Khalifa, al potere da quando il paese ha ottenuto l'indipendenza nel 1971. Il movimento di opposizione del Bahrain risulta essere estremamente trasversale, in quanto le sue richieste riguardano la società civile nel suo complesso. Dopo le elezioni del 1973, le prime dopo l'entrata in vigore della Costituzione, il popolo non è più stato chiamato alle urne fino al 2002. A differenza del parlamento unicamerale ed elettivo previsto dalla prima costituzione, quello attuale è composto da una Camera Alta di nomina regia ed una Camera Bassa elettiva; non è difficile intuire come l'efficacia delle proposte avanzate da quest'ultima sia fortemente limitata dall'operato della prima.

Mai sopito da quarant'anni il movimento ha tratto nuova forza dall'esempio di quelli degli altri paesi e dalla consapevolezza di rappresentare una solida maggioranza della popolazione. Le sue aspettative sono state invece tradite dalla combinazione in questo minuscolo Stato di enormi interessi internazionali. All'indomani di violenti scontri tra manifestanti disarmati e polizia nel Febbraio 2011 le milizie del GCC hanno attraversato il ponte che collega il Paese all'Arabia Saudita in sostegno alle forze di polizia locale per soffocare la rivolta; un presidio fisso è ancora presente sul territorio nazionale. Promotrice dell'intervento è stata l'Arabia Saudita, a dir poco preoccupata per il possibile successo di una rivolta sciita alle porte del Paese e dell'esempio fornito agli oppositori della Provincia Orientale. *Al Jazeera Arabic* ha disilluso le aspettative popolari di salire alla ribalta internazionale, ignorando del tutto il fatto che in Bahrain gli arresti di attivisti per i diritti civili, i processi sommari, le torture e le violenze su manifestanti pacifici sono all'ordine del giorno e che un corpo militare autorizzato ad intervenire solo in caso di aggressione di uno dei suoi membri dall'esterno abbia interferito con quella che invece è una questione interna. L'Iran, pur dichiarando l'illegittimità dell'intervento del GCC, si limita a fornire sostegno morale: qualora la repressione si dimostrasse efficace la permanenza degli Al Khalifa sul trono equivarrebbe al mantenimento dello status quo, mentre se fosse il movimento di opposizione ad avere la meglio un Paese controllato da una maggioranza sciita alle porte del nemico Saudita sarebbe una valida carta da giocare per estendere la leadership di Teheran sulla regione.

L'Occidente, dal canto suo, non reagisce. Non denuncia le violazioni dei diritti umani, non denuncia l'intervento del GCC né tantomeno prende posizione in difesa delle legittime richieste del popolo del Bahrain. Tace soprattutto Washington, promotrice ed esportatrice di democrazia ai quattro angoli del Globo. Tace perché gli USA stanno passando uno dei periodi peggiori della loro storia, sia a livello interno quanto nei loro rapporti con l'estero. Dopo l'esito disastroso delle missioni in Afghanistan ed in Iraq gli USA non si possono più permettere, né economicamente né

politicamente, lo sforzo di intervenire in un conflitto i cui esiti sono incerti. Nel caso specifico gli svantaggi dell'intervento supererebbero di molto i vantaggi. Intervenire in sostegno dell'opposizione significherebbe non solo un considerevole impegno sia in termini di mezzi che di uomini e risorse, ma equivarrebbe ad inimicarsi i paesi del GCC, favorire gli interessi dell'Iran e rischiare di perdere l'amicizia con un governo che permette agli USA di far stazionare la Quinta Flotta, responsabile del coordinamento delle forze navali nel Golfo, nel Mar Rosso, nel Mare Arabico e nelle coste dell'Africa Occidentale fino al Kenya. Gli USA da soli non sono più nella posizione di poter determinare gli equilibri mondiali che favoriscono i loro interessi, ed il sostegno degli attori locali è in tal senso assolutamente indispensabile.

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Introduction

Immediately after the Second World War, in the period between the '50s and '70s, the oil market was in the hands of the Western oil majors, the so-called Seven Sisters. British Petroleum (BP), Anglo-Dutch Royal Dutch Shell (Shell), U.S. Standard Oil of New Jersey (Esso), Standard Oil of California (SoCal, then Chevron), Standard Oil of New York (Mobil oil), Gulf Oil and Texas Oil Company (Texaco) controlled at that time almost all of the reserves (80%¹), production and refining capacity of oil existing in the world outside of the United States, Canada and the countries then under the Soviet umbrella. Substantially, these big companies were those fixing the international price of oil. The price did not reflect the real one: it was fixed taking into account the forecasts on both demand and offer of every country and then transmitted to the producers.

The independence process, the consequent nationalisation and the withdrawn of concession mainly concerned Arab countries. The predominance of the market by the cartel of Western oil companies was called into question by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), that was founded in 1960² with the aim to safeguard the right of oil producers to control their own natural resources and to concur in fixing process.

The decision by Arab countries to apply the oil embargo on countries intervening in aid of Israel after the attack by Syrian and Egyptian forces on 1973 is the most showy symptom the relations between them and Western partners, in particular with the USA, was starting to overturn. More and more dependent on oil, Western countries now depended on the decisions of countries they had long time took advantage of.

The dollar flow deriving by oil sale in the cashes of the producers allowed them to enormously enrich. This money began to be reinvested and deposited in Western countries, assuring Arab countries a high level of wealth; commercial and economic relation between oil producers and buyers are well established.

This relationship, however, is not immune to criticism. The firm opposition of Arab countries to the very existence of the State of Israel clashes with the undoubted preferential relations it has with their biggest commercial partner, it is to say the USA. On the other hand Washington support, mainly as far as the military and security issue is concerned, is fundamental to its Gulf partner in order to maintain stability and the safeguard of their interest in one of the most problematic areas of the world.

¹ “Sette Sorelle”, *Petrolino – Tutto sul petrolio*, accessed February 3, 2013.

² OPEC, Brief History. Accessed february 3, 2013 http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/24.htm.

Since more than two years the world has been witnessing the evolutions of the wave of uprising that are shocking a considerable number of Arab countries. Popular masses took the streets in order to manifest their opposition to ten-years despotic regimes excluding the population from the right to fair elections and representation in contrast with the basic democratic rules, and succeeding in the deposing them.

The first country facing a popular uprising was Tunisia in December 2010³, when a pitchman set fire to himself to protest against the police seizing his goods. This event provoked a series of popular demonstrations that led to the resignation of the government and the exile of the President Ben Ali to Saudi Arabia. A transition government is actually ruling the country, under the leadership of Mohamed Ghannouchi.

After a month it was the turn of Egypt to revolt against the regime of Hosni Mubarak, who has ruled the country since 1981⁴. Pushed by the desire for social and political reform the crowd gathered in Tahrir Square, that became the symbol of the revolution. The former President resigned after a month of violent repression, during which more than 600 people were killed; today the President is Mohammed Morsi, belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood Party and elected on June 24, 2012⁵.

In the same month of January, demonstrations started in Yemen; they ended when President Ali Abdullah Saleh was victim of an assassination attempt and he resigned. The current President of Yemen is Abd Rabbuh Mansour al-Hadi⁶, who served as the vice-president.

Libyan turmoil first began in Bengasi in February 2011, and then it reached the capital city Tripoli. The UN intervention resulted in the capitulation of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, the country ruler since 1970s; he was captured while trying to escape from the city of Sirte and killed by the rebels⁷. A civil war between people opposing the regime and the government forces is still going on in Syria. The effective number of casualties is unknown, but there are proofs that also several women and children have been killed⁸, and the violent repression of the dissent seems far to stop.

³ Perolo, "Primavera Araba, che cosa è rimasto?", *GQ.com* (2012), accessed February 2, 2013.

http://www.gqitalia.it/viral-news/articles/2012/marzo/cosa-e-rimasto-delle-cinque-rivoluzioni-arabe-libia-siria-egitto-yemen-e-tunisia-la-situazione-di-prima-e-quella-di-adesso#?refresh_ce.

⁴ "Hosni Mubarak", *The New York Times* (2012), accessed February 2, 2013.

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/m/hosni_mubarak/index.html.

⁵ "Egitto, vince Mohammed Morsi. 'Sarò il presidente di tutti gli egiziani'", *Corriere della Sera* (2012), accessed February 2, 2013. http://www.corriere.it/esteri/12_giugno_24/egitto-nuovo-presidente_814d64dc-bdf9-11e1-a8f4-59710be8ebe6.shtml.

⁶ "In Pictures: the year in review", *Al Jazeera* (2013), accessed February 2, 2013.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2012/12/20121227155424734165.html>.

⁷ McElroy, "Colonel Gaddafi died after being stabbed with bayonet, says report", *The Telegraph* (2012), accessed February 2, 2013. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/9613394/Colonel-Gaddafi-died-after-being-stabbed-with-bayonet-says-report.html>.

⁸ "Syria: new 'massacre' in Homs as diplomacy stalls - Monday 12 March 2012", *The Guardian* (2012), accessed February 3, 2013.

By the way, there are attempts of popular uprising that have not been successful. As a matter of fact the positive outcome of a revolt is strictly connected to the peculiar characteristic of the country in which it occurs. Local variations seems to predominate⁹, because the demands of the people are not specifically Arab or Islamic.

The same way Egypt and the Maghreb faced difficult domestic situations, Middle East is no exception. Persian Gulf region is a very complex area, where ancient resentment among the different actors for local leadership intertwine with never soothed internal division.

Shia minority living in the Saudi region of Qatif has been claiming for wider political consideration for years. The central power is succeeding in limiting the activists opportunities to coordinate their action with that of other opposition groups both in the region and in the rest of the country. When interviewed about the aims of their struggle the organizers of the Eastern Province Revolution¹⁰ declare that “there is limited communication with activists in other regions of Saudi Arabia, with the purpose of exchanging specific strategies”¹¹. The low level of coordination of the movement, then, goes to the benefit of the central power. This does not imply, though, that the action of these groups is constantly monitored.

By contrast, the immense wealth of Qatar assures the country a certain level of stability. Out of a total population of 1,951,591 inhabitants¹², 40% is of Arab belonging and the remaining 60%¹³ is composed of Indian, Pakistani, Iranian, Filipinos and Western. The widespread opinion of people owning citizenship is that domestic reforms should not be a priority to the Emir, and they are satisfied with the current situation: “civil society seems to be generally satisfied and it does not feel the necessity to demand for further rights”¹⁴. By the way, foreigners are excluded from the privileges granted to the natives.

Ideally leaving Arabic peninsula and going North, it is possible to witness the tense relation between two states which developments could deeply influence global balances. Israel is the only existing Jewish state, and it is located at the heart of the Islamic world; in addition, it benefits of uniquely advantageous connections with Washington. US generosity and Israeli government enduring refusal to fully recognize the existence of a Palestinian state on its territory go on

⁹ Lauri, “L’utopia della primavera araba: il successo non è garantito”, *Limes Online* (2011), accessed February 2, 2013. <http://temi.repubblica.it/limes/lutopia-della-primavera-araba-il-successo-non-e-garantito/30291>.

¹⁰ Political youth group that seeks to establish a consultative and electoral ruling system that represents the will of the people, resulting from the coincidence of different local groups belonging to the Saudi Eastern Province.

¹¹ Bsheer, “Saudi Revolutionaries: An Interview”, *Jadaliyya* (2012), accessed February 2, 2012. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6104/saudi-revolutionaries_an-interview.

¹² “Central Intelligence Agency”, accessed February 2, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/qa.html>.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Alma Safira, “Qatar, baluardo dell’antico regime”, *Limes* 3/2011 (2011), 144.

fostering, even with different entities and more or less officially, the aversion of the big petro-monarchies. On the other hand, the suspect of international community that Islamic Republic of Iran could actually afford the atomic bomb construction despite it is not allowed to own it worsened Israeli fears, for Iranian leadership repeatedly claims for its destruction; UN sanctions seems to have not had effect on Iranian resolution to carry on its nuclear program. The advocacy of military option by the highest Israeli government charges seems for now been set aside.

The only case of a Gulf country in which the opposition front is wide enough to bode well for its positive outcome is the small island of Bahrain, where a violent repression has been going on since 2011. It is a Shia-majority country, while the ruling Al Khalifa family is Sunni; the fact that the local monarchy can count on the help of the surrounding countries can be a correct explanation of why the popular uprising seems far from being successful.

Regional instability represents a serious threat to Washington. To rely on the loyalty of Gulf monarchies is an essential prerequisite to the US in order to safe its own energetic and military interests, and the persistence of Sunni monarchies in order to contrast Iranian influence and aggressiveness remains a priority.

Part I

Friends, with reservations.

It is the time to enter into details about the role that local actors are now playing as regards the Arabs springs. We are not going to talk about the countries directly involved in this process, but we are going to deal with the reaction that the recent events have provoked in the surrounding ones. As a matter of fact being the Gulf area a deeply complex and challenging one, characterized by the presence of a thorny balance of power, the unprecedented sequence of political upheavals has a direct consequence a dramatic influence on the whole area, where smoothed centuries-old conflicts are always about to rekindle and ignite. Such an awkward situation requires the presence of strong central authorities, in order to keep all the different and hostile elements under control. In this area it means to have a central power able to balance all the components of a society that has its base in a family and tribal structure, where the kinship with the country leader and the appointment government assignment are the rule and traditional hostilities between countries are die hard. The Realpolitik ideals are rarely taken into account in this area where ethnicity and religion keep on being the guidelines in the definition of politic agendas, and the retention of privileges for the leading families prevails on the well-being of the country. Oil provides immeasurable richness to reigning families in such a proportion that state aid programs are directly financed by their money, and not by a proper welfare authority; the higher echelons of the Army – such as the same Minister of Defense – are members of the sovereign families, and this assures its absolute loyalty to the central power.

All these elements given, it is easier to understand why the uprisings in the Middle Eastern and Maghreb area represents an unprecedented chance for their countries to redefine their role in the area, extending their influence in the region to the detriment of traditional opponents. It is regional security, and not the status quo maintenance, the goal that countries set themselves on – it is to say they are not disposed to delegate to the United States the role of the order restorer anymore, in order to settle the conflicts pertinent to them on their own. Nevertheless the traditional links between them and Washington, started when these country where seen in the light of bipolar confrontation (it means such as a pawn to gain in the fifty-years game with Soviet Union), can not be overlooked; the results of this cooperation, achieved thanks to economic, political and military helps from the

two superpowers to the local actors can be confirmed out of the present facts - this is just the reason for the relationship between these countries and the United States are under discussion now. The point for the local actors is to decide the line to follow, and choose between the one of the retention of the pre-existing good terms, but strongly restating (and increasing too) their role in the decision making or the one of the challenge, claiming for the full independence about the decisions concerning home policy. In the following chapters it is the first group of countries that will be analyzed.

Chapter 1.

Saudi Arabia.

When people is asked to say what is the most US-friendly Arab country, the answer would likely be Saudi Arabia – and talking about Saudi Arabia is the same thing that talking about Al Saud family. This all-power, billionaire family numbers somewhere around 15,000¹⁵ people and 2,000 of them are in charge with responsibility roles in the public administration, such as ministries and diplomatic charges. They due their origin from King Abd al-Aziz (full name Abd al-Aziz bin Abdul Rahman bin Faisal Al-Saud, also known as Abdul Aziz or Ibn Saud), that fathered 45 male sons from 22 wives, even if both numbers are under discussion¹⁶ . Among Ibn Saud's sons, the most influential branch since the ascent of Fahd's ascent to the throne in 1985 had been the Al Sudairi one, from the name of their mother Husa bint Ahmad Al Sudairi, belonging to an influential Saudi family; these brothers hold positions of significance, especially following the appointment of Fahd, the eldest of them, as the regent in 1975 (he became the King in 1982)¹⁷ . More interested in political issues than in the business activities unlike other children of Abd Al-Aziz, they represented a valuable support for King Faisal, that appointed them with very prestigious positions such as those of the Interior Minister (Fahd), Minister of Defense (Sultan) and Governor of Riyadh (Salman)¹⁸ . Once Fahd became king, the brothers consolidated their power by appointing their sons and brothers to ministerial offices and key positions in the government hierarchy, giving some continuity to the system. On the other hand this has often led their other brothers to oppose them; this circumstance favored the ascent to the throne of King Abdullah, that pragmatically used his

¹⁵ Milmo, "The Acton princess calling for reform in Saudi Arabia", *The Independent* (2012), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/news/the-acton-princess-calling-for-reform-in-saudi-arabia-6284225.html>

¹⁶ "House of Saud", *Geocities*, accessed February 6, 2013. http://www.geocities.ws/saudhouse_p/alsaudf.htm

¹⁷ "Al Sudairi Clan", *Global Security*, accessed February 6, 2013.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/gulf/sudairi.htm>

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

alliances with the other brothers and the sons of Faisal in order to become the king and to downsize the influence of the Sudairi brothers - even by issuing, in 2006, the Allegiance Institution Law¹⁹ in order to formally establish the Allegiance Council, the family assembly that established by informal consensus of its members the future successor of the king in charge.

As a matter of fact the definition of the Saudi heir to throne follows the principle of agnatic seniority, a patrilineal principle of inheritance where the order of succession to the throne prefers the monarch's younger brother over the monarch's own sons ; this implies that next generation can succeed to power only after all the male members of the elder generation die. All male members of the family are reputedly candidate to the throne – and considering that Ibn Saud had more than 40²⁰ male sons from different women it is easy to understand how the system become very complex the years going by, even because in such a large family as the al-Saud one – where the sons of the same mother tends to unite against the others – it is very common to assist the emergence of one branch on the others, as in the Sudairi case.

So the Allegiance Council, headed by the eldest son of King Abd al-Aziz, is the competent body as far as the definition on the new heir to the throne²¹. Each line of the al-Saud family has a representative; in the case of the Princes who have already died or not able to participate, the task of representing them goes to their sons. The main role of the Council is to approve, within a month his accession, the choice of the new King or select one of his nominees; if any of the candidates of the King seems to be suitable, the Council can produce its own nominee from the sons or grandsons of Ibn Saud. In any case, the Council has the last word in the appointment of the new Crown Prince²².

If we consider that all the twenty alive sons of Ibn Saud are older than sixty-five, multiple transitions in a short period of time are absolutely likely to happen; a considerable number of al-Saud brothers are in their seventies or in their eighties and they do not enjoy good health anymore²³. Now than ever before it is crucial to the United States to know if the Saudis are still a loyal friend to them. The children of Abd Al-Aziz acquired their positions for their seniority and loyalty and not for their skills; now for the first time since the founding of the country, the power will go into the hands of the second generation of Princes.

¹⁹ “The Allegiance Institution Law “, *Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC* (2006), accessed January 30, 2013. <http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2006/transcript/Page4.aspx>

²⁰ “The Al-Saud dynasty”, *Islam Daily* (2006), accessed January 4, 2013. <http://www.islamdaily.org/en/saudi-arabia/4565.the-al-saud-dynasty.htm/>

²¹ “The Allegiance Institution Law “, *Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC* (2006), accessed January 30, 2013. <http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2006/transcript/Page4.aspx>

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Henderson, “The Saudi Succession Question. Possible Scenarios for the Saudi Succession”, *The cutting edge* (2011), accessed September 15, 2012. <http://www.thecuttingedgenews.com/index.php?article=52962>

Looking at the current distribution of government charges we can see how this transition is already underway: Prince Salman, son of King Abdullah, is the Deputy Prime Minister (office held by Prince Saud Al Faisal)²⁴, and its brother Mutab is the head of the National Guard, a separate military force independent from Saudi Arabia Defense Force with the task is to ensure the safety of the royal family, defend facilities and resources and to protect the Holy Places²⁵; Muhammad, son of King Fahd, administers the Eastern Provinces while Prince Khaled (son of Faisal), the current Emir of Mecca, seems to be intended to cover in future assignments particularly relevant. Despite this generation of princes is more skilled than the previous one as far as international affairs are concerned- most of them received an excellent education in the most prestigious British and US colleges - this does not necessarily mean a brighter future for the country with regard to social and politic reforms.

1.1. Concerns about internal turmoil.

The recent events in the Arab countries are deeply concerning old King Abdullah. When in February 2011 he came back to Saudi Arabia after spending a time abroad for undefined health reasons, the Middle East shape had deeply changed: Egypt and Tunisia, his old allies among the Arab League, were in full turmoil and both their presidents were forced to escape their countries; signs of unrest had started to appear in Bahrain and Oman while in Yemen, where Bin Laden family has its homeland, groups with qaedaist overtones started to menace country stability; in the meanwhile in Libya, Colonel Gaddafi was facing an unprecedented wave of riots that would have soon let the country to the civil war.

In addition to that, for the first time in the country history King Abdullah has now to face homeland discontent: not only Shias minorities (and that means, in Saudi vision, a direct support by Teheran) living in the Eastern regions started to become a source of troubles, but also claims for civil rights and appeals to revolt started to appear online. In addition, the number of complaints that regional lords periodically collect in order to report to the King is getting more and more copious. In a country that does not have a formal constitution, and where un-codified Sharia is the law, people claims for power-sharing and further participation to decision making – mainly of the part of the rich and open-minded youth that often has studied in Western countries²⁶.

²⁴ Henderson, "After King Abdullah. Succession in Saudi Arabia", *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (2009), accessed December 10, 2012. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus96.pdf>

²⁵ "Saudi Arabia National Guard", *Global Security*, accessed December 10, 2012. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/gulf/sang.htm>

²⁶ Charmelot, "Dal re saudita parte la controrivoluzione a suon di dollari", *Limes 3/2011* (2011), 35-44

The main current concern of the al-Sauds is to maintain its own security and to strengthen its leadership in the area, avoiding the leaders of neighbor states to be forced to leave their countries because of homeland turmoil in behalf of Shias agitated minorities claiming for their rights and of social riotous claiming for a more active participation in social life and decision making. The riots promoted by Shias minorities have already taken place not only in Oman and Bahrain, but also in Saudi's own territory. Freedom of expression, access to information, active participation in politics and civil rights are the main characteristics of democratic countries, and the Saudis are really far from achieving these goals. Internal discontent is growing stronger, the dynasty is passing through the most delicate phase of its history and its role in the area is put in strong debate.

1.1.1. The Qatif Rebels.

Qatif province is a governorate located in Eastern Province of the country, where most of people works in oil, industry, public services, education and health care sector. Its peculiarity is to be a Shia region²⁷ in a Wahhabi ruled country, and this fact made a real thorn in the flesh of Riyadh out of it since years. Both in 2011²⁸ and 2012²⁹ disorders have occurred in Qatif but state media have repeatedly stop any attempt of the riotous to spread their message worldwide, even by means of counter-revolutionary campaign , the cooptation on religious and political authorities and putting economical pressure on people with blockades. Spokesmen of the revolutionary³⁰ define themselves like a political youth group with the aim to establish an electoral and consultative system representing the will of people, by both revolutionary and legal activities and popular backing.

With the general name of "Eastern Province Revolution" we identify the activities of different groups: the Free Youth Movement, Free Dignity Movement, Day of Qatif Rage for the Release of of Forgotten Prisoners and the Youth Reform Movement. All these groups are the result of the convergence of smaller and isolated groups with the aim to be more organized and assertive, and that decided to get organized under a single movement, the Coalition for Freedom and Justice, with the main goal to give media resonance to their arguments by means of electronic activism; they periodically meet and put together a schedule of the events they are going to carry on to be

²⁷ Beehner, "Shia Muslims in the Mideast", *Council on Foreign Relations* (2006), accessed September 6, 2012
<http://www.cfr.org/religion-and-politics/shia-muslims-mideast/p10903>

²⁸ "Arabia Saudita: 14 feriti nei disordini a Qatif", *Focus Medio oriente* (2011), accessed September 6, 2012.
<http://www.focusmo.it/politica/61-interna/14232-arabia-saudita-14-feriti-nei-disordini-a-qatif.html>

²⁹ "Arabia Saudita: disordini ad al Qatif, proteste degli sciiti", *Agenzia Nova* (2012), accessed September 6, 2012.
<http://www.agenzianova.com/a/503e996268e8f6.57634190/666734/2012-07-27/arabia-saudita-disordini-ad-al-qatif-proteste-degli-sciiti>

³⁰ Bsheer, "Saudi Revolutionaries: An Interview", *Jadaliyya* (2012), accessed September 6, 2012.
http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6104/saudi-revolutionaries_an-interview

published on their Facebook page³¹ with no signatories, for none of the movement publically adopts the activities. By acting like a coalition, all these groups can carry on their activities in a more efficient, public and official way³².

By the way, even if the Eastern Province Movement has been the first one in the region and the source of inspiration for all of the other groups, there is limited communication with activist of other Saudi regions³³, and it is about the exchange of specific strategies only. This is a huge limit for it made the achievement of the goals of the movement harder: as a matter of fact the only tangible sign of politic activisms can be found in Eastern Province, and even in this case there is any true and recognized political body already existing there.

As regards the supporters of Qatifi cause, in addition to the majority of the population there also religious figures and lawyers standing by their side; women have an active role in both organization and mobilization. By the way consensus is not unanimous in the region, mainly when we consider the different behavior of religious leaders: they can decide not to participate the protest, but without prevent people for doing what they think is the right to do; or they can decide both not to participate the protest and both to clash with them, accusing people participating the riots not to be a relevant and representative part of the will of the country and not to follow religious rules.

However the way to the achievement of the goals is long and full of challenges, for the ruling family has no intention to sit back and take the risk that opposition movements could acquire importance also in Saudi Arabia, threatening the very survival of the status quo. The great strength of al-Saud family is the sureness to rely on security forces that are armed and trained by the US³⁴ and always ready to quell and discourage dissent across the country - in collaboration with the police, who is no stranger to beatings and arbitrary arrests against unarmed civilians³⁵. This is true not only for people who have actually taken part in the disputes, but also several people were forbidden to move freely within the country or to express their opinion through the press only for criticizing the current political situation; several blogs were closed³⁶, the use of social networking

³¹ <https://www.facebook.com/rev.east>

³² Bsheer, "Saudi Revolutionaries: An Interview", *Jadaliyya* (2012), accessed September 6, 2012. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6104/saudi-revolutionaries_an-interview

³³ Abu Nasr, "Saudi Arabia Demonstrators Hold Rallies in al-Qatif, Awwamiya", *Bloomberg* (2011), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-03-16/saudi-arabia-demonstrators-hold-rallies-in-al-qatif-awwamiya.html>

³⁴ Blanchard, "Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations", *Congressional Research Service* (2012), accessed February 3, 2013. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33533.pdf>

³⁵ "Saudis protest police violence on women", *Press TV* (2012), accessed September 7, 2012. <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/201000.html>

³⁶ Fortin, "Saudi Arabia Suggests Global Internet Regulations To Preserve 'Public Order'", *International Business Times* (2012). <http://www.ibtimes.com/saudi-arabia-suggests-global-internet-regulations-preserve-public-order-845179>

sites such as Twitter is closely watched, and many were forced to sign commitments not to act against the laws and regulations³⁷.

The most obvious result of the success of this counterrevolutionary campaign led by national media is the imposition of an almost total absence of information regarding the voices of dissent, both as regards the foreign both as regards the interior of the country³⁸. Not only different websites have been closed, but the media law has also been further enhanced to provide more and more severe penalties for offenders: the publication of photos or videos regarding the protests can cost up to ten years in prison and hundreds of dollars of fine. The lack of information within the country has reached levels that make the people of the various provinces almost completely unaware of what is happening not only abroad but also within the same Saudi Arabia.

Despite the tightening of laws and the media blackout, disputes are small but constant, especially in the form of requests to the offices of ministers on issues concerning, for example, increased wages, reinstatement in jobs that were promised and payment of salaries on time³⁹. Such requests are renewed from time to time according to the importance attributed to them: that is to say, after weeks of requests the attention moves from the issue of political prisoners to, for example, the one of the increase of job.

The importance or otherwise of an issue with respect to another is obviously the prerogative of the media, which may silence claims about a topic calling it of no national interest by taxing it, for example ,with a matter concerning only the Shiite component of the population. A good example of how the media can manipulate the events can be that of King Khalid University in Abha, where more than five thousand women gathered to protest against the corruption of the administration, restrictive policies and gender discrimination⁴⁰. Despite the killing of a woman and the serious injuring of about forty protesters (one of which has undergone an abortion) as a result of police intervention, the media has dubbed the incident as an attack of the students at the university staff, during which they would wounds each other.

The lack of media cadres and others means of communication is a factor that does not intervene on the behalf of the movement: it requires skilled people belonging to the region to promote its own cause, even if the support of others would made the results to come easier and

³⁷ Bsheer, "Saudi Revolutionaries: An Interview", *Jadaliyya* (2012), accessed September 6, 2012.

http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6104/saudi-revolutionaries_an-interview

³⁸ "Saudi Arabia Country Profile", *Library of Congress Federal Research Division*, accessed February 4, 2013.

http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Saudi_Arabia.pdf

³⁹ "Saudi Arabia: A Country Study, 'Saudi Arabia - The Royal Diwan'", *US Library of Congress* (1992), accessed January 30, 2013. <http://countrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/48.htm>

⁴⁰ "Fifty injured in attack on Saudi student protest: report", *Al-Akhbar English* (2012), accessed January 30, 2013 <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/50-students-hurt-attack-saudi-student-protest-report>

faster. In the opinion of the monarchy, the revolutionaries of Qatif are considered on a par with those of other neighboring states - such as Bahrain - it is to say with strong bonds of cooperation and support from Iran; if this were true, both the Eastern Province Revolution and the revolutions of Bahrain would be surely more effective, and would certainly have a higher profile on the international stage. For these reasons, the uprising in Eastern Regions probably does not represent a real threat to the power of Riyadh in the short period, but they are still cause for concern for a regime that does not allow any form of opposition.

1.1.2. The social pressures.

People, therefore, claim for social reforms. And in a country where the monarchy and the State coincide, welfare is directly financed by the personal revenues of the family; if we only consider the esteemed personal fortune of King Abdullah, we are talking about 18 billion US\$⁴¹.

The first thing the old monarch does once back home on February 2011 is to allocate 36 billion dollars⁴² in behalf of social programs direct mainly to young people looking for employment and to disadvantaged classes; the appropriation also consider the cancellation of the debts of people that died in jail, the implementation of council housing, the earmarking of education credits and the sponsorship of a range of different association. 100 billion US\$⁴³ have been allocated further in order to stop criticism against the monarchy; this allocation provides unemployment benefits, a bonus to civil servants equal to the wage of two working months and funds to the healthcare. On the other hand, the monarchy also hired 6000⁴⁴ new house detectives and implemented the anti-corruption committee.

The return of the King also sparked the adoption of a series of political, economic and personal by different family members. Minister of the Interior issued a statement according to which anyone who has been involved in dissent would have been punished by law, and he was immediately followed by the religious justification to these measures given by the *ulamas*, who stated that to act against the state is such as an anti-Islamic act such as directly act against God is; religious authorities have also invited the preachers to promote discussions on fidelity to al-Saud family during the Friday prayer and to encourage the faithful not to take part in the protests.

⁴¹ "The World's Richest Royals", *Forbes* (2011), accessed February 1, 2013.

http://www.forbes.com/2010/07/07/richest-royals-wealth-monarch-wedding-divorce-billionaire_slide_4.html

⁴² Fischetti, "Arabia Saudita, il re promette 36 miliardi di dollari in sussidi", *Il quotidiano italiano* (2011), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.ilquotidianoitaliano.it/esteri/2011/02/news/arabia-saudita-il-re-promette-36-miliardi-di-dollari-in-sussidi-62427.html/>

⁴³ Bongiorni, "I grandi progetti di Riyad", *Il Sole 24 Ore* (2012), accessed February 5, 2013.

<http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/impresa-e-territori/2012-03-29/grandi-progetti-riyad-111405.shtml?uuid=AbKIJmFF>

⁴⁴ Charnelot, "Dal re saudita parte la controrivoluzione a suon di dollari", *Limes 3/2011* (2011),35-44.

In any event King Abdullah immediately sent his emissaries to the four corners of the country to remind the tribes, the business leaders and several families their old ties with the monarchy; some tribes directly sent their representatives to the court to confirm the king their loyalty. At the same time, sources within the Ministry of Interior revealed as the return of the King coincided at a wave of arrests of people linked to online organizations and popular protests, requiring social and political reforms.

The rumors about the killing of the promoter of a national "Day of Rage", scheduled for March 11⁴⁵ and promoted via a page on Facebook, have certainly toned down popular demands for a fairer welfare state and deterred people from taking part in any kind of political organization. Unofficial messages circulating among the population talked about of up to five years and hundreds of thousands of Saudi Riyals in fines for those who took part in the protests and tens of thousands of Saudi Riyals and three years in prison for those who took photos or videos of the riots. These messages, which releaser remains unknown, together with the items that they wanted the presence of al-Qaeda elements and feminist behind the promotion of the "Day of Rage" have been able to shift the feelings of the population by the enthusiasm and the hope of a possible change to a climate of suspicion and fear.

1.1.3. Saudi people requests.

But who are the Saudi claimers, what do they want, and what are their requests? They are young men and women who want their country to be in step with the rest of the world as regards to research and development in the cultural, economic, scientific field, and a free access to information thanks to the modern social media in order to get in touch with the rest of the world. The gap with the rest of the world is now so large, especially when it relates to freedom of opinion and civil rights, that it can no longer be ignored. It precisely is the current situation in the Middle East, where young people were a very active component and often the promoters of disputes, to make the young Saudis think about their condition. This reflection leads them to refuse to be an inactive part of a system often based on neglect, corruption, unemployment and lack of attention to the needs of the population.

First of all, they ask for job opportunities with fair wages in all specialization and an adequate medical coverage, so that everyone is able to have a lifestyle at least decent. The extreme

⁴⁵ Black, "Saudi Arabian security forces quell 'day of rage' protests", *The Guardian* (2011), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/11/saudi-arabia-police-quell-protests>

poverty of some categories of the population is in fact a contradiction, if we consider that we are talking about the richest oil exporting country in the world. This affects the level of education, health and quality of life; future generations therefore call for state subsidies and for the lowering of prices of basic necessities, housing, water and electricity and to make cheaper means of public transport.

With regard to the public sector the most serious problem is the widespread corruption⁴⁶, as well as the lack of transparency, which makes the cases of misappropriation of public funds and abuse of power the norm, as it lacks competition authority of efficiency and accuracy in the industry. Add to this the rampant nepotism, which is combined with discrimination based on tribal, regional and sectarian especially with regard to local government, severely limits the possibilities of employment in the public sector; this issue is strongly felt by the public opinion that have not the right to freely participate the political decisions, as any decision-making is a prerogative of the royal family with no need to submit it to popular approval.

The obstinacy of the al-Sauds to keep all the power "in the family" and the intestine fights⁴⁷ in the royal family itself are in fact determining the decrease in efficiency of the administration and more and more exacerbating the existing gap between the society and public administration . In the light of the changed political situation in the whole Middle East region is absolutely necessary for the al-Sauds to decide to take the road leading to social and political reforms; it is necessary to remember that Saudi Arabia is under observation by the activists of Amnesty International for years for violation of human rights, such as the limitation of freedom of expression, the arrest of dissidents and their detention without due process and heavy discrimination against women.

The almost total lack of rights of Saudi women is a matter of stern warnings by the international community. All Saudi women, regardless of their age and marital status, are supposed to have a guardian (the father, the husband, a brother or one of their own children) to which they must ask permission not only for example, to travel or study but also to submit themselves to medical treatment. Despite the right to travel without permission of a guardian⁴⁸ was recently

⁴⁶ "Difesa, la corruzione nel settore costa 20 miliardi di dollari all'anno", *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (2013), accessed January 3, 2013. <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/01/30/transparency-international-corruzione-nella-difesa-costa-20-miliardi-di-dollari/483606/>

⁴⁷ Emiliani, "Rentier States arabi in crisi:il caso dell'Arabia Saudita", *Scienza e politica* (2010), accessed January 31, 2013. https://www.google.com/search?q=al+saud+intestine+fighths&oq=al+saud+intestine+fighths&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#hl=en&tbo=d&sclient=psy-ab&q=lotte+intestine+famiglia+al+saud+2000&oq=lotte+intestine+famiglia+al+saud+2000&gs_l=serp.3...10637.12270.4.12619.5.5.0.0.0.340.1089.0j3j1j1.5.0.les%3B..0.0...1c.1.2.serp.pBIENvUorrk&pbx=1&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_qf.&bvm=bv.41867550,d.bGE&fp=ca04ccaefd91619a&biw=1517&bih=714

⁴⁸ "Saudi women free to travel across GCC with IDs: report", *Al Arabiya News* (2012), accessed January 30, 2013. <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/09/19/238953.html>

granted to women over the age of 45⁴⁹, airport officials continue to ask for written permission. In case they have the permission to study, is the guardian to apply for registration on their behalf, since women were not allowed to do this kind of requests; access to libraries is severely limited, the level of teaching is still lower than that for males and if they reside in the dorms they can not leave the campus without their legal guardian. As far as medical care is concerned, women can only receive care for which the guardian has from time to time gave permission. If they are allowed to work and the office does not provide the separation of the sexes, it is necessary the constant presence of the guardian. If a woman has to appear in court she must bring two men as guarantors of her identity, and four others to confirm that they are reliable; the witness of a woman is equal to half that of a man⁵⁰, and in any case she to address the court through a guardian. They can be elected to the boards of Chambers of Commerce⁵¹, but they can not run for the highest elective offices. They are not allowed to enter a hotel unless accompanied by a family member - to produce their ID card has recently become sufficient, even if and the hotel is still obliged to inform the nearest police station of the room reservation and the duration of the stay. Children are legally belonging to the father, and in case of divorce can stay with the mother until they are seven years old ⁵²(if they are older is the family of the father that take care of them). In case of inheritance they are theoretically entitled to have half as much as their brothers, even if they are often deprived of their inheritance rights for they are economically expected to depend on their father or husband⁵³.

King Abdullah has made some tentative step forward towards improving the status of women in her country - some coeducational universities have been set up and the segregation is less rigid, while remaining the norm - but these reforms are more formal than actually effective. Women were allowed to vote in municipal, but the lack of seats separated from those of men and the need for them to have the permission of the guardian has effectively nullified the measure. These steps, whose relevance and effectiveness are actually minimum, have attracted support from the international community, even if the road to emancipation is very long and thwarted; often women themselves, because of the lack of information and their cultural heritage, are not aware that they are entitled to rights that women of much of the world has firmly won by decades.

⁴⁹ "Hajj Requirements", *Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC*, accessed February 4, 2013.
http://www.saudiembassy.net/services/hajj_requirements.aspx

⁵⁰ "Women's Rights", *Center For Democracy And Human Rights In Saudi Arabia*, accessed February 4, 2013.
http://www.cdhr.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=38&Itemid=69

⁵¹ "Women" of the Council of Saudi Chambers – 6 Pivots to Support Work at the Women Sections of the Chambers", *Council of Saudi Chambers* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013.
<http://www.csc.org.sa/English/News/Pages/2012women.aspx>

⁵² Nihal, "Khula: An unending fight for women in the Kingdom", *Saudi Gazette* (2012), accessed February 30, 2013.
<http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20121212145728>

2. Saudi Arabia and the US.

The U.S. has always entertained a very special relationship with the Gulf Countries in general and with Saudi Arabia in particular. It is no secret that huge quantities of petrodollars earned by the Saudis in the 70's have been wisely invested in the U.S., even and especially in treasury bonds, and that the a relevant amount of the U.S. investments abroad are to the benefit of Gulf Counties. According to some estimates of the International Monetary Fund, from 2000 to 2008 1,3 trillion U.S. dollars entered into the coffers of the Arab states⁵⁴. This nothing short of huge flow of money mainly comes from the export of hydrocarbons, the remittances of citizens living abroad and, more generally, from sales and exports, favored by recent legislation on the liberalization of the market and the boom in homeland consumption.

Especially if we consider the amount of FDI⁵⁵ in favor of these states, it sound quite contradictory as this boom happened just in the decade of terroristic attacks of 2001, of which states of the area have been in various ways often accused of being the lenders. Despite this, the relations between the Saudis and the U.S. have resisted even after September 11 attacks, and the reasons for this are essentially two. Firstly, the Saudis have been engaged in a tight domestic battle to the salafis, without ever mystery not to approve bin Laden's strategy (hostile to the Saudis because of their proximity to the US) and by arresting a big number of them; the successes of operations also allowed the Saudis to provide Americans with valuable information on recognizing and combating these extremist.

The second one is essentially due to geopolitical reasons. If war in Iraq had gone as hoped for by the tops of the Army - it is to say if it resulted in the stabilization of the country- the U.S. probably would not have had so need to maintain close relations with Riyadh. However, with Iraq out of the games and the increasingly hostility of Teheran towards the US, Washington desperately needs trustful allies in the area. For their part the Saudis, especially during Bush administrations, put aside their reserves about some of the measures they had been suggested to take, such as for example the request to introduce some cautious democratic reforms, to reiterate once more as the alliance with the U.S. is vital for them.

For many the fact remains doubtful whether the petrodollars were recycled in favor of terrorist organizations and the support of their cause; this is a legitimate doubt, if we examine the ways in which these proceeds are invested and their destination. First, the destination of these

⁵⁴ Pfeifer, "Petrodollars at Work and in Play in the Post-September 11 Decade", *MER260*, accessed September 15, 2012. <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer260/petrodollars-work-play-post-september-11-decade>

⁵⁵ "U.S.-Saudi Arabia Trade Facts", *Office of the United States Trade Representative*, accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/europe-middle-east/middle-east/north-africa/saudi-arabia>

investments, and therefore their use, is not always traceable. When it is, we mostly talk about investments in Western markets, in the emerging markets both of the Middle East and of non-Western countries. For the first time in their history, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have become investors in various sectors of their own economies and they invest and lend abroad, abandoning their traditional role of exporters. Investment are not only of productive nature (which remain the largest component), but they are also directed in stock market; the 2008 crisis and the recession have in fact significantly affected the Gulf Countries economies as well.

Speaking of data, if we take in account the entire area we are talking about a 912 billion US\$⁵⁶ surplus in the period 2003-2008. Of these, 544⁵⁷ were invested in a traceable way, mainly in the Bank for International Settlements deposits, in US financial claims (mainly Treasury bonds) and FDI⁵⁸. The percentage of surplus expenditure decreased in favor of savings and investments, even with a strategic use: investment in the U.S. military have revealed to be useful as a deterrent to the spread of anti-Islamic and anti-Arab phobia in the USA. On this point, in 2011 signed an agreement for the sale of F15 fighter jets to Saudi Arabia for a value of about 30 billion US\$⁵⁹.

A similar investment is explained by the determination of the United States in assuming the role of promoter of security in a highly strategic area, even and especially in an anti-Iranian perspective. Concern, this, that unites the U.S. and the Saudis, even with different views about the level of the threat and how it should be addressed. The supply of F15 is only a part of a larger plan of arms sales to the Saudis from Washington, along with combat and troop-transport helicopters, ships and antimissile systems. This sale is expected to reach a figure of about 60 billion US\$⁶⁰ as a whole, even if such provision being extended over time the costs could almost surely undergo adjustments. All this of course after Israel has sought and received assurances that it is still the primary beneficiary of the most modern technologies available in the USA. Saudi Arabian status of largest purchaser of US arms has in fact always be the subject of Israel puzzles, for Tel Aviv is another big beneficiary of this kind of investment and its relations with Riyadh have always been strained.

Cooperation between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia gets more and more important as Iran increases its nuclear potential and its arsenal; the absence of Iraq influence, Iranian traditional

⁵⁶ Pfeifer, "Petrodollars at Work and in Play in the Post-September 11 Decade", *MER260*, accessed September 15, 2012. <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer260/petrodollars-work-play-post-september-11-decade>

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ "U.S., Saudi Arabia agree to \$30 billion deal for F-15s", *CNN* (2011), accessed February 4, 2013. http://articles.cnn.com/2011-12-29/middleeast/world_meast_u-s--saudi-fighter-sale_1_saudi-arabia-aircraft-military-edge?_s=PM:MIDDLEEAST

⁶⁰ "U.S. announces \$60 billion arms sale for Saudi Arabia", *Reuters* (2010), accessed February 3, 2013. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/10/20/us-usa-saudi-arms-idUSTRE69J4ML20101020>

counterweight in the area, is making the situation particularly tense. Is for this reason that the U.S. needs all of its traditional allies, in a time in which they must seriously reconsider their position and role in the area. Is absolutely clear that the U.S. presence in the Gulf is not into question, because its allies absolutely need it.

Whether the point is to review the method of this presence and the forms of cooperation with regional actors, the United States must be ready to engage in a whole new set of activities ranging from the endowment of hybrid arms and covert warfare to the promotion of deterrence, in order to prevent its allies both to acquire nuclear weapons from Iran if Teheran actually will become a producer and to produce them on their own. The sale of conventional weapons, then, is made with the intention of persuading allies that Iran can be contained without necessarily acquire nuclear weapons. Iran is indeed becoming the threat to face, for it does not absolutely made a mystery to be in strategic competition with the U.S. and its allies, demonstrating to be able to attack strategic targets.

Taking in analysis the destination of FDI we can observe that 13%⁶¹ of them are intended example to Turkey and to other Arab countries, but this amount still continue to appear small when compared to other financial activities: in 2008, the acquisition of 16%⁶² of the Barclays Bank from part of Abu Dhabi and Qatar for 12 billion US\$⁶³ exceeds the total of all FDI for Egypt (9.5 billion dollars) in respect of the same year. In the period 2003-2008, 450 billion dollars⁶⁴ has been invested in US security, as opposed to 243 billion invested in the whole area of the South and East Mediterranean⁶⁵. If, however, the cash flows are not traceable we are probably in the presence of illicit funds - where for illicit we mean that not being traceable they can not be taxed or subject to tax audits, and not that they have been earned by non-lawful means. They are not necessarily used for illegal purposes, but they are misappropriated funds for investment.

The Arab Countries illicit funds represent “18% of the world total, with Saudi Arabia on the fourth, the UAE on the sixth, Kuwait on the seventh and Qatar on the ninth place in the ranking of countries with the most significant illicit funds”⁶⁶. FDI in the whole area (including the then North Africa) have gone from being practically null in the 90s to being the 5.7%⁶⁷ of global FDI and the

⁶¹ Pfeifer, “Petrodollars at Work and in Play in the Post-September 11 Decade”, *MER260*, accessed September 15, 2012. <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer260/petrodollars-work-play-post-september-11-decade>

⁶² “Qatar and Abu Dhabi to Barclays Rescue: Latest Developments in the World of Sovereign Wealth”, *Roubini Global economics* (2008), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.roubini.com/analysis/57797.php>

⁶³ Werdigier, “Barclays Seeks \$11.8 Billion From Abu Dhabi and Qatar”, *The New York Times* (2008), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/01/business/worldbusiness/01barclays.html>

⁶⁴ Pfeifer, “Petrodollars at Work and in Play in the Post-September 11 Decade”, *MER260*, accessed September 15, 2012. <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer260/petrodollars-work-play-post-september-11-decade>

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

15.5%⁶⁸ of FDI to developing countries in 2008. The distribution of these investments is heavily skewed in favor of the Gulf States, which, while representing 10%⁶⁹ of the total population, receive about 60% of the funds⁷⁰.

Many analysts now speak of the six countries of the Gulf as a single economy vibrant and expanding, for their foresight in accumulating liquidity in good times and then reinvest in sectors other than oil and gas in periods of downturn in the industry. The sector in which they invest more is the infrastructural, with the launch of ambitious plans for the construction of ports, highways and railways, the building of residential and industrial centers and the investment in residential construction, both luxury and more affordable.

However it is Saudi Arabia to rule the boost in terms of FDI in its favor from both the other Gulf States and from countries such as Jordan or Syria. After years when inflows and outflows were essentially in balance, in the last few years the former are much more relevant. FDI are concentrated primarily in activities related to hydrocarbons such as refining, mining and chemical industry, although the attention is now shifting from oil to the gas sector. Companies linked to the state, however, continue to grab the lion's share in the matter of FDI. Despite the companies involved in construction, pharmaceutical research and telecommunications are private, who continues to receive billions in funding are still the companies and the projects linked with Aramco, the Saudi Arabian Basic Industries Corporation and the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority.

Saudi Arabia is able to win the hearts of entrepreneurs also introducing itself as an open and of diversified business opportunities country, especially promising easy access to credit, increased consumption and demand for infrastructure, low fuel costs and incentives for energy-intensive companies, while also offering facilities for the families of entrepreneurs who would like to move such as good schools and cutting edge health care facilities. After a phase of stagnation private sector started to recover in 2009 thanks to new capital inflows, favored by high prices and growing profits in hydrocarbons and related sectors, and it is now able to guarantee loans and low risks for projects that are of interest for foreign investors.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

3. Oil.

On the other hand, the variable of oil can not be ignored. The unification of the country in the early years of the twentieth century alone is not enough to explain the beginning of oil exploration in the country; this should be considered together with at least three other elements, such as the First World War, the Great Depression and the more or less contemporary discovery of oil fields throughout the Middle Eastern area. The first and the last reason can have some points of contact, for European powers engaged in the First World War were in fact found to have an absolute need for fuel for their new ships, no longer fueled by coal. It was Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, to present a bill to the Parliament to buy more than the half of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company stock for just over 2 million pounds⁷¹. The availability of Saudi oil, along with the one coming from the plants of Standard Oil in New Jersey and those of Royal Dutch Shell, proved decisive in order to impose the superiority ally on the Central Powers.

The first contacts with the U.S. date to the late 1920s when Frank Holmes, a New Zealand businessman which earlier in the decade had succeeded to obtain by Ibn Saud the concession for oil exploration in the area⁷², turned to Gulf Oil in New York, one of the few US companies to deal with the development of oil industries abroad. By the way the engineers sent from Europe to carry out studies in the area did not yield positive results, in line with the widespread opinion that there was no oil in the Arabian Peninsula; this belief was so deep-rooted that the major European companies considered unprofitable to invest in the exploration of the region. Therefore he signed a concession with Bahrain, and looking for a company that take load of it he turned to the Gulf Oil. This company worked in partnership with the Iraq Petroleum Company, a subsidiary of Royal Dutch, Anglo-Persian Oil Company, *Companie Française des Pétroles* and a consortium of American companies who had the task of defending U.S. interests in the region. All these companies had signed an agreement according to which none of them could have acquired the license to Bahrain without the consent of the others. Then Gulf Oil passed the concession to Standard Oil of California, which was not part of the partnership and therefore could agree to start the exploration in Bahrain; the discovery of oil in 1932 gave impetus to explore the entire region. Concession for Saudi Arabia, of the duration of 60 years on more than 900,000 square miles of territory was signed in 1933⁷³.

⁷¹ "Oil Rulers", *Hermes Press* (2008), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.hermes-press.com/oilupdate.htm>

⁷² "The Arabian Concession- The World that Frank Holmes Made", *Penn State University*, accessed February 4, 2013. <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/egee120/node/241>

⁷³ Lunde, "A King and a Concession", *Saudi ARAMCO World* (1984), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/198403/a.king.and.a.concession.htm>

The discovery of large oil fields was the salvation of the king that after the Great Depression had seen fall rapidly the presence of pilgrims in the two holy cities with a consequent fall in revenues that they brought into the coffers of the state. It was then that the Middle East ceased to be seen as the decadent last vestige of the old Ottoman Empire to become the most strategic geopolitical area of the world. The main beneficiary of the discovery of Saudi oil obviously was the US. The oil commerce turnover between the countries is still huge: Saudi Arabia is the third world producer of oil, with 11,161⁷⁴ thousand barrels produced per day, while the US with 18,835⁷⁵ thousand barrels per day are the largest consumer.

Fears of a new conflict in the area are increasing and with it the need and demand for oil by Washington. Sanctions on Iran to desist from carrying out its program of uranium enrichment greatly hindered its ability to sell crude, the engine of its already crippled economy. Riyadh therefore undertook to increase production, so as to compensate the amount of oil on the market and avoiding prices to skyrocket. Crude prices have skyrocketed as a result of the exacerbation of the debate between Israel and Iran, when the hypothesis of an attack did not seem so unlikely, and as a result of the worsening of general social unrest in Arab countries.

The peculiar characteristic of Saudi Arabia in its nature as a producer of crude oil is that it had never maintained a constant level of production: the richness of its deposits has in fact always allowed the adjustment of production to the needs of the world. However Riyadh is already beginning to invest capital from the sale of oil (which depends more than 80%⁷⁶ of the national economy) in R & D programs on solar and nuclear energy technologies, starting also to increase the activities related to the extraction of natural gas, encouraging the conversion of petrol pumps in gas distributors to have more oil for export.

As has already been said, however, the Saudis find themselves now facing a period of deep uncertainty: the death of the old princes, the social dissatisfaction and revolt in the eastern provinces are not ideal elements when in fact the country would require policy continuity and stability, also as regards the definition of oil policies. US still need Saudi oil, although domestic production is highly increased in recent years; and this dependence on oil passing through the Strait of Hormuz is now strategically advisable, given the tensions between Israel and the Iran, at least until the new oil rigs

⁷⁴ "Saudi Arabia", *CIA-The World Factbook*, accessed February 4, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html>

⁷⁵ "BP Statistical Review of World Energy", *BP* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. http://www.bp.com/assets/bp_internet/globalbp/globalbp_uk_english/reports_and_publications/statistical_energy_review_2011/STAGING/local_assets/pdf/statistical_review_of_world_energy_full_report_2012.pdf

⁷⁶ "Saudi Arabia", *CIA-The World Factbook*, accessed February 4, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html>

in Canada will not be completed. In fact, if Iran decides to block the Strait US would be dramatically without resources.

Despite the friendship and partnership between the two countries are not into question US soft power is in sharp decline throughout the area, and Saudi Arabia is no exception. Although they remain a superpower US are now a “primus inter pares” that while continuing to be a key ally for the states with which it entertains friendly relations is not the responsible for the maintenance of world balance anymore. In the last years they went back to look at domestic politics and can no longer afford the titanic effort to be the controller of world order. This being the case, the various regional powers have begun to deal with the maintenance of order in their own backyards. Added to this, the Saudis have never hidden the fact they see themselves as the last bastion of Islam in the region. With Iraq out of the game, absolutely unstable Egypt and Iran increasingly internationally isolated, the Kingdom country is now in the best conditions to take on the role of dominant actor in the area.

It can do so thanks to its almost unlimited financial means by which to finance the newborn Arab regimes that witness the win of strong Islamic background parties in the first free elections. This implies that the investment of big sums of money could authorize the Saudis to ask these countries to align themselves to Riyadh policies on issues such as the relations with Egypt and Israel, civil and women and the treatment of Christian minorities.

The Saudis have two reasons for blaming the United States. The first refers to Bahrain, where the Shia minority-led revolution has the ideological support of Iran, which is likely to use the dissatisfaction of the small state against Riyadh and Washington standing as the defender of democratic ideals in the area. Saudi Arabia and UAE have readily sent troops to Bahrain under the cover of the Gulf Cooperation Council to restore order, troops that are still firmly on the ground.

In all this, the U.S. has kept carefully out of the question, to the exclusion of suggestions made to the Saudis about the possible way to follow to defuse tensions with Shia, such as in the form of some cautious political reforms. This action is a symptom of the widening of the gap between Riyadh and Washington, with the first mentioning the sacrifice of Hosni Mubarak on the altar of democracy perpetrated by the U.S. as an example of what could happen if the protests will break out in the Arabic world. The al-Saud are certainly more disenchanted than Westerners, as they are perfectly familiar with the area and its dynamics and they know that even if the Arab revolts have ended twenty years of non-democratic regimes that does not mean the establishment of new pro-American democratic governments.

Democracy is still seen by most Americans as his best export product, even if in the name of “democratic ideals” they had no hesitation, especially during Cold War, to sign alliances with

absolutely arguable subjects; paradoxically, the US has often pursued its democratic goals by absolutely undemocratic means. However America continues to be reluctant to abandon its role as the beacon of worldwide democracy, without realizing that it is not the only possible example of democracy any longer.

In contrast, the disruptive electoral success of parties linked to the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist parties is a symptom of how these minorities, held in check by the regime for years, are now able to express their demands thanks to the wide popular base supporting them. The Saudis are suspicious of the rise to power of these groups: they fear that the internal dissident groups may find in them the source of inspiration and support to overthrow the monarchy and its allies, and they accuse Washington of being too weak in this sense.

If the Shia will actually gain legitimacy it would be to the advantage of the local outsider, it is to say Iran, with absolutely destabilizing effects. In light of recent changes Washington should ride the wave of change and ensure that the new regional actors do not remain neutral - and therefore potential pawns in the hands of his opponents - nor hostile. Both the strategic and economic element will undoubtedly continue to bind the two countries; however Riyadh seems to be no longer willing to align with Washington's foreign policy with regard to regional affairs. Since the world is no longer a bipolar theater, where there is the need to necessarily line up with one or the other hegemon in order to carry on their own politics, multipolarity implies that even while maintaining the traditional relations of cooperation the single countries can feel free to make their own strategic choices once their ally has proven to be not able, not willing or considering not strategically favorable for its own purposes to show force.

Chap. 2.

Qatar

A small peninsula on the Arabian Peninsula, one of the many emirates that emerged in the twentieth century – it has rejected the annexation both to Saudi Arabia (the only country with which it shares borders) and the United Arab Emirates once it gained independence from Britain in 1971 - Qatar has the characteristics similar to those of a city-state rather than those of a state itself. It does not reach the two million inhabitants, of whom only 40%⁷⁷ of Arab ethnicity; the remaining 60%⁷⁸ are Indo-Filipinos immigrants supplying cheap unskilled labor, Pakistanis and Iranians, as well as a 15%⁷⁹ of Western journalists, engineers and technicians. Like most of the neighboring countries, it is an Islamic majority monarchy whose royal family holds all major government offices, controls the major companies in the country and the media, and it bases its economy on the export earnings of hydrocarbons (in this case liquid natural gas). On the other hand, if compared to other "giants" of the area such as Saudi Arabia the weight of its armed forces is almost irrelevant, the spatial extent is modest to say the least and its strategic importance from the geopolitical point of view is almost zero (it does not border on any other country with the exception of Saudi Arabia).

Its uniqueness, however, can be inferred from a few, very clear data: the second unemployment rate, the first real GDP growth rate and the second GDP per capita in the world; in 2010, GDP increased by 19%,⁸⁰ the industrial sector has increased by 27%⁸¹ and the investment in the education sector amounted 4%⁸² of GDP. The Qataris, of which 40%⁸³ are members of the royal family, are generally satisfied with the many privileges granted to them and bet everything on economic development; only a small part of the population believes that the priority of the monarchy should be the granting of greater civil liberties, in a country where non-Qataris are excluded from any program of government subsidies and they have no possibility of naturalization⁸⁴.

This is because the powerful al-Thani family, which controls the country since its birth, has understood better than others counterparts in the area that if it wants to lead the transition of the

⁷⁷ "Qatar", *CIA-The World Factbook*, accessed February 4, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/qa.html>

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Romeo, "Il Qatar e la diplomazia dell'equilibrio", *Geopolitica* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013.

<http://www.geopolitica-rivista.org/19854/il-qatar-e-la-diplomazia-dellequilibrio/>

⁸⁴ "Is it possible to become a national of Qatar?", *Just Landed*, accessed February 4, 2013.

<http://www.justlanded.com/english/Qatar/Qatar-Guide/Visas-Permits/Citizenship>

country into modernity without losing its own privileges it must become the same promoter of the democratic process- even if the meaning of democracy does not certainly coincides to the "traditional" one, based on popular consent obtained by universal suffrage, but rather to a status that must be taken to be fully welcomed into the international community.

1. Homeland situation.

1.1. Education

With regard to education, Doha represents excellence in the Middle East. The Supreme Education Council, established by decree of the Emir in November 2002⁸⁵ - of which his second wife Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al-Missnar is a member - is responsible for the definition, implementation and application of education policies in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, whose funds have been greatly reduced in favor of the Council. By providing a world-class free education from kindergarten to high school to all the citizens, with the awareness that an educational system that is in line with western standards is a powerful vehicle acceptance in the international community, the Emir proved to be far-sighted.

As regards primary education, the Council has established a hundred institutes throughout the country known as Independent Schools⁸⁶, which are afforded autonomy in the pursuit of educational objectives and methods (they are supposed to be accountable at the Council itself, of course); on the other hand they have to adhere rigorous standards for the teaching of Arabic, English, mathematics and science and they are subjected to periodic assessments on the use of state funds.

However, the council pays the most of its attention to secondary education, both for undergraduate and post-graduate students. As a matter of fact the Council establishes programs for college students that are considered to be particularly deserving, providing them generous financial subsidies. Take for example the Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani scholarship program: in the case of undergraduates students are guaranteed an annual bonus that goes from 30,000 to 50,000⁸⁷ QR (approximately from 8,000 to 14,000 U.S. \$) according to merit; for post-graduate the figure ranges from a minimum of 100,000 to a maximum of 200,000⁸⁸ QR (approximately from 27,000 to 55,000

⁸⁵ "World Data on education, VII Edition 2010/2011", *International Bureau of Education* (2011), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en.html>

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ "Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani' scholarship program", *Supreme Educational Council* (2013), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.sec.gov.qa/en/secinstitutes/highereducationinstitute/offices/pages/missionsandscholarships.aspx>

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

U.S.) a year always according on the profit, while in the case of Masters we talk about economic incentives that go from 150,000 up to 250,000 QR⁸⁹ (approximately from 41,000 to U.S. \$ 69,000) for the PhDs. In addition, Qatar boasts partnerships with the most prestigious universities not only in the other Arab countries, but also in Europe, in Australia and in the U.S., such as Georgetown University, Dartmouth College, Boston University, the School of Oriental and African Studies and St. Andrew's University.

1.2. Media and communication. The *Al-Jazeera* case.

If the vanguard of the education system in Qatar can only be praised, the same cannot be said of its media. Doha is now at the 150th position out of 197⁹⁰ countries for press freedom (Freedom House)⁹¹, for all means of communication, such as TV stations, newspapers, magazines and internet sites are more or less directly owned by the government; it is almost impossible to find foreign press in the country. Despite the censorship was formally removed by the current Emir in 1995⁹², the text of a press law is currently still in draft form: it looks very vague, providing prohibitions, restrictions and fines without on the other hand mentioning any form of press protection⁹³.

Over the past decade Al-Jazeera has established itself as a bastion of freedom of information in the Arab world; from the spread of video messages by Osama bin Laden to the media coverage of Egyptians riots, the Qatari TV station became part of the group of those who world public opinion defines the big international networks of information, like the American CNN. Founded in 1996⁹⁴ following the closure of the BBC's Arabic-language channel based in Saudi Arabia - and thanks to a 137 million dollars⁹⁵ investment by the Emir - it always has placed itself as a voice for those visions breaking with the traditional method of providing information in the Arab world, attracting the antipathy of many states of the region (first of all the neighboring Saudi Arabia) that do not look with favor on the editorial line of the issuer. The international fame the station has is mainly due to the positions decidedly at odds with the typical logics of the Arab world, positions that often clash

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ "Freedom of the Press 2012 Report", *Freedom House* (2012), <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Global%20and%20Regional%20Press%20Freedom%20Rankings.pdf>

⁹¹ "Qatar: bikini models, Piglet from Winnie the Pooh censored", *AnsaMed* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/generalnews/2012/11/21/Qatar-bikini-models-Piglet-Winnie-Pooh-censored_7834475.html

⁹² "Qatari draft media law criticized by rights group", *Reuters* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/30/us-media-qatar-idUSBRE89T17620121030>

⁹³ "History of Al Jazeera Television", *Allied Media*, accessed February 4, 2013. http://www.allied-media.com/aljazeera/jazeera_history.html

⁹⁴ Miles, *Al-Jazeera: The Inside Story Of The Arab News Channel That Is Challenging the West* (Groove Press, 2006), 136

with each other making it difficult to figure out which line Al-Jazeera exactly follows: it has been the first one to broadcast an interview to an Israeli personality in Hebrew in the Arab world ⁹⁶ breaking with the opposition to the state of Israel that characterizes the Arab world, and in the meantime it gave massive sensation and media coverage both in the riots of Tahrir Square and to the activity of the rebels in Libya following the participation of Qatar in the offensive against Gaddafi at the side of the Western powers.

The debate concerning the true nature of Al-Jazeera is source of an interesting discussion among scholars and commentators. According to the studies of Mahmoud Al-Sadi in his doctoral dissertation “*Al Jazeera Television: Intifada on the Air*” (University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee, May 2011) there are three main currents⁹⁷. The first and the second one are based on the anti-establishment rhetoric of the issuer, but while the first group of commentators considers it as a strong catalyst of radicalism, a very common issue among the majority of the Arab population, the second sees it as the embodiment of typical Western qualities - such as democracy and freedom of expression - in a context in which the media are heavily controlled by the state.

The vision of the third current is undoubtedly the most interesting, the only one that takes into account the particular historical and political context in which the network was born. The promoters of this view maintain that Al-Jazeera is not, contrary to the claims of the supporters of the other two, an anomaly in the landscape of state-sponsored Arab mass media; on the contrary they believe it is absolutely in line with them in relation to the objective of serving and defending the interests and policies of the host country, in this case of Qatar.

This last one is presumably the more faithful to reality current, or at least the less rebuttable. In fact both the theory of radicalization and moderation does not take into account a number of factors, first of all the natural bias of the commentators of the channel that emerges from their analysis; whether you see this prejudice as an indicator of radicalism or as a symptom of opening inspired to Western values, it speaks more of the single commentator than of the channel in general.

Another variable that is neglected is the ambiguity typically adopted by the speakers in the Arab world when talking of politics, both in the case in which they are favorable to the establishment - and in this case the ambiguity is a mean to make an unpopular policy more acceptable to the public - and in the case where the reporter at issue maintains a vague tone in order to avoid contrasts, both of legal and personal order, with a regimen that is not soft at all towards dissidents. Proponents of these arguments make a macroscopic mistake from the moment they

⁹⁶ Moffat, “War on ‘The Island’ .How Al Jazeera is improving the democratic landscape of the Middle East”, *Livejournal* (2011), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://joeskillet.livejournal.com/40592.html>

⁹⁷ Al-Sadi, “Al Jazeera television: Rhetoric of Deflection”, *Arab Media and Society* (2012). http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20120408193318_Al-Sadi_Mahmoud.pdf

neglect the perhaps most important thing to take into account when it comes to Al Jazeera, it is to say its relationship with Qatar⁹⁸. Once made aware of the connection between the two elements, the network appears as a clear example of the typical pragmatism of Qatar, a small country in need to have as many allies as possible. They also neglect all that set of rules that guides the approach to the Arab media, whose popularity is all the greater as the expectations of his audience are.

This does not mean that the school of thought arguing that Al Jazeera is nothing more than a sounding board to justify the not always consistent foreign policy of Qatar is unassailable: the same commentators, first of all the channel star Faisal al-Qasim do not hesitate to express vehement anti-Americanism and anti-Israeli feelings⁹⁹, despite the US Fifth Fleet is stationed off the coast of Doha and Qatar is the only one in Arab world to host an Israeli commercial office.

2. Foreign Policy.

There is an adjective that clearly describes the nature of Qatari foreign policy: pragmatic. Whether you embrace the theory that the moves of Doha are simply guided by mere geopolitical calculation whether you agree with those who say that the foreign policy of Qatar is instead guided by its Sunni nature - and that it therefore has the becoming the ideological guidance of the entire Muslim world as its last aim - there is no denying that the path the government is following is based on extremely delicate balances. The wealth accumulated through the sale of natural gas and wisely reinvested in the last ten years¹⁰⁰ is not enough fact to explain the influence that the small country is gaining on the international space. Its alliances with countries that are traditionally hostile as a result of wise strategic calculations¹⁰¹, its acts as the “peace-broker throughout the Islamic world”¹⁰² and especially the soft power Al Jazeera¹⁰³ are variables that must not be overlooked while reflecting on the nature of the international role of this country.

⁹⁸ “Al Jazeera and the Qatari Government’s Editorial Influence”, *On the Media* (2011), accessed February 4, 2013.

<http://www.onthedia.org/2013/jan/11/al-jazeera-and-qatari-governments-editorial-influence/>

⁹⁹ Al-Sadi, “Al Jazeera television: Rhetoric of Deflection”, *Arab Media and Society* (2012).

http://www.arabmediasociety.com/articles/downloads/20120408193318_Al-Sadi_Mahmoud.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Masnata, “Qatar: una spettacolare crescita economica”, *Eccellere* (2008), accessed February 4, 2013.

<http://www.eccellere.com/rubriche/MercatiInternazionali/qatar.asp>

¹⁰¹ “L'ombra del Qatar sul conflitto libico”, *Centro Studi Internazionali* (2011), accessed February 4, 2013.

<http://www.cesi-italia.org/medio-orientelombra-del-qatar-sul-conflitto-libico>

¹⁰² Cafiero, “Is Qatar's Foreign Policy Sustainable?”, *Foreign Policy in Focus* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013.

http://www.fpi.org/articles/is_qatars_foreign_policy_sustainable

¹⁰³ Momigliano, “Al Jazeera —Soft power, TV e rivoluzioni”, *Hugh Miles*, accessed February 4, 2013.

http://hughmiles.com/uploads/press/11c48_Jazeera%20article%20Studio%20Italia.pdf?iframe=true&width=100%&height=100%

With the vital need of maintaining balance in the Persian Gulf region - is through the Strait of Hormuz that Qatari gas arrives in Japan, South Korea, India and China¹⁰⁴- but with the knowledge of being the penultimate¹⁰⁵ military power in the Middle East, Doha cannot help but to cooperate and seek the support of other countries when it comes to maintain the security, even if it means coming to terms with unfriendly heads of state. Do not take a clear position on crucial issues affecting the area is vital to Doha in order to continue to support the delicate play of alliances undertaken.

Acting according to the dictates of “a multi-directional balancing act”¹⁰⁶, the emirate combines the friendship with the US (essential to balance the influence of Saudi Arabia and Iran in the area) both with the bond arising from the common interest¹⁰⁷ in gas extraction with Iran and the support for Hamas. The mounting tensions between Sunnis and Shiites and between the Arab world and Teheran led to the rapprochement to the old Sunni allies in the GCC, even if in the meantime Doha invited the same Iran to participate the Conference in 2007¹⁰⁸, causing the astonishment and the disappointment of the other participants.

Qatar supported the new order in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria and Yemen¹⁰⁹, to which Al-Jazeera gave great publicity by promoting the international debate on the issue and also providing a justification for modernizing impulse given by the Emir at the domestic level, but at the same time it backed up, in a manner to say the least obscure and in cooperation with Saudi Arabia and the UAE¹¹⁰, the suppression of the opposition in Bahrain, to which on the contrary has been given almost no media coverage. It actively participates to the Arab League¹¹¹, powerful tool through which exert influence on issues of interest to the country; Qatar currently chairs the League Ministerial Committee¹¹².

¹⁰⁴ “World Oil Transit Chokepoints”, *US Energy Information Administration* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013.

<http://www.eia.gov/countries/regions-topics.cfm?fips=wotc&trk=p3>

¹⁰⁵ Blanchard, “Qatar: Background and U.S. Relations”, *Congressional Research Center* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL31718.pdf>

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Dargin, “Qatar’s Natural Gas: The Foreign Policy Driver”, *Academia* (2007), accessed February 3, 2013.

http://www.academia.edu/236463/Qatars_Natural_Gas_The_Foreign_Policy_Driver

¹⁰⁸ Vatanka, “The Odd Couple. Iran and Qatar: Two regional misfits”, *The Majalla* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.majalla.com/eng/2012/03/article55230108>

¹⁰⁹ Cafiero, “Is Qatar's Foreign Policy Sustainable?”, *Foreign Policy in Focus* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013.

http://www.fpif.org/articles/is_qatars_foreign_policy_sustainable

¹¹⁰ Friedman, “Battle for Bahrain: What One Uprising Meant for the Gulf States and Iran”, *World Affairs* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/battle-bahrain-what-one-uprising-meant-gulf-states-and-iran>

¹¹¹ “League of Arab States”, accessed February 4, 2013.

http://www.lasportal.org/wps/portal/las_en/home_page!/ut/p/c5/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3gXy8CgMJMgYwOLYFdLA08jF09_X28jIwN_E6B8JG55C3MCuoNT8_TDQXbiNwMkb4ADOBro-3nk56bqF-RGVHjqOioCAKQoUKM!/dl3/d3/L2dBISeVz0FBIS9nQSEh/

¹¹² “Behind Qatar’s anti-Syrian Policy”, *Iranian Diplomacy* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013.

<http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/en/page/1897259/Behind+Qatar%E2%80%99s+anti-Syrian+Policy.html>

It could be useful to present some specific cases. An example of this policy may be given by the observation of the relations maintained with Iran: in 2010¹¹³ the two countries signed an agreement under which the parties undertake to cooperate in the fight against terrorism and to promote joint projects on security, and in 2006 Qatar was the only country in the Security Council¹¹⁴ to vote against the UNSC Resolution 1696 condemning the nuclear activities of Iran. These examples of cooperation are clearly due to wise strategic calculations. Iran and Qatar share in fact the rich North Field / South Pars natural gas deposit, and it is in the interest of both to maintain the political balance of the entire area of the Gulf. In addition, Shia minority in Qatar is too small to arouse concern in respect of any uprisings inspired by Tehran, a possibility that on the contrary is a source of strong worries for the majority of the Gulf States.

Looking at Israel, relations once existing¹¹⁵ between the two countries did not prevent Qatar to entertain relations with both Hamas and Lebanese formations, including Hezbollah. It was this unique ability to entertain good relations with countries traditionally hostile to each other and the wealth of resources that ensured Qatar the possibility to present itself as the legitimate and impartial guarantor of security in the area, ready to become actively involved as a mediator and organizing the peace negotiations. Following the concern of Palestinian factions about Hamas winning in 2006 elections, Doha proposed itself as the mediator¹¹⁶ in the discussion with Fatah. The greatest achievement of the Emir was the promotion of the negotiations “between Hezbollah and other Lebanese factions shortly after sectarian violence exploded throughout Lebanon”¹¹⁷ in 2008.

By attempting to solve the crisis affecting Gulf countries Doha aims to succeed where the Americans have failed emerging and consolidating its role as a power stabilizer. The government sees the support and the promotion of these negotiations in a logic of long-term investment for the national interest. On the other hand this same non-linear foreign policy makes a partner not always reliable out of Doha, especially when it is the time to act on the international level. It is not clear whether its acts are driven by ideological or opportunistic calculations; the approach adopted in Libya is a good example. Once the NATO campaign against Gaddafi started, Qatar was “the first

¹¹³ Fulton and Farrar-Wellmann, “Qatar-Iran Foreign Relations”, *Iran Tracker* (2011), accessed February 4, 2013. http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/qatar-iran-foreign-relations#_edn24

¹¹⁴ Davenport, “UN Security Council Resolutions on Iran”, *Arms Control Association* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Security-Council-Resolutions-on-Iran>

¹¹⁵ “A shameful rejection”, *Haaretz* (2010), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/a-shameful-rejection-1.291142>

¹¹⁶ Abu Toameh, “Hamas, Fatah agree on unity gov't; Abbas to be PM”, *The Jerusalem Post* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=256671>

¹¹⁷ Cafiero, “Is Qatar's Foreign Policy Sustainable?”, *Foreign Policy in Focus* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. http://www.fpif.org/articles/is_qatars_foreign_policy_sustainable

Arab country to grant political recognition to the Libyan rebels”¹¹⁸. On the other hand is not a mystery that a large contingent of Libyan exiles had stayed in Doha for months at the expense of the Emir, who has also taken steps to give generous support in terms of humanitarian aid but also weapons and special forces in charge of training the rebels on a regular basis and for the value of tens of millions of dollars, although Qatar had pledged to the side of NATO in maintaining the no-fly zone over Libya¹¹⁹.

2.1. The Limits of Qatari Foreign Policy.

The sustainability of this policy has undoubtedly limits. The constant meddling in conflicts that do not concern directly to Qatar has alienated to it the sympathies of the states that have been interfered with, and that very often have proved to be critical about the channels through which the support of Doha comes to them - unofficial ones, and that undermines the legitimacy of those same groups the Emir would rather help. In addition, the growing tensions in the area are likely to come to a point where even Qatar will be forced to take a clear position, and its heterogeneous friendships would undoubtedly represent a problem: if, for example, the hostility between Tehran and Washington were to result in military confrontation, Qatar would find itself in the difficult position of being at the same time host of the main naval base in the US and entertainer of friendly relations with Iran due to their sharing of South Pars/North Dome.

However, the greatest obstacle to the credibility of Qatari foreign policy comes from the homeland. How can in fact a non-elective emirate, kept under continuous observation by organizations such as Amnesty International¹²⁰ and Freedom House¹²¹, where all the power is firmly centralized in the hands of the family of the monarch and there are no political parties nor so free elections, welfare is directed only to the holders of citizenship¹²² (about 40%¹²³ of the population) and the possibility of naturalization is not required by law, stand as the champion of democracy spreading in the Arab world?

¹¹⁸ Krauss, “For Qatar, Libyan Intervention May Be a Turning Point”, *The New York Times* (2011), accessed february 4, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/04/world/middleeast/04qatar.html>

¹¹⁹ “Qatar, un pigmeo dal pugno da gigante”, *Global Project* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.globalproject.info/it/mondi/qatar-un-pigmeo-dal-pugno-da-gigante/11378>

¹²⁰ “Qatar Annual Report 2012”, *Amnesty international* (2012), accessed February 4, 2012. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/qatar/report-2012>

¹²¹ “Qatar”, *Freedom House* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2012/qatar>

¹²² “Qatar”, *Global Security*, accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/gulf/qatar-intro.htm>

¹²³ “Qatar”, *CIA-The World Factbook*, accessed February 4, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/qa.html>

The standard governance model of the Arab state is easily identifiable: the monarch belongs to a family that was considered as a prestigious one even before the attainment of independence, whose numerous members occupy all the major public offices – to the appointed of the sovereign - and sit on the board of directors of the biggest state companies. In this sense, Qatar is no exception. The Constitution, approved by referendum in 2003 “by an overwhelming majority of citizens”¹²⁴, provides for the establishment of a legislative body of forty-five¹²⁵ members, of whom thirty¹²⁶ will be elected by universal suffrage and fifteen¹²⁷ will be appointed by the Emir; it currently exists an advisory board, with a simple advisory power.

The Constitution provides three main tasks for this term, such as the approval of the national budget, the draft, debate and vote on the national balance - which are approved only after obtaining the two-thirds majority of the Assembly and the approval by the Emir - and the monitoring of the work of the ministers; the process of approval of legislation and the introduction of institutional changes in line with the constitution are still in progress.

The Emir's prerogatives as head of state are numerous and centralize in his hands a large number of powers. In addition to the appointment of all the ministers, he appointed the current Advisory Council and he has the power to call referendums, which result is binding. As the Minister of Defense, he is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, he can declare war only for defensive purposes, he has the function of checking the work of the police and in exceptional cases established by law he has the power to impose martial law. He has the right to establish new ministries and advisory bodies, to develop government policies in consultation with the Council of Ministers and to ratify and promulgate laws, despite not having any direct legislative power; the new Constitution transfers these powers to the Advisory Council, which will become the advisory body. If the Advisory Council is not in session the Emir may issue decrees with legal value, which must be ratified by the board that has the power to revoke or to subject them to review in the case of reaching the two-thirds majority in please.

¹²⁴ “The Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar”, *Qatar Legal Portal*, accessed February 4, 2013.
<http://www.almeezan.qa/LawPage.aspx?id=2284&language=en>

¹²⁵ “The Constitution”, *Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, accessed February 4, 2013.
<http://english.mofa.gov.qa/details.cfm?id=80>

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

3. National Vision 2030.

Even if the road leading to a true commitment to democratic ideals that should characterize a country in the twentieth century is still long, Qatar has already covered the one that leads to full economic development, and with surprising results. The authorities are in fact fully aware that oil reserves at their disposal are not unlimited; nevertheless it is the reliability that is given by the possession of such a resource that makes the market reliable in the eyes of foreign investors and allow the state to fund ambitious projects.

The most significant representation of this type of investments is National Vision 2030¹²⁸, a program of long-term development articulated in the fields of human, economic, environmental and social development that “aims at transforming Qatar into an advanced country by 2030, capable of sustaining its own development and providing for a high standard of living for all of its people for generations to come”¹²⁹. According to the authors of the plan the forces the country nowadays has to balance are modernization and at the same time the maintenance of the traditions, the current needs of the population but at the same time those of future generations, growth control in order to avoid an uncontrolled expansion of the activities, the entity and the preparation of the expatriate workforce and the choice of areas in which to invest, and, finally, economic growth, social development and environmental management.

The importance given to the development of human capital comes, again, by the awareness that physical capital given by oil will not last forever, and that the future prosperity of Qatar will depend massively on the ability of its citizens to succeed in the new world order based on global competitiveness and possession of knowledge. Qatar Foundation and its ambitious educational programs, public health programs and the importance given to the preparation of the workforce are the starting point for the development of the country in that direction.

The primary purpose of Qatar Foundation is “to prepare the people of Qatar and the region to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world, and to make Qatar a leader in innovative education and research”¹³⁰ by promoting “a network of centers and partnerships with elite institutions, all committed to the principle that a nation's greatest natural resource is its people”. The aim of the ambitious educational projects is to enable young Qataris to manoeuvre in the future world order through programs of first-class training that will enable them to develop their full potential. To achieve this, the authorities have realized the importance of the encouragement of the

¹²⁸ Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, “Qatar National Vision 2030”, accessed February 6, 2013. http://www.gsdp.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/gsdp_en/qatar_national_vision

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Qatar Foundation, “Mission”, *Qatar Foundation*, accessed February 6, 2013. <http://www.qf.com.qa/discover-qf/qatar-foundation-mission>

development of critical thinking and innovation, demonstrating to be aware of how the ability to adapt to the challenges expecting the new generations is of paramount importance. The promotion of research centers, especially in science but also in the intellectual field, is in this sense fundamental, not to mention the ambitious projects that have been taken up to make out of Qatar a center of international reference for sports facilities.

Following the push of the Emir, a fond sports fan and sportsman himself, the government is investing significant resources to achieve this goal. Doha was the site of the 2006 Asian Games¹³¹, of Asian Football Cup in 2011¹³², and after submitting his candidature to host the Olympics in 2020¹³³ is preparing to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022¹³⁴. We can take as an example of this policy Aspire Academy¹³⁵, a center of excellence both in terms of athletic training and about the study and research of the sciences related to it, such as biochemistry, physiology and sports medicine. It admits boys from 12 to 18¹³⁶ years engaged in disciplines such as football, athletics and water sports and followed by a technical staff of excellence in the international arena. The boys are constantly supported to successfully complete their education, and they are given the opportunity to access programs of excellence at the undergraduate level.

With regard to public health¹³⁷ the country aims “to develop an integrated system for health care, managed according to world-class standards”¹³⁸ and “accessible to the entire population”¹³⁹. The objective is to improve the quality of life and to prolong its expectation, by providing medical coverage both for prevention and for regarding the care through public and private institutions continuously monitored by the state, which ensures constant efficiency and adherence to the highest standards. For this purpose, it is essential to have high-level experts at the national level, confirming once again that higher education in order to train highly skilled workers is a key pillar of QNV.

With regard to the last aspect, in the near future Qatar will find himself forced to rely on non-local workers selected from among the holders of excellent knowledge and skills to whom will

¹³¹ “Asian Games”, accessed February 6, 2013. <http://ocasia.org/Game/GamesL1.aspx?9QoyD9QEWPeJ2ChZBk5tvA>

¹³² “Qatar confirmed as cup host”, *Fox Sports* (2007), accessed February 6, 2013. <http://www.foxsports.com.au/football/asian-cup/qatar-confirmed-as-cup-host/story-e6frf4fu-1111114064344#.UQFgTCfX5wA>

¹³³ “Doha launches bid for 2020 Olympics”, *Doha Stadium Plus* (2011), accessed February 6, 2013. <http://www.dohastadiumplusqatar.com/doha-launches-bid-2020-olympics/>

¹³⁴ “2022 FIFA World Cup awarded to Qatar”, *Fifa World Cup* (2010), accessed February 6, 2013. <http://www.fifa.com/newscentre/news/newsid=1344500/index.html>

¹³⁵ “Aspire Academy”, accessed February 6, 2013. <http://www.aspire.qa/Aboutus/VisionMissionValues/Pages/VisionMissionValues.aspx>

¹³⁶ “About Us”, *Aspire Academy*, accessed February 6, 2013. <http://www.aspire.qa/Aboutus/WhatWeDo/Pages/WhatWeDo.aspx>

¹³⁷ “Supreme Council of Health”, accessed February 6, 2013. <http://www.sch.gov.qa/sch/En/index.jsp?>

¹³⁸ Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, “Qatar National Vision 2030”, accessed February 6, 2013. http://www.gsdp.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/gsdp_en/qatar_national_vision

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

have therefore to be ensured a variety of incentives, not least of which large assurances by the institutions as regards their safety and their rights. The country is in fact currently facing “shortages of local labor”¹⁴⁰, that is not sufficient to the accomplishment of the ambitious projects of the development plans. To overcome this situation the state has provided significant investment “in certification and training programs by public and private institutions”¹⁴¹ and provides incentives to citizens who decide to pursue a professional career (also in management roles) in private business, education and health, providing them the opportunity to participate in a wide range of training courses “corresponding to their ambitions and abilities”¹⁴²

We must not forget a key variable, which is the central importance given to Arab traditions by the citizens. When the creators of the QNV speak of welfare state, equality and assistance programs they do it by reiterating the central importance of the respect of high Islamic values such as “justice, benevolence, freedom, equality, and high morals”¹⁴³. The core around which the welfare initiatives develop is in fact the family, the place where to learn to respect the traditions and the foundation upon which rests the whole of society. National cohesion is a prerequisite to entry in its own right on the international scene, starting with the participation of Qatar to the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of Islamic Conference. Cooperation with the countries of the area is privileged, without forgetting to participate as a munificent sponsor in initiatives dealing with worldwide development and humanitarian assistance.

The realization of all these programs requires, of course, the investment of figures significant to say the least. The lack of liquidity is not a problem for a country that has the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world, the Qatar Investment Authority¹⁴⁴, which is estimated to have some 60 billion US\$¹⁴⁵ in capital gain. The assumed starting point is to maintain sustainable growth rates, in order to give future generations the same opportunities of access to resources that is given to the present one. In this context it is very important to focus on a judicious exploitation of oil and gas reserves, by clearly stating what should be exported and how much should instead be stored for strategic purposes in order to ensure the security and prosperity of Qatar and encouraging the development of activities linked to the extraction of gas (an energy source that is considered "cleaner" than oil).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ “Qatari Constitution, article 19”, *Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, accessed February 6, 2013. <http://english.mofa.gov.qa/details.cfm?id=80>

¹⁴⁴ “Qatar Investment Authority”, accessed February 6, 2013. <http://www.qia.qa/>

¹⁴⁵ “Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait”, *Hansa Fincon* (2011), accessed February 6, 2013. http://www.hansafincon.com/marketing_persiangular.html

Investments are directed both to the domestic market and to the foreign ones. In the first case the aim is the expansion of industries related to the extraction of hydrocarbons, developing the potential in fields such as Qatar represents excellence (including the training of the work force) and paving the way for the consolidation of the already mentioned "knowledge-based economy". This corresponds, in other words, to develop projects established by QNV regarding entrepreneurship, education and high-level public health, infrastructure and transport network and transparency of institutions. In terms of foreign investment, the Authority invests its funds in equities and other assets and of course through direct investments; the competitive nature, stability and adherence to international standards have made a highly attractive market for foreign investment out of Qatar, even thanks to the given incentives by the government to private enterprise.

4. Qatar and the US.

4.1. The military cooperation.

The opportunity to climb to international fame and to rethink its role in the region and its policy came to Doha with the Second Gulf War. The invasion of Kuwait, similar to Qatar for being a small oil-rich state surrounded by other ones far richer and more powerful, became a warning to the Emirate to strengthen its network of alliances, especially in a defensive key. Doha redeemed in the eyes of Washington allowing coalition forces to use the bases on its territory during Operation Desert Storm¹⁴⁶, agreeing also to destroy American missiles in its possession and moving so the first steps towards a military alliance that is crucial to the very survival of the country.

We have already said that because of the restricted territorial entity and the small population Qatar has the absolute need to rely on external aid for defense. Although the purchase of American-made defense systems¹⁴⁷ should be considered absolutely in line with the trend taken by other states in the region in relation to the importance that the possession of such systems has acquired in recent years due to the changing geopolitical conditions, it is necessary to emphasize that Doha has heavily invested¹⁴⁸ in modernizing its military structures during these last years.

Despite Qatar did not have its own air force, during the 1990s over 1 billion US\$¹⁴⁹ has been invested for the construction of Al Udeid Air Base, which is considered at the forefront of its kind.

¹⁴⁶ Blanchard, "Qatar: Background and U.S. Relations", *Congressional Research Center* (2012), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL31718.pdf>

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

The contract for the construction of “storage, housing, service, command, and communication facilities”¹⁵⁰ of over 100 million US\$¹⁵¹ was won by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers¹⁵², works in which over the years has also affected the Qatar giving a strong push to deepening and consolidation of cooperation in the military field. Al Udeid base has been of fundamental importance for the United States in the last few years as a logistics and command reference for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and this suggests that investments in its expansion not only from Washington but also from its allies will increase steadily over the years.

In order to better understand the strategic importance of the base in the eyes of Washington it may be useful to provide some figures for US investments in its favor. From FY (Fiscal Year) 2003 to FY2007 the Congress authorized the appropriation of 126 million US\$¹⁵³ for projects related to the construction and the improvement of military facilities; investments for 81.7 million US\$, 69.6 million US\$ and 117 million US\$¹⁵⁴ were authorized for FY2008, FY2009 and FY2010, while in 2011 and in 2012 the authorization to allocate respectively 64.3 million and 37 million US\$¹⁵⁵ “to continue the dormitory and recreation facility project”¹⁵⁶ at Al Udeid has been requested. It results clear that Qatar is assuming increasing strategic importance in the eyes of Washington.

In addition, growing instability makes Bahrain an unstable country in whose waters keep the base of the Fifth Fleet, making its future shift¹⁵⁷ in the territorial waters of Doha a possibility not so remote. As a matter of fact Qatar seems to be the only viable option, albeit temporarily, not only for the political importance of the gesture but also to the objective material difficulties that this would cause - in this case, the dredging of the costs to build the port facilities necessary to adequately accommodate the fleet . If this were to happen, the military importance of the alliance between Doha and Washington would be even greater.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² “Construction of the Logistics Storage Warehouse Hi-Voltage Line Connection at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar”, *Federal Business Opportunities* (2012), accessed February 6, 2012.

https://www.fbo.gov/?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=2ea8e612a64dded749642f2cf4f498d8&tab=core&_cview=0

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Tomlinson, “US fleet may quit troubled Bahrain”, *The Australian* (2011), accessed February 6, 2013.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/us-fleet-may-quit-troubled-bahrain/story-e6frg6so-1226098580227>

4.2. The political links.

The strength of cooperation on the military side given for granted, the same cannot be said on the political one; on the other hand, the alliance between the U.S. and Qatar is in fact so connected to the common security needs that they cannot allow either party to undermine their relationship. It is no secret that there are still strong suspicion¹⁵⁸ on Qatari prominent personalities, including members of the royal family itself, to have supported or encouraged the activities of a number of terrorist groups that eventually led to the events of 9/11, and the political and financial relationships¹⁵⁹ with groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah are not a secret as well. The opinion of Washington about the issue has been perfectly made clear in 2009 by Senator John Kerry when saying "[Qatar] can't continue to be an American ally on Monday that sends money to Hamas on Tuesday"¹⁶⁰.

However, the heterogeneous alliances of Qatar made out of the emirate a reference to the area as it is not only the only one who can afford to present itself in the difficult task of mediating disputes between states but also, more specifically, the only one that can provide its territory when there is the possibility of a confrontation between the Western Allies and so-called "problematic" Islamic groups. So it is essential for the US to consolidate all those kind of relationships that are not only the purely military ones with Doha too, in order to maintain its traditional influence in the Middle East. However, the achievement of this goal goes through the availability of the Emir and his government to take some important steps to ensure that the country could be considered as a credible interlocutor for the international community and a trusted ally for the US. It is essential to Washington to encourage these steps and to support them when necessary.

First, a country that stands as a promoter of democracy in neighboring countries can not help having its representatives appointed following free elections. If the parliamentary elections promised by the Emir for 2013¹⁶¹ will actually take place Al-Jazeera, which is traditionally disinterested in the internal affairs the same way it is interested in what happens outside the borders of the country, will not be able to get out of giving them coverage. This would be a great help to the country, for it would certainly stimulate the debate and confrontation between the political forces

¹⁵⁸ Shimatsu, "Mideast Revolutions and 9-11 Intrigues Created in Qatar", *New America media* (2011), accessed february 6, 2013.

¹⁵⁹ Frankel, "Keeping Hamas and Hezbollah Out of a War with Iran", *The Washington Quarterly* (2012), accessed February 6, 2013. <http://csis.org/files/publication/twq12FallFrankel.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ Senator John Kerry, "Restoring Leadership in the Middle East: A Regional Approach to Peace", *The Brookings Institution* (2009), accessed February 6, 2013.

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/events/2009/3/04%20leadership/20090304_kerry.pdf

¹⁶¹ Toumi, "Qatar to hold parliamentary elections in 2013", *Gulf News* (2011), accessed February 6, 2013. <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/qatar-to-hold-parliamentary-elections-in-2013-1.921954>

inside the Emirate on domestic politics and reinforce the image of Qatar as a solid and reliable help in the management of regional issues

It is also necessary to work on foreign policy, in particular on the approach multilateral to say the least Doha has so far adopted when proposing to settle disputes among its neighbors. On the one hand the ability of Qatar to go beyond the traditional hostility between the two main Islamic currents¹⁶², thanks to the skills of its representatives but also thanks to its undoubted economic availability (which is absolutely not minor when there is the need for weapons and support, even if this help comes from someone belonging to the opposite ideological front), make it a valuable ally for the US in achieving their goal for the post-Arab Spring, it is to say to maintain and strengthen old ties and creating new ones with those who will be the new power groups. In this sense, the question of the legitimacy of Qatar as a mediator in the eyes of these new partners is of paramount importance.

On the other hand Doha has to review the manner in which it maintains ties with entities as diverse and hostile to each other. In this sense, it is essential to the Government to prove to be more willing to teamwork with other members of the international organizations to which it belongs, such as the Arab League and the GCC, and to avoid individualism and aggressive policies dictated by pure self-interest that do not take into account the delicate balance on which the game of international powers is based, in order not to annoy those allies who prefer to follow stricter lines dictated by old ideological enmities but that are certainly more consistent and linear. "Solo" policies are in fact much less effective than those conducted within multilateral bodies, and are certainly less credible in the eyes of the international community.

The recognition of Israel as a trading partner would be appreciated by the Western Allies in general and by the US in particular, considered as maintaining good relations with Tel Aviv is nothing short of crucial Washington. The reopening of an Israeli commercial office in Doha, which closed in 2009¹⁶³ following the Israeli offensive against Gaza, would be a good first step on the road that could lead to establishment of more official diplomatic relations. However, the proposal of Doha to reopen the existing office on the condition that Israel give the permission to send huge quantities of building materials¹⁶⁴ to Gaza has been rejected, for "allowing such massive amounts of

¹⁶² Al Qassemi, "Qatar's Brotherhood Ties Alienate Fellow Gulf States", *Al Monitor* (2013), accessed February 6, 2013. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/01/qatar-muslim-brotherhood.html>

¹⁶³ Fromherz, "The Future of Qatar: Dealing With Israel", *The I.B. Tauris Blog* (2012), accessed February 6, 2013. <http://theibtaurisblog.com/2012/01/31/the-future-of-qatar-dealing-with-israel/>

¹⁶⁴ Ravid, "Israel rejects Qatar bid to restore diplomatic ties", *Haaretz* (2010), accessed February 6, 2013. <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israel-rejects-qatar-bid-to-restore-diplomatic-ties-1.290866>

construction material into the Strip, of the sort that Hamas uses to build bunkers and reinforced positions for missile launches against Israel, runs counter to Israel's security interest”¹⁶⁵.

The crucial question for the U.S. is to understand what a powerful Qatar would mean for its interests. For its timid opening to Israel, having granted the vote to women at least in the municipal elections and investing in education and public health Doha proved to be a pleasant exception in the Middle East, and its possible pre-eminence in region, thanks to the support of the U.S., could prove to be positive thanks to its moderator capacity.

On the other hand the Emirate proved to not to be prone to consistency about forging and honoring alliances, and there are no official assurances that exclude with absolute certainty that in the future Doha would decide that military-based ties with the US are more important than gas-based ones with Iran, whereas the foreign capitals-attracting well-being and stability of the market is actually based on the availability of LNG. The inescapable relationship with Teheran has contributed not a little to make Washington's steps towards a more solid and concrete alliance with Doha very cautious, while admitting that the recent stance in support of the opposition to Assad has meant a shift in foreign policy that tends to be more akin to American one.

At the moment Qatar is the only regional actor possessing the skills to shape the new balance of the area, even by acting beyond its borders thanks to the heterogeneity of its allies and with the help of the guidance and the encouragement of the US. In this sense the official meetings¹⁶⁶ between President Obama and the Emir took great significance in the eyes of Qataris, as they are a clear representation of the undeniable importance and prestige now attributed to the emirate on the international stage. Washington, however, still feels very uncomfortable because of the proximity to the ally to Hamas, Hezbollah and the Taliban, but it is certainly not in the position to overlook the great help the Emirate can give to redefine the balance of the area.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ “Qatar Emir, Obama to meet at White House on Thursday”, *Doha News*, accessed February 6, 2013. <http://dohanews.co/post/4517797088/qatar-emir-obama-to-meet-at-white-house-on-thursday>

Part II

Old Friends/ New Enemies?

In the light of what has been said it is clear that the nature of the interests linking Riyadh and Doha to Washington. Despite the reforms currently under implementation often come into conflict with the interests of Washington both alliances have proved to be advantageous for all the parties involved, although for different reasons. Relations between Saudi Arabia and the U.S. continues to remain vital despite no longer rosy as before, especially in light of increasingly harsh anti-Americanism now widespread throughout the region and very popular among the clergy and the people; and considering that 15 out of 19 perpetrators of the attacks of 9/11 were from Saudi Arabia is not hard to see why the feeling of suspicion is mutual. The logic that binds the two countries is simple: the U.S. needs oil as Saudi Arabia still needs weapons, although in recent years have been made investments in the local war industry.

With regard to Qatar the link with Washington is of a similar nature. US companies with interests in Qatar, especially those operating in the field of hydrocarbons and in petrochemical sector, are numerous; many plants operates in joint venture with Qatar Petroleum, and on their efficiency depends in part the good state of US economy. If the US were to decide to resize their dependence on oil, as in fact is already happening, the Qatari gas could be a valuable alternative source of energy. The strengthening and the reliability of Qatari market they are making it an increasingly important trading partner for Washington (13% of imports come from the Qatar USA), with benefits for both parties. So despite the occasional tensions and despite the two Middle Eastern actors clearly claim for themselves their right to autonomously manage issues relating to their region the bonds of cooperation that bind the U.S. and Qatar and Saudi Arabia are not currently under discussion. So, despite the occasional tensions and despite the two Middle Eastern actors clearly claim for themselves their right to autonomously manage issues relating to their region the bonds of cooperation that bind the U.S. and Qatar and Saudi Arabia are not currently under discussion.

The same thing can not be said instead about two other great local actors, whose mutual rivalry has nowadays reached such a level to cause the most grave concern of the whole international community. Both linked to the U.S. by alliances that have been voted as of iron for a long time, the state of Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran are now clearly pursuing policies that are manifestly opposing to the interests of their long-time ally. For both countries, the current historical moment is a challenge for their very survival. Following the recent events that led to the

collapse of old pro-Western regimes at the hands of the masses with a strong Islamic-orthodox component in the neighboring countries Israel is now more isolated than ever. Remembering the experience of Afghanistan and Iraq the U.S. are proving very cautious and to say the least hesitant about any kind of intervention in the area, at the same time reassuring Tel Aviv that the support of Washington is not put into question.

For its part, Iran is going through its most critical phase since the advent of the Islamic Republic. With the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as the President of the Republic for the first time this charge is not covered by a member belonging to the clerical aristocracy, but by a Pasdaran who fought in the forefront against the Iraqis in the 80's and has no particular respect towards the old Ayatollahs, accused of having betrayed the ideals of the revolution in exchange for legitimacy in the eyes of the West. The news that Iran would be able to equip themselves of the atomic in a few years concerns the international community as a whole and the entire Middle Eastern region in particular: a nuclear Iran would not only unleash an arms race not in neighboring countries but from the point of view Israel it is a threat to its very survival.

UN sanctions have had little effect on Iran , that not only does not tone down but rather goes ahead with its nuclear program despite they seriously threat to inflict severe blows to the already unstable economy. The immobility of Obama, until last November involved in the campaign for his second term and then certainly not in the best position to take a firm stand on the matter sparked the disappointment Netanyahu, decided to resort even to preventive military intervention if Tehran does not give up totally acquiring nuclear technology. In the following sections we will see on what the relations with the U.S. has been based in the past and how this relationship has evolved over the years to the current fracture.

Chap.3

1. Israel

Suppose to have to estimate what kind of relationship may exist between two countries, conventionally identified as country A and country B. Country A covers 9,826,675¹⁶⁷ sq. km from ocean to ocean and has a population of 313,847,465¹⁶⁸ people, 78.5%¹⁶⁹ of whom profess to be Christian in a variable percentage of Protestants, Catholics and Mormons; it is the second largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$ 15.08 trillion¹⁷⁰ its currency is the basis of international trade, it has military bases in the four corners of the globe, a permanent seat in the UN Security Council and it has been for over half a century an inspiration to all those countries that aspired to the realization of the ideals of democracy, free market and modernity. Country B extends over a partially desert strip of land of 20.770¹⁷¹ sq. km, and 78.5%¹⁷² of its 7,590,758¹⁷³ inhabitants is of Jewish faith; unlike big petro-monarchies of the area, it produces small quantities of hydrocarbons (100 bbl. / day of oil and 1,55 billion cu m of natural gas)¹⁷⁴, it must compete for the few arable land with the advance of deserts with large investments in expensive agricultural technologies, it is torn apart by decades of conflict between the various souls of its people, of which a considerable part is denied the simple freedom of movement and travel abroad, and certainly does not enjoy great popularity in the eyes of the world stage.

The economic, geographic, religious and cultural ties between the two countries are so gross to make as to be least biased to any kind of cooperation, and if such a relationship existed it would be of no use to A, which needs any not strategically important and resource-poor ally while all around it is spoiled for choice if we consider that its priority is to find partners in the business of oil and a place for its military bases. Nevertheless the extent of economic support in favor of B by A is such to be puzzling: by an average of about 63 million dollar per year in the period between 1949 and 1965, the spending almost doubled, with \$ 102 million in just the four years from 1966 to 1970; the following year the figure rises to almost \$ 635 million, that increased fivefold in the mere span

¹⁶⁷ “United States”, *CIA-The World Factbook*, accessed November 10, 2012.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ “Israel”, *CIA- The World Factbook*, accessed February 5, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/is.html>

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

of three years; in 1976, country B was the largest recipient of country A support, a position it still holds¹⁷⁵.

While remaining in the abstract is quite clear that B is the land on which for decades the implacable hate of the entire Arab world vents. The only non-Muslim state in the region, a strip of land surrounded by those strategic giants responding to the names of Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE, Israel is a foreign body inside of that great geopolitical laboratory the Middle East is; such a hate is reinforced by the more or less explicit and consistent support to openly aggressive organizations that oppose its very existence such as Hamas and Hizbullah. These are all countries that Washington has no interest in antagonizing, both for the existence of strategically vital alliances - such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia - and for the seriousness of the consequences of a confrontation that would not only be regional but global.

However, despite the lack of strategic or economic advantage and the hostility of the Arab world that follows, Washington continues to be nothing short of generous towards Tel Aviv, and it does so in a constant way despite the succession of Democrats and Republicans both in the administration and at the Congress, although Israel has violated its commitments and continues to pursue the policy of settlements in the West Bank and the Golan Heights and in spite of this alliance does not bring particular benefits to the US.

¹⁷⁵ Mearsheimer and Walt, *La Israel Lobby e la politica estera Americana* (Milan: Mondadori ,2007), 38.

1.1. The USA and the support to Israel.

1.1.1. The military support.

The aid that the U.S. gives to Israel is clearly divided on several fronts: the economic, military and diplomatic one. Military cooperation is undoubtedly the one that most favors Israel, that in addition to the access to the best American weaponry - from fighters to helicopters and the most advanced ammunitions- and generous subsidies to the development of new missiles, tanks and fighter planes can boasts a wide range of both formal and informal agreements with regard to military supplies and intelligence services¹⁷⁶. This also implies that Israeli government¹⁷⁶ has the right to be able to deal directly with contractors for the purchase of military equipment¹⁷⁷ (expenses are then covered by the reimbursement of aids from the United States) without having to go through the supervision of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), that refers to the Department of Defense and that takes care of synchronizing the various cooperation programs with regard to security; its duties include the management of both direct sales and the financing of military services abroad, the supervision of the International military Education and Training (IMET) program, humanitarian assistance programs and the management of the regional centers¹⁷⁸. In addition, Israel is not required to submit to authorization of the U.S. all those contracts for military supplies the amount of which is less than \$ 500,000¹⁷⁹.

These conditions have no equal in any other country that has the support of the U.S. military, which are usually very strict in regularly monitor that the funds and supplies they handed out are actually used by the legitimate beneficiaries and not, rather, to be not wisely managed by local officials or resold on the black market. The U.S. military aid had a strong boost during the years of Reagan administration, with a clear anti-Soviet intent; a memorandum of understanding of May 1988¹⁸⁰ based on the recognition of the close cooperation between Israel and the U.S. reaffirms the importance of the commitment¹⁸¹ undertaken in 1981 by the U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and Ariel Sharon, then Israel's Minister of Defense, in terms of

¹⁷⁶ Mearsheimer and Walt, *La Israel Lobby e la politica estera Americana* (Milano:Mondadori,2007), 45

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁸ "International Military Education & Training", *Defense security Cooperation Agency*, accessed February 5, 2013. http://www.dsca.osd.mil/home/international_military_education_training.htm

¹⁷⁹ Mearsheimer and Walt, *La Israel Lobby e la politica estera Americana* (Milano:Mondadori,2007), 45

¹⁸⁰ "Memorandum of agreement between the United States of America and the State of Israel regarding joint political, security and economic cooperation" (1988), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/Vol%2011-1/Israel.pdf>

¹⁸¹ "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United States and the Government of Israel on Strategic Cooperation" (1981), *Avalon Project at Yale Law School*, accessed February 5, 2013 www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/pal03.htm

strategic cooperation: the agreement led to the creation of a series of bilateral groups such as the Joint Security Assistance Planning Group (JSAPG) with the task of coordinating "the effective implementation of U.S. security assistance and defense industrial co-operatives reviews issues ", the Political Joint Military Group (JPMG) with the task of helping" in the initiation of joint military planning, prepositioning of United States defense material in Israel, and combined exercises with Israeli forces and finally the Joint Economic Development Group (JEDG) with the aim to develop policies" which promote a strong and self-sufficient economy in Israel ¹⁸².

Besides, Israel enjoys as well as other countries¹⁸³ the status of Major non-NATO ally (MNNA), conferred by the President of the United States to those partners who maintain close ties with its armed forces but are not members of NATO, and that entitles them to a whole series of advantages in terms of funding in the military segment that are closed to other members. In addition to having priority in the distribution of war material in surplus and the ability to participate in both anti-terrorism and R & D programs conducted by the U.S., these countries are granted with a wider choice in the purchasing of weapons compared to member states, and for more at cheaper prices; in addition favor is shown to commercial firms in these countries when they submit tenders for defense contracts granted by the U.S.¹⁸⁴. In the specific case of Israel, not only it has undeniable advantages due to its status of MNNA - which is in addition to the generous aid already received - but it has free access to the U.S. Army military supplies stored on its territory, that in case of need should be redistributed between US units¹⁸⁵. The risk could be the occurrence of a quite unique situation in which two different military contingents could draw from the same reserves of arms, creating not only a certain chaos in the logistics but also the risk the entitled to the use of these same arms (in this case the USA) could not have the certainty that they are actually available.

¹⁸² "Memorandum of agreement between the United States of America and the State of Israel regarding joint political, security and economic cooperation" (1988), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/Vol%2011-1/Israel.pdf>

¹⁸³ Australia, Egypt, Japan, South Korea, Jordan New Zealand, Argentina, Bahrain, Philippines, Thailand, Kuwait, Morocco, Pakistan, Afghanistan

¹⁸⁴ "U.S. Code, Title 10, section 2350a", *Office of the Law Revision Counsel*, accessed February 4, 2013. <http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/10C138.txt>

¹⁸⁵ Mearsheimer and Walt, *La Israel Lobby e la politica estera Americana* (Milano:Mondadori, 2007)

1.1.2. The economic support.

To the fundamental military cooperation is added one of economic nature, that is to say the least indicative of the preferential treatment Washington reserves to Israel despite it has the 52nd world GDP (237,000,000,000 US\$¹⁸⁶) on 229 countries. The first real commitment from the U.S. to actively participate in the defense of Israel came during the Kennedy administration, which authorized the first sale of surface-to-air rockets not only to gain the sympathies of Israeli government in support of the American plan for peace but especially to counterbalance the parallel relationship between the Soviet Union and Egypt¹⁸⁷. Since 1976, Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. aid outside its borders, that since 1974 are partially provided in the form of non-repayable loans¹⁸⁸.

Israel is not only in the considerably advantageous position of being able to purchase equipment and services in the defense sector to a much higher value than the one it could really afford, but it also can do so by having to pay the U.S. lower interest on these loans than the one it really should pay. It also benefits from flat-rate aids - in addition to those for such programs for the protection of children and school projects - for the use of which it don't account to the U.S. - this is a support that could well be used, for example, for the consolidation of settlements in the West Bank.

In addition to large sums on behalf of Israel the U.S. do so with conditions that are favorable to say the least, together to other forms of assistance not covered by the budget for the support of foreign allies so that the actual amount of aid is much higher than what is believed. Subsidies are generally paid in quarterly installments, but a clause in Foreign Assistance Act on annual aids abroad make an exception for Israel by providing it with the full due amount in the first 30 days of the fiscal year¹⁸⁹. This implies that while the U.S. government, that notoriously works in a situation of budget deficit, is forced to borrow money to meet its commitment, Israel not only earn interest on the part of the loan not yet used but it can also use it to buy U.S. Treasuries. Tel Aviv also pays a lot less interest than it should thanks to loan guarantees, thanks to which it can claim money from the

¹⁸⁶ "Israel", *CIA- The World Factbook*, accessed February 5, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/is.html>

¹⁸⁷ The USSR offered support to Egypt during the Arab-Israeli War of 1967; in addition to this a series of scientific, technical and economic cooperation agreements between the two countries was signed during the 60s of the twentieth century (<http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Soviet-Egyptian+Agreements>). The links between Egypt and the Soviet Union were also of cultural nature: during the Nasser years a big number of young Egyptian students had the chance to complete the advanced studies in the Soviet Union, and for his anti-imperialistic policy Gamal Abdel Nasser was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, the highest Soviet decoration.

¹⁸⁸ Mark, "Israel: U.S. Foreign Assistance", *Foreign Press Center* (2006), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/11062.pdf>

¹⁸⁹ Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel", *Congressional Research Service* (2006), accessed February 5, 2013. http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL33222_20060105.pdf

U.S. commercial banks at lower rates than those established; technically the only function of the U.S. government is that of the guarantor, in the sense that if Israel (the debtor) would plead to be insolvent it undertakes to repay its creditors, or individuals who have paid the loan. This implies that the Congress actually provides, when planning the budget, the allocation of an amount to cover any default, thus deducting resources that could be used in other projects of greater utility to the nation¹⁹⁰.

Another exception is made within the Foreign Military Financing Program (FMFP) working beyond the scope of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, the program through which the United States provide loans or grants to military partners to acquire their arms on with the aim to back the national defense industry¹⁹¹. Even in this case Israel is the only one to use, with the consent of Congress, one quarter of such aid in order to sustain its war industry - with the result that Israel is currently in eleventh place in the list of weapon producer countries¹⁹². It may also request the FMF to allocate the due sum according to the expected expenditure to face for that year, without the need to reserve these expenses from the funding for previous years¹⁹³. This aid allocated under government and cooperation projects should also be added to the contribution of private U.S. citizens who, through the purchase of Israeli bonds at subsidized rates and direct donations (which are tax deductible), pour annually into the State coffers something like 2 billion dollars¹⁹⁴.

Whereas private donations are outside the US tax jurisdiction is very difficult to Washington to verify their final destination, for it has no way to ensure these funds are not used instead in projects considered "not allowed" such as the supporting to the expansion of settlements - such as those supported by the World Zionist Organization (WZO) via the "settlements division" that does nothing but follow what were the tasks of the Settlements Section of the Jewish Agency, a semi-governmental organization that deals with the facilitation and coordination of new arrivals in Israel¹⁹⁵.

¹⁹⁰ Mark, "Israel: U.S. Foreign Assistance", *Foreign Press Center* (2006), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/11062.pdf>

¹⁹¹ "Defense Security Cooperation Agency", accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.dsca.mil/>

¹⁹² "TIV of arms exports from the top 50 largest exporters (2011 rank)", *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, accessed February 5, 2013. http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_toplist.php

¹⁹³ U.S. General Accounting Office, "Military Sales Cash Flow Financing (NSIAD-94-102R)", *U.S. Government Accountability Office* (2004), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/90/83571.pdf>

¹⁹⁴ Mark, "Israel: U.S. Foreign Assistance", *Foreign Press Center* (2006), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/11062.pdf>

¹⁹⁵ Mearsheimer and Walt, *La Israel Lobby e la politica estera Americana* (Milano:Mondadori, 2007), 43

1.2. Israel and the US: the *Israel Lobby*.

A lobby is group whose members share certain goals and work to bring about the passage, modification, or defeat of laws that affect these goals¹⁹⁶; in other words it is a pressure and interest group moving within the establishment through direct and private channels, an informal coalitions formed by individuals and organizations that not only have such a financial liquidity to result decisive on the occasion of the election campaigns but also they are so powerful as to be able to direct the policy of the politician they have supported. Their support is so important that if the candidate they contend is actually elected they are able to target without excessive stress its policy so that it is coincident to their interests - we are talking about coalitions with billion dollars turnovers, such as the weapon producers, pharmaceutical industry and health services.

It is relatively simple to understand how to oppose or criticize the work of one of these groups can correspond to great difficulties for a U.S. politician, both in terms of funding both for the effective implementation of its policy; it depends, however, on the political spectrum each politician belongs to have more or less to heart the support of a specific group of pressure: for example a Democrat candidate will be certainly more interested in being supported by the civil rights movement, and vice versa a Republican will be interested in those of the arms industry.

Nevertheless exists a group that no American politician aspiring to a prestigious seat prestige in Washington - if not to reside in the White House - never would run the risk of contradict nor to openly criticize, a group that has the distinction of defending interests outside the borders of the nation, even at the cost of damaging those of the U.S. itself. Lacking, like all the lobbies, in a defined leadership and composed by different currents also in harsh opposition to one another, the Israel lobby is an informal coalition consisting of both organizations (such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee,) and individuals, lay and religious, Jews and not and more or less openly identified with it, but with the common goal of trying to influence the direction of American foreign policy so that it continues to work to keep those they believe to be the interests of the State of Israel. It is thus characterized by the pursue of a precise policy, and not by the religious or ethnic origin of its members¹⁹⁷. A further information is needed: in this case, when we mention the members of the lobby is to be understood we are talking about the core, consisting of foundations, organizations and even by individuals who support them (even financially) with the aim to make them able to successfully promote the interests of the group, while the average citizens who sympathize with the

¹⁹⁶ Hirsh, Kett, Trefil. "The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know", *Dictionary.com*, accessed February 5, 2013. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/lobbying>

¹⁹⁷ Mearsheimer and Walt, *La Israel Lobby e la politica estera Americana* (Milano: Mondadori, 2007), 145

state of Israel and that are favorable to U.S. support to its troops in case of need can not be considered lobbyists.

As already said lobbies exert their influence in the highest government circles, and in the case of the Israeli lobby obvious manifestations of its influence can be found at the Congress, where there is a strong tendency to approve by a large majority the resolutions that are in its behalf thanks to a massive presence of representative supporting the interest of the group¹⁹⁸. The influence of its representatives is so entrenched in Washington that they are able to divert the attention of the administration of that large portion of the population (we're talking about 40%) which declares itself to be persuaded that the unconditional support of U.S. to Israel is one of the causes, if not the main, of anti-Americanism which in recent years has started to spread around the world, and that are convinced that Bush administration has been guided by Israeli pressures when deciding for intervention in Iraq¹⁹⁹. Just think that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the branch of the lobby that deals purely to make its interests at the Congress, is probably the most influential of all pressure groups operating in the capital. It has something like 100,000²⁰⁰ activists equally distributed by age, origin and political spectrum, and within its website is possible to find a comprehensive list of his supporters at the Capitol²⁰¹: a fact that is not unusual, considering that the existence of lobbies and the identity of their members are absolutely in the public domain, for the avoidance of any doubt about the fact they act in ways in some sense conspiratorial or with purposes that are close to a plot - such a doubt is also raised regarding other pressure groups.

This does not mean that the American public does not sympathize for the Israeli cause, but the fact remains that especially at the level of the élites people are absolutely aware of how Washington often loses sight of the very interest of the nation for the benefit of a small country 10.000 km far²⁰². The lobby has proved to be very adept at overshadow this part of the public

¹⁹⁸ "You see this napkin? In twenty-four hours, we could have the signatures of seventy senators on this napkin." Steven J. Rosen, a leading figure of AIPAC for more than 20 years and indicted in 2005 for having illegally divulged documents regarding the national security, summarizes in these few words the extent of the influence of the lobby at the Congress despite the scandals in which its exponents are occasionally involved. The quote is the answer Rosen gave to Goldberg when asked about his concerns about the possible entailments deriving from the disclosure in 1992 of some tapes in which the then president of AIPAC David Steiner declared of entertaining contacts with both the outgoing Bush administration in order to provide further aid to the State of Israel and with the next Clinton administration in order to try to find an agreement on a pro-Israel secretary of State. Goldberg, "Real Insiders. A pro-Israel lobby and an F.B.I. sting", *The New Yorker* (2005), accessed February 5, 2013.

http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/07/04/050704fa_fact

¹⁹⁹ Allen and Tyson, "The U.S. Public's Pro-Israel History", *Pew Research Center* (2006).

<http://www.pewresearch.org/2006/07/19/the-us-publics-proisrael-history/>

²⁰⁰ "About AIPAC", *The American Israel Public Affairs Committee*, accessed February 5, 2013.

<http://www.aipac.org/about-aipac>

²⁰¹ "The American Israel Public Affairs Committee", accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.aipac.org/en>

²⁰² <http://www.distancefromto.net>

opinion, by using proven and very simple tools: to show criticism towards Israel policies or to give a shy sign of sympathy for the Palestinian cause is sufficient to be accused of anti-Semitism, if not of being associated to those people questioning the very existence of the State of Israel; also raise objections on the same work of the lobby may make people run into similar allegations.

Even and especially considering a past made of hundred-years-old fierce persecution in much of the Western world, it is absolutely understandable that the Jewish component of the lobby is legitimately worried about the rekindling of old anti-Semitic feelings; but this does not make entirely justifiable the fact that accusations of anti-Semitism are directed not only to those who demonstrate to be simply critical about the work of the lobby, but also to who simply discuss about facts that are in the public domain, such as the generosity in funding the election campaigns and the commitment to philanthropic activities. These are charges in which no good American would ever want to run, especially in the case of well-known and active members in the community, with the result that to be critical about the goals of a pressure group that has so much at heart the interests of the Jewish triggers off feelings of self-censorship, if not of real embarrassment, in that 40% of the population persuaded that the unconditional support that the U.S. give to the government in Tel Aviv is uncritical²⁰³.

This case is virtually unique in the universe of lobbies. If a congressional candidate would tax the pharmaceutical industry of non-ethically acting or would flung against the ease with which even minors can legally purchase fire weapons, this would hardly affect his chances of actually being elected to the office he aspires - indeed, it probably could make the fight-a symbol of his entire campaign out of it. on the other hand, if we consider that probably not many ordinary people would dispute the methods by which the Israel lobby exerts its influence we can only guess how much a politician who aspires to a seat in Washington would not even consider such an option, nor to hint at the option to suggest the review of the entity of the current funding.

The fact that the majority of members of the lobby belongs to the American Jewish community does not mean that the community as a whole belongs to the lobby; indeed, a good percentage of American Jews do not share the methods by which the lobby pursues its interests or nor their implementation (for example the critical to the war in Iraq²⁰⁴). Even inside the lobby coexist different souls, which has sometimes led to infighting, and this is a further example of how the lobby does not always clubs once it is the time to define the policy - for example, AIPAC and the Conference of Presidents have been aligned with the Likud for the opposition to the Oslo

²⁰³ Mearsheimer and Walt, *La Israel Lobby e la politica estera Americana*, 11-25. Mondadori, Milano 2007

²⁰⁴ "2006 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion", *American Jewish Committee* (2006), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=ijITI2PHKoG&b=846741&ct=3152877>

process, while smaller groups such as the Israel Policy Forum and Jewish Voice for Peace are convinced of the need to opt for the "two states solution"²⁰⁵.

Whatever the approach adopted by the different fronts, the constancy of U.S. support to the state of Israel remains a point not to question. The heads of the lobby admit to follow, albeit with less emphasis than in the past, the guidelines issued by Israeli authorities especially with regard to security issues, so that even if they would prove to be skeptical about these claims is unlikely that the U.S. government ask them to plead with Tel Aviv about these arguments. This is because besides the obvious intent to avoid giving too much space to those who oppose the very existence of a Jewish state the smaller organizations are likely to be ostracized from the most powerful ones, that may cause them to gain less consensus and especially funding from the community.

²⁰⁵ Mearsheimer and Walt, *La Israel Lobby e la politica estera Americana* (Milano:Mondadori, 2007), 144

2. Islamic Republic of Iran.

Even if despite the differences of opinion the cooperative relationship with Israel is not in question, the bonds of cooperation that once tied Tehran to Washington have been completely severed. An enormous country of unquestionable strategic importance, both in terms of geographical location and of resources of the subsoil, Iran is nowadays involved in a bitter dispute that saw it lined up against the U.S., the Israeli sworn enemy and the various big Arab petro-monarchies, whose concerns about Teheran's ever dormant imperial nostalgias have been further exacerbated by the collapse of the traditional counterpart to its ambitions, namely Iraq.

The élite of the only Shiite-majority state (the 89%²⁰⁶ of people professing Muslim religion in the country) in a Sunni-majority region has never hidden the resentment toward Europeans for having imposed themselves in neighboring countries as colonial powers first and toward the U.S. for having imposed their massive presence (supported by local allies) in the area then, making the hopes of about the achievement of an Iranian Shia-guided pan-Arabism increasingly vain.

These hopes are now frustrated by the new momentum of Turkey's expansionist²⁰⁷, ranging to add up with the strong opposition to the very existence of Israel, making Iran a country that is prepared to use any means, even aggressive, in order to fulfill his ambitions. Tehran identifies in this regional framework the justification to its feelings about being an island in a sea of enemies²⁰⁸, who never miss an opportunity to conspire between them to its injury in order to sabotage its ambitions. In the eyes of the leadership this perception now makes essential than ever the possibility of being able to introduce new tools with which to bend to its hegemonic ambitions on what it believes to be its natural sphere of influence. This lever seems to be the possibility to avail itself of the atomic, owned by virtually all the major Asian powers, and even if not officially by Israel.

To understand how we got to the current situation it is useful to take a brief look at the recent history of the Islamic republic.

²⁰⁶ "Iran", *CIA-The World Factbook*, accessed February 5, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>

²⁰⁷ "Iran e Turchia competono in Iraq", *Il Cannocchiale* (2012), accessed February 5, 2013. http://hurricane_53.ilcannocchiale.it/2012/08/28/iran_e_turchia_competono_in_ir.html

²⁰⁸ "Negotiating with Iran", *United States Institute For Peace*, accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.usip.org/publications-tools/negotiating-iran/the-lessons-fourteen-steps-success>

2.1. Iran and the West.

The first European power obtaining a license for the extraction of Iranian oil was Britain. Despite the possession of these rights began to be very important from the First World War only, the country had the right to exercise it since 1901 when citizen William Knox d'Arcy obtained the concession to extract, refine and sell oil for sixty years on the condition of granting an initial sum and a percentage of the profits by Muzaffar al-Din Shah (16%) on virtually all Iranian territory, except for the five northern provinces of the then Russian border²⁰⁹. It was not until from the 10s of the Twentieth century that the British government began to look with interest to these lands, where in the meantime d'Arcy had finally found the oil and founded the Anglo-Persian oil Company (later BP). From 1912 the British Navy had in fact begun to abandon the use of coal to fuel its Fleet ships in favor of the use of oil, of which however had no mines in its territory; the government was able to ensure at competitive prices the oil its Navy needed in 1914 by entering into a contract with the APOC, the later BP²¹⁰.

The British Crown, however, was not the only one to be in urgent need oil to sustain the imminent war effort. With the Russians temporarily out of games as busy on the home front to solve the issue of the Bolshevik revolution, the already appointed five Northern provinces not exploited by the APOC were still free of a grant. The failed approval of the Anglo-Persian treaty of 1919, which if ratified would have granted to Great Britain an outstanding control over the financial and military affairs of Iran full rights of exploitation on the whole territory²¹¹, and the withdrawal and the redeployment of British troops from the country to fronts that were considered most important to the interests of the Crown such as Iraq, Palestine and Egypt worsened the situation of instability.

It was then that Washington, a power in enormous growth, began to look with interest to Iranian oil, although to see the actual entry of the U.S. in disputes between the USSR and GB must wait until 1943, when Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met in Tehran to discuss about the post war order. In the Declaration of the Three Powers Regarding Iran of December 1, 1943²¹² Great Britain, USSR and the U.S. emphasized their gratitude to Iran for supporting the war effort, or rather for having made possible the transport of supplies from the U.S. to the USSR through its territory, despite this had made run the country's economy in serious difficulties. To this end the three powers

²⁰⁹ Sabahi, *Storia dell'Iran, 1890-2008* (Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 53

²¹⁰ "History of BP", *BP*, accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.bp.com>

²¹¹ Fatemi, "Anglo-Persian agreement of 1919", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (1985), last updated August 5, 2011. Accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/anglo-persian-agreement-1919>

²¹² Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, "Declaration of the Three Powers Regarding Iran, December 1, 1943", *The Avalon Project at Yale Law School*, accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/wwii/tehran.htm>

committed themselves to continue to support the country's recovery, although to the extent permitted by their already remarkable commitment towards Europe; they also ensured that the war ended Iranian economic issues somehow related to the war effort would have the most serious consideration by the UN in the context of conferences or special agencies that would have been involved in the matter. In the text is also reminded that the three contracting powers hoped in "the maintenance of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran"²¹³ and that "they count upon the participation of Iran, together with all other peace-loving nations, in the establishment of international peace, security and prosperity after the war, in accordance with the principles of the Atlantic Charter"²¹⁴.

Meanwhile the Shah abdicated in 1941²¹⁵ leaving his young son Muhammad Reza Shah a country divided by the claims of independence of different ethnic groups, an inflation that in 1943 amounted to 300% and a crippled economy²¹⁶. However, nor London nor Moscow were willing to end the occupation; on the contrary, to avoid that in exchange for supporting the Iranian economy Washington obtained the right to exploit the northern provinces, the Soviet Union played in advance advancing similar claims on the 5 provinces not yet given in concession. Overwhelmed by the demands of oil concessions and no longer willing to tolerate foreign interference in the management of its territory, the local Parliament declared that the government would not discuss such matters until the foreign powers had not ended the occupation²¹⁷.

In this regard the Soviets proficiently avoided raising the issue both at Yalta and Potsdam conferences, focusing instead on the weakening of Iranian domestic front. They began to support the activities of Tudeh²¹⁸, the local Communist Party, and the claims for independence of both the Kurdish and Azeri minorities, whose regions were under the Soviet sphere of influence and in which the troops were conspicuously increased causing a complaint to the UN by the Iranian government about the occupation of its soil by Soviet troops. Initially Iranian government tried to achieve the withdrawal of the troops by offering as an inducement the creation, in partnership with the Soviets, of an oil company with a 50-year concession on exploitation rights and the allocation of any profits at 50%²¹⁹ in the Northern regions. Later the agreement was not ratified and the issue was definitively solved by diplomatic means, with the international community in support of Iran's right

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ "Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, accessed february 5, 2013.

http://www.iranchamber.com/history/mohammad_rezashah/mohammad_rezashah.php

²¹⁶ Sabahi, *Storia dell'Iran, 1890-2008* (Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 77

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 82

²¹⁸ Behrooz, "State of paralysis (Tudeh factionalism and the 1953 coup)", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, accessed February 5, 2013. http://www.iranchamber.com/history/articles/state_of_paralysis.php

²¹⁹ Sabahi F., *Storia dell'Iran, 1890-2008* (Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 84

to national sovereignty and worried about a possible demonstration of strength by the Soviets²²⁰.

The so-called “Iranian Crisis of 1946”, however, threatened to turn into what could have been the first crisis of the Cold War. It was necessary to Tehran to reassure Washington about the mere utility of the Russian-Persian agreement, due to the Iranian right and necessity to maintain its own national sovereignty ; and to this end the Iranian government was willing to grant the U.S. rights of exploitation on Baluchistan and the permission to dislocate troops on its territory.

2.2. Muhammad Reza Shah and the White Revolution.

Already in the sixties of the twentieth century there were the first signs that the regime of Muhammad Reza Shah, based on a rigid authoritarianism, lacked of popular support. It was strictly necessary to the Shah to introduce substantial reforms, both in the social and in the administrative field; a valuable ally in the achievement of this goal was the newly elected US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Firmly persuaded of the importance of the introduction of liberal reforms as the best antidote to the rampant communism, he put the Shah the appointment of liberal ministers and the implementation of an agrarian reform redistributing the land to the peasants as a condition for a loan of 85 million US\$²²¹.

The effects of White Revolution, the corpus of these long-term reforms launched by the Shah to modernize the country, struck in a transversal manner across the country but it was probably the issue of land reform to ignite the most heated debate. In fact the peculiarity of Iran was that many owners had not only inherited the land they owned, but they often had invested their savings in the regular purchase of a lot. However only a very small percentage of them owned a field with such an extension to allow sustenance. The vast majority was made up of sharecroppers and tenant farmers, almost half of them without any right on the land they worked. Thanks to land reform it was possible for them to buy it for a third of the market value, to be paid to the state in 25 years without interest²²². The size of the plots, however, appeared to be too limited, and often did not permit subsistence of rural large families; many farmers were therefore forced to look for another job or to cluster in nationalized cooperatives.

Another measure that ignited the rage of the clergy against the Shah was the extension of conscription to seminarians that were traditionally exempted from military service. The opposition

²²⁰ UNSC S/RES/2, UNSC S/RES/3, UNSC S/RES/5, *United Nation Security Council*, accessed February 5, 2013.

<http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/1946.shtml>

²²¹ Sabahi , *Storia dell'Iran, 1890-2008* (Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 107

²²² *Ibid.*, 135

to these reforms led in the summer of 1963 to a three-day demonstration²²³, attended by social groups most diverse - from teachers and students to unemployed and workers, traders and religious - that was severely repressed.

For the first time even the religious, traditionally not engaged in politics, took part in the protests. Their additional concerns were the modernizing scope of the spread of primary education in rural areas, hitherto their preserve and now entrusted by the Government to the Literacy Corps²²⁴, made up of young graduates of the urban middle class with the task of giving primary education for children aged 6 to 12 years to compensate the lack of staff willing to work in the countryside: women were allowed to enlist too, with the appointment of the education of girls living in not too isolated rural areas; universal suffrage was extended to women too. The Government made substantial steps in this path, with important changes to the family law concerning marriage, divorce, child custody, polygamy and the option given to men to divorce freely.

2.3. The Islamic Revolution.

The factors that led to a sharp drop of the consensus toward the establishment were different. The proposal of the Shah to grant diplomatic immunity to all U.S. citizens on Iranian soil, whose presence and high wages bothered the venues²²⁵ and the intention of the government to purchase arms from U.S. thanks to oil export revenues - perfectly fitted within the framework of the Nixon Doctrine, giving US allies the tools to repress any communist outbreak to the four corners of the globe - exacerbated the popular resentment against the monarch. Nixon administration gave Iran the recognition of its status of local leader and authorized the purchase of any types of weapons - with the exception of the atomic - in order to enable it to exercise its influence in the region, ignoring that the real threat to the stability of Iran came from the increasing risk of a popular uprising.

Even if the increase in oil prices, which culminated in the price of 12 US\$ per barrel of 1973²²⁶, had the effect to made the revenues of Iran to soar from 200 million to 20 billion US\$²²⁷ in a few years the most of the population did not enjoy absolutely the benefits of this wealth. The second half of the seventies was in fact characterized by a growing movement of opposition to the

²²³ "How did Khomeini rise to power in Iran?", *Answers*, accessed February 5, 2013.

http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_did_Khomeini_rise_to_power_in_Iran

²²⁴ Sabahi, "Literacy corps", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2004), accessed February 5, 2013.

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/literacy-corps-1>

²²⁵ Sabahi, *Storia dell'Iran, 1890-2008* (Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 82

²²⁶ "The Price of Oil", *CBC News* (2007), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/oil/>

²²⁷ Sabahi, *Storia dell'Iran, 1890-2008* (Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 113

Shah with the clergy increasingly active part in the protests, but do not yet large enough to really worry the government.

The situation worsened in the second half of 1978, following the season in a few months of three events that finally led to the explosion of the revolution led by the religious. On August 19 of that year a fire at Cinema Rex in Abadan caused more than 400 victims²²⁸, trapped in theater; the vox populi was that the fire had been organized by the services of Shah in order to discredit the Islamic militants, hostile to Western cinema. On September 7²²⁹ following a particularly attended demonstration the Shah declared martial law; the day after, that became known as the Black Friday²³⁰, the Army fired on the crowd that had equally met.

The real detonator, however, was the return of Ayatollah Khomeini in his homeland after more than 15 years of exile. He had risen to national prominence for the first time in 1963, when he was the only one to have the courage to openly criticize the government for the extension of compulsory military service even to seminarians²³¹ - among them the young Rafsanjani, the future Prime Minister, and at that time an aspiring mullah and Khomeini's pupil, compelled by force with his companions to leave his school and taken to barracks in Teheran. The following year the Ayatollah spoke publicly against the loan²³² of 200 million US\$ for the purchase of American weapons Iranian Parliament was planning to ask for and against the privileges enjoyed by U.S. citizens in Iran, on which the local jurisdiction had no power even if they had committed serious crimes. Being an extremely inconvenient element to the regime he was exiled in that same year going first to Turkey, where he resided for one year, and then to Najaf, where he stood until 1978²³³. In that year the Shah recklessly put pressure on Iraqi government in order to make it expel Khomeini that, rejected by Kuwait, was received by France and settled in Paris²³⁴. Such a decision proved to be fatal to the Shah's regime: in Europe Khomeini was welcomed as the victim of a despotic and oppressive regime, the media gave wide coverage to his story and his residence was constantly monitored by the British, French and U.S. granting for his security; the ease with which

²²⁸ "National Fire Protection Association", accessed February 5, 2013.

<http://www.nfpa.org/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=1352&itemID=30955&URL=Research/Fire%20statistics/Key%20date%20in%20fire%20history>

²²⁹ Sabahi, *Storia dell'Iran, 1890-2008* (Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 129

²³⁰ "Black Friday", *Conestoga Valley Blog Site* (2011), accessed February 5, 2013.

<http://blog.cvsd.k12.pa.us/iranrevolution/>

²³¹ Moin, *"Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah"* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd), 96

²³² "Ayatollah Khomeini", *Iran Chamber Society*, accessed February 5, 2013.

http://www.iranchamber.com/history/rkhomeini/ayatollah_khomeini.php

²³³ Allam, "Najaf la ribelle", *ChiesaEspresso*, accessed February 5, 2013.

<http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/7767>

²³⁴ "Ayatollah Khomeini", *Iran Chamber Society*, accessed February 5, 2013.

http://www.iranchamber.com/history/rkhomeini/ayatollah_khomeini.php

he could communicate with the followers also helped to enhance his prestige at home, and made his astonishingly rapid rise to power once back.

Aware of the precariousness of his situation, the Shah fled the country on January 17²³⁵, officially for a period of vacation - even though almost a year passed before the U.S. agreed to give him asylum on the grounds to give him adequate medical - paving the way for the return of Ayatollah Khomeini, who had clearly expressed its intention not to return to Iran until the Shah had left the country²³⁶. Despite the militias that had remained loyal to the Shah had reached the point of closing the airport in order to prevent his return the Ayatollah came back on February 1, 1979²³⁷ after nearly 15 years of exile, welcomed by such a crowd to make necessary the use of a helicopter to help him to get out of the airport. After ten days only he established a provisional government.

The target of the first wave of reform were women, who in the space of two months were denied the exercise of the office of judge and were required to wear the hijab in the workplace; segregation in the events sports and beaches was announced. Administrative reform of the summer of the same year worsened the condition of the until then emancipated Iranian women, from which is sought obedience to the principles of the Islamic Republic - which also includes the use of the veil in all governmental offices - in order to support the fight against western consumerism; family law was abolished and pertinent courts about divorce and child custody were established²³⁸.

The reformative project of religious was not only limited to the legislative area, but also reflected in the same state structure still in force. The highest rung of the hierarchy is occupied by the Supreme Leader (Rahbar), the highest office in the country and the spiritual guide of the entire Shia community, a position that was covered by Khomeini until his death in 1989 and later by Ali Khamenei, even now fulfilling the role. An elected parliament continues to exist, even if all candidacies must first be submitted to the scrutiny of a panel of experts, the Guardian Council²³⁹, consisting of six religious appointed by the Supreme Leader and 6 Islamic judges approved by Parliament. The Council also has the authority to approve, with the right of veto if needed, on the conformity of laws enacted by the legislature to Sharia and to the Constitution, drafted in 1979 by

²³⁵ "Islamic Revolution of 1979", *Iran Chamber Society*, accessed February 5, 2013.

http://www.iranchamber.com/history/islamic_revolution/islamic_revolution.php

²³⁶ "The return of Khomeini, 33 years later", *Sipa Press* (2012), accessed February 5, 2013.

<http://www.sipa.com/fr/feature/2220422/tehran-the-return-of-khomeini-33-years-later>

²³⁷ "1979: Exiled Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran", *BBC*, accessed February 5, 2013.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/1/newsid_2521000/2521003.stm

²³⁸ Sabahi, *Storia dell'Iran, 1890-2008* (Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 142. See also "The Position of Women From The Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini. Extracted from speeches of Ayatollah Rouhollah Mousavi Khomeini", *The Institute for compilation and publication of Imam Khomeini's work* (2011), accessed February 5, 2013

http://www.iranchamber.com/history/rkhomeini/books/women_position_khomeini.pdf

²³⁹ Schirazi, "Guardian Council", *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2002), last updated February 23, 2012, accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/guardian-council>

the Assembly of Experts, a body dominated by conservative *ulama* that is permanent since 1983 and that at that time was in charge with the matter of the succession of Khomeini. The Assembly is in charge of selecting the Supreme Leader among the candidates for the role and supervises his work; it has the right to withdraw his appointment if he was no longer able to fulfill his task or it no longer meets the requirements which instead responded at the moment of appointment²⁴⁰. The activities of all these institutions, however, remit to the authority of the Expediency Discernment Council, a body made up of theologians, politicians of Islamic education and placeholders without any particular Islamic skill.

In 1988 the old Ayatollah found himself no longer able to postpone the question of his succession. Khomeini identified in Hussein- Ali Montazeri the only having the necessary political credentials needed to fulfill the role of *Rahab* among all the grand ayatollahs of the country. Convinced that Khomeini's successor as Supreme Leader should be referred to the people and in favor of the legalization of political parties, he was also persuaded the revolution had to be exported through the means of the ideological inspiration and not with the military training of Islamist opposition groups; for these reasons he was removed from the Revolutionary Council. Its designation as the future *Rahab* was withdrawn following his criticism to Khomeini's *fatwa* on Salman Rushdie²⁴¹ and the statements about the suppression of dissent he issued to western journalists.

At that point it became necessary to evaluate which of the candidates hitherto considered unsuitable to the succession was the most suitable to succeed Khomeini. The task was entrusted to the Expediency Discernment Council²⁴² that enacted an amendment establishing that not only grand ayatollahs could aspire to the position of Supreme Leader, but also other Islamic scholars with sufficient revolutionary credentials could accede to the candidacy. This allowed Ali Khamenei, the new favorite, to be appointed as the successor even though he was not even an ayatollah and he was already filling the post of President of the Islamic republic; the amendment appointed him *ex officio* a grand ayatollah, but this does not allow him to exercise his religious authority outside of Iran's borders²⁴³. He was formally appointed as the Supreme Leader by the Assembly of Experts the day after the death of Khomeini occurred on June 3, 1989 and he still holds the position.

²⁴⁰ Fhari, "The Assembly of Experts", *United States Institute for Peace*, accessed February 5, 2013. <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/assembly-experts>

²⁴¹ "I inform the proud Muslim people of the world that the author of the 'Satanic Verses' book, which is against Islam, the Prophet and the Koran, and all those involved in its publication who were aware of its content, are sentenced to death. I ask all the Muslims to execute them wherever they find them". Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, February 1989.

²⁴² Farahani, "Islamic Republic of Iran Expediency Discernment Council of the System", *Iran Online* (1997), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/Expediency.html>

²⁴³ Sabahi, *Storia dell'Iran, 1890-2008* (Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 155

2.3. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Iran.

Passed from being virtually unknown to most to being considered the top threat to world stability, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his own election as the President of the Islamic Republic have undoubtedly resulted in a radical change in the nature of the Iranian regime. It is the first time that the Pasdaran manage to have a real political expression after being excluded from representation in the higher echelons government by the overwhelming power of the clerical aristocracy for more than 20 years, although they fought against Iraq in first person and their strong defense of revolutionary ideals.

Son of a grocer on the outskirts of Tehran he had the chance to study at the best school of the area, and he distinguished himself for the excellent academic achievement which enabled him to choose among the best universities in the capital after finishing the high school; the choice fell on the University of Engineering of Narmak, where his family lived²⁴⁴. It was in this background that he and his brothers came into contact with the ideas of Ali Shariati, a philosopher at that time very popular among the students that in his discourse found an inspiration to their demands for renewal of the country through a vision of Islam both in its religious and in its political meaning. Ahmadinejad brothers soon united to the supporters of the exiled Ayatollah, so that their participation in propaganda activities was well known to the intelligence services of the Shah, and the future president joined the Guards in the first months of the revolution, entering a framework in which he had the chance to meet Khamenei through its participation in the activities of the Office for Strengthening Unity (*Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*, DTV²⁴⁵), the network that was in charge of coordinating the activities of students from different universities and of which the current Supreme leader was interlocutor for account of the Ayatollah.

His first assignment as a local administrator was the appointment as governor²⁴⁶ of the small and heterogeneous district of Maku, West Azerbaijan, where Turkish-speaking Shia Azeri coexists with Sunni Kurds. It was a relatively quiet area which enabled him to complete his studies in 1986, when he decided to enlist and serve his compulsory military service at the headquarters of the Revolutionary Guards in Kermanshah. Once ended the experience of the war against Iraq and removed from office as a result of the establishment of Khatami as President of the Republic in

²⁴⁴ Sabahi, *Storia dell'Iran, 1890-2008* (Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 182.

²⁴⁵ "The Office for Strengthening Unity", *Iran Data Portal of Princeton University*, accessed February 5, 2013.
<http://www.princeton.edu/irandataportal/parties/tahkimevahdat/>

²⁴⁶ "Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Biography", *Global Security*, accessed February 5, 2013.
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iran/ahmadinejad-bio.htm>

1997 he returned to Tehran, where after completing his PhD in Transport Engineering worked as a professor of traffic engineering²⁴⁷.

The first signs of how the popular base was beginning to feel far from its conservative representation appeared in 2000, when the political reformers managed to win the parliamentary elections even in the holy city of Qom, the traditional outpost of the Shiite clergy, despite the attempts by the guardian Council to exclude the majority of their representatives from the lists²⁴⁸. The re-election of Khatami as the President of the Republic, however, provoked the split within the right between the religious and the second generation of revolutionaries, coming from the ranks of the army and of the Pasdaran and claiming for greater political weight. On the occasion of 2003 municipal election, mostly due to the strong widespread abstaining, the latter group was able to win almost all the seats in Tehran, choosing Ahmadinejad as its candidate for the role of mayor.

Knowing the circumstances in which the current president entered politics may be a good starting point to better understand the ways in which he carries on his idea of doing politics, which is closely related to its cultural background. It could be a good example to report his first move as mayor of the capital, which was a source of considerable confusion for many citizens. He proposed not only to establish military cemeteries and memorials to the fallen during the conflict with Iraq, setting them up in parks, squares and universities but he also ordered the construction of hundreds of commemorative fountains, funding with public money donations to mosques to celebrate religious functions and neglecting neighborhoods inhabited by the bourgeoisie preferring to restore the premises of the militias and the streets of poor neighborhoods outsourcing work to companies run by Pasdaran, with the clear intention to strengthen his grassroots consensus.

He has never made any secret of how clerical bourgeoisie, safe in Tehran while the Guards were fighting at the front, does not enjoy his esteem. Khatami, in the eyes of the president guilty of having too much traveled abroad boasting his credentials as an intellectual, has been accused of having traded Iran's right to have a say about the issue of Afghanistan and Iraq in exchange for the attention of the foreign media, while his criticism on Rafsanjani doubled because of its being both a clergyman and belonging to a wealthy family²⁴⁹.

It can quite easily be deduced how the President represents an anomaly in the political landscape of Iran, traditionally characterized by personalities owning a comprehensive religious, juridical and political culture and belonging to the clerical aristocracy, while he has repeatedly demonstrated his lack of awareness of the ways and means a leader is supposed to use to drive his country. His inexperience is reflected in the choice of the members of his team that have often

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ Sabahi F., *Storia dell'Iran, 1890-2008* (Bruno Mondadori, 2009), 187

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 179

proved not to be expert in the tasks assigned to them and selected according to questionable criteria of homogeneity. At the UN General Assembly of 2005 the Iranian delegation boasted nor any diplomatic officer nor any member of the nuclear program team. The former Foreign Minister and former ambassador to Turkey and Japan Manouchehr Mottaki²⁵⁰, firmly opposed to any negotiation about the atomic with Europe direct reporter to the Supreme Leader, was a member of the same cabinet of the liberist Davoud Danesh-Jafari, serving as the Minister of Economy and Finance Affairs.

Despite criticism from the laity to the religious and vice versa, although the difficulties the clergy has to deal with in its attempts to assert its own view of the management of the state and in spite the national economy is going through a period of serious crisis, the people do not seem to care too much about the precariousness of the political situation. What continues to provide consent to the regime is the huge machine of the welfare state, which provides a wide range of subsidies, benefits, tax relief to the citizens. Ahmadinejad administration has extended the health care, clearly specifying the beneficiaries and the conditions of access, to the entire population (and in a country like Iran that means to nomads and shepherds too) with the result that regardless of whether they are men or women 90% of Iranian people benefits from a coverage²⁵¹. Whereas the majority of the population is under the age of 35 and looking for the first residence is relatively simple to take advantage of interest-free loans for the purchase of the house, and young couples receive an additional assistance if they decide to marry²⁵². If they do not have the necessary resources to afford the expenses, the pilgrims who want to go to Mecca can contact one among the numerous state agencies that incurs the expenses of the travel. Put all together all these measures provide a large part of the Iranians to have a purchasing power corresponding to the triple of their actual revenues, which together with the promise that in the future the country will continue to exercise its national sovereignty without foreign interference constitute a valid explanation to why the population does not need to rise up and overthrow the regime to improve its conditions.

²⁵⁰ “Biography of Mottaki, nominee for post of foreign minister”, *Global Security*, accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iran/2005/iran-050814-irna03.htm>

²⁵¹ Mehrdad, “Health System in Iran”, *Japan Medical Association* (2009), accessed February 5, 2012. http://www.med.or.jp/english/journal/pdf/2009_01/069_073.pdf

²⁵² Ilias, “Report for Congress on Iran’s Economy”, *Congressional Research Service* (2008), accessed February 5, 2013. http://www.parstimes.com/history/crs_economy_08.pdf

2.3.1. The atomic Iran.

The first steps towards the development of nuclear power plants dates to the 50s of 20th century, when the Shah signed an agreement with the U.S. on nuclear cooperation for civilian purposes and acceded to NPT in 1970²⁵³. It was in 1974 that the Shah began to invest the significant revenues of oil sales in a nuclear program, aware of the importance of not wasting oil that could be exported to produce electricity when it was possible to experiment alternative forms of energy. The aim of the project was the achievement of the covering of a quarter of the nation's electricity needs from nuclear power in the space of 20 years through the construction of 20 stations across the country²⁵⁴. The construction should have had the participation of both Germany and France, with Iran acquiring foreign bonds for the supply of fissile material. The project was abandoned during the first years of the Islamic republic, also because of the damage reported by the plant during its war with Iraq, and re-started during the mid-90s of the twentieth century.

The regime had understood the importance of the operation of such systems already in the mid'80s, but the distrust of Germany and France prevented the export of material and stopped the project. It was thanks to an agreement in which Russia took on the commitment to complete the work of Bushehr plant , the first nuclear power plant in the country, for civilian purposes and to provide the fissile material to start it that the project restarted²⁵⁵; the work, however, were affected by notable Western pressure and have not yet been completed.

The first doubts of the international community about civilian nature of Iran's nuclear program dates back to 2002, when a group of opposition to the regime pointed out to IAEA inspection the construction of a for uranium enrichment site close to Natanz with technology presumably from Pakistan²⁵⁶: Iran signed the NPT, and can, therefore, neither acquire nuclear weapons nor the countries that are allowed to own this kind of armament can provide it the technology to achieve this purpose. In addition to not comply with the provisions of the Treaty Iran has not signed the Additional Protocol of 1997²⁵⁷, according to which the IAEA inspectors have the authority to inquire into activities related to the production of nuclear energy if their nature is not

²⁵³ Kerr, "Iran's Nuclear Program: Status", *Congressional Research Service* (2012), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL34544.pdf>

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ "Atomstroyexport", accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.atomstroyexport.com/project/eng/22>

²⁵⁶ "New Information on Top Secret Projects of the Iranian Regime's Nuclear Program. Remarks by Alireza Jafarzadeh, U.S. Representative Office, National Council of Resistance of Iran", *Iran Watch* (2002), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.iranwatch.org/privateviews/NCRI/perspex-ncri-topsecretprojects-081402.htm>

²⁵⁷ "Model Protocol Additional to the Agreement(s) between State(s) and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards (INFCIRC/540)", *International Atomic Energy Agency* (1997), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/1997/infcirc540c.pdf>

proved to be clear²⁵⁸. Even if the IAEA inspectors were promptly sent to the power station to verify if there were actual irregularities, reports²⁵⁹ of at that time President of the agency Mohamed El-Baredei declared they found no traces of enriched uranium in the plant. Two years later, despite the president has declared the potential of Iran to produce nuclear electricity on an industrial scale and in spite of IAEA inspectors find that not only deadlines for the suspension of uranium enrichment have not been met esteem but they also esteemed the achievement of the objective - namely the construction of a nuclear device - in a period ranging from 3 to 8 years, the U.S. worries about the future possible implications of the retaking of Iranian nuclear project are still restrained. The strain of the reports change in the one of November 2011, that clearly talks of a "possible existence in Iran of undisclosed nuclear related activities involving military related organizations, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile"²⁶⁰. The report also states that Iran attempted to procure equipment to be used with both civilian and military purposes and that it entered into possession of technical documents on the design of nuclear weapons, as well technicians were working on a project on their manufacture and on the related tests.

The possession of the bases of nuclear physics and of sufficient quantities of fissile material are not sufficient to produce an efficient device. It is also necessary to be in possession of a whole range of accessory technologies in order to produce a nuclear warhead, such as those related to the production of detonators and other accessory components which must nevertheless be subjected to a wide series of accurate tests; furthermore, the effectiveness of such a weapon goes hand in hand with the efficiency of the carrier on which it is positioned. In this case it is unclear whether these supporting technologies are actually possessed by Teheran and neither to what extent these plans have progressed. What is certain is that considerable progress has been made in the design of medium-range missiles, and if we consider that the range of this kind of vector goes from 1000 and 3000 km²⁶¹ and the distance between Tehran and Tel Aviv is almost 1600 km the worries of the State of Israel become understandable although the missiles are still in testing.

²⁵⁸ This did not, however, prevent India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea to acquire the atomic although they have never subscribed the Treaty; Tel Aviv even denies to dispose of such a technology, fueling tensions with Tehran.

²⁵⁹ IAEA Board Report, "Implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran", *International Atomic Energy Agency* (2003), accessed February 5,

2013. <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2003/gov2003-40.pdf>

²⁶⁰ IAEA Board Report, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *International Atomic Energy Agency* (2011), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2011/gov2011-65.pdf>

²⁶¹ U.S. Department of Defense. The classification depends on the standards of the different organizations

2.3.2. Sanctions.

Sanctions not always results in the paralysis of the country to which they are applied, if the local government has proven to be able to manage both the human and the economic capital is available - and it seems to be the case of Iran, even if the death of some of the most talented engineers in the country has undoubtedly affected the progress of the nuclear program.

It is however undeniable that the consequences of more stringent penalties could result to be significant, especially if Teheran will decide to put in place the threat of closing the Strait of Hormuz. In fact through the strait circulate every day something like 17 million barrels of oil, equivalent to almost 20%²⁶² of world consumption and to 80%²⁶³ of the needs of emerging Asian economies, with China in the lead²⁶⁴. Sanctions against Iran came from both national and multinational entities, and most of them can be reduced to the nations prohibitions which apply in the following areas: export of missiles, nuclear warheads, weapons and refined oil derivatives; investments in the oil, gas and petrochemical, do business with Iranian Republican Guard Corps, bank transactions and insurance companies, including the Central Bank of Iran.

Since 2006 there are eight resolutions passed at the UN about the sanctions on Iran for its refusal to halt its nuclear program. Through the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1696 of the UN calls on Iran to suspend uranium enrichment by August 31 on penalty of both economic and diplomatic sanctions²⁶⁵; failure to comply with the conditions led in December of the same year to in UNSC Resolution 1737²⁶⁶, unanimously passed and that, in addition to providing additional penalties for failure to comply with previous resolutions, freezes the funds of individuals and companies dealing with the activities related to uranium enrichment and prohibits the sale of their technologies and materials related to nuclear research. Following the refusal of Iran to stop enrichment in for the provision of technologies for civil nuclear power, in the following March UNSC Resolution 1747²⁶⁷ passed unanimously, tightening the measures already taken and also proclaiming the embargo on arms; sanctions were renewed by the UNSC Resolution 1835²⁶⁸, which was voted on after the IAEA report of 15 September 2008 in which the inspectors confirmed that

²⁶² World Oil Transit Chokepoints, U.S. Energy Information Administration 2012), accessed February 4, 2013.

<http://www.eia.gov/countries/regions-topics.cfm?fips=WOTC&trk=p3>

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ United Nations Security Council, "UNSC Resolution 1696", *United Nations Security Council* (2006), accessed February 5, 2013. [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1696\(2006\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1696(2006))

²⁶⁶ United Nations Security Council, "UNSC Resolution 1737", *United Nations Security Council* (2006), accessed February 5, 2013. [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1737\(2006\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1737(2006))

²⁶⁷ United Nations Security Council, "UNSC Resolution 1747", *United Nations Security Council* (2007), accessed February 5, 2013. [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1747\(2007\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1747(2007))

²⁶⁸ United Nations Security Council, "UNSC Resolution 1835", *United Nations Security Council* (2008), accessed February 5, 2012. [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1835\(2008\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1835(2008))

Iran was not only going on with the enrichment of uranium and hiding the true nature of its nuclear program but it was also making significant progress with regard to the accessory technologies.

But how these sanctions should deter Iran from continuing with the program? What is certain is that the greatest risks concern oil exports, which are essential to the very survival of the country and stopped by the ban on sale through the usual channels financial. Whether the measures become real is expected a loss of the 25% on the proceeds of exports: this would be a harsh blow to the already shaky Iranian economy, and the Saudis are already ready to take advantage of this instability by offering to increase their production in order to fill the gap due to the shortage of Iranian oil.

2.3.3. Why Iran can not give up nuclear.

The fact that despite the harsh sanctions and threats of military intervention if it would not give up its ambitions to equip itself with nuclear weapons, Iran does not seem very willing to cede on the issue. This is because there are solid reasons which impel the Islamic Republic to proceed with its nuclear program.

The first is the more strictly strategic one, that is to say to deter its neighbors from attack; the source of any disputes is currently determining who is entitled to benefit from the energy resources of the Caspian Sea, being no longer valid the agreements made at that time with the Soviet Union. What Iran also wants to prevent are the attacks on its citizens even outside the boundaries, as in the case of the killing of 10 Iranian diplomats stationed in Afghanistan in 1998²⁶⁹ after which it was decided to deploy troops to the border.

The second one is related to a question of more strictly energetic nature, arising from the fact that to the increase of the population and its displacement towards urban centers always correspond an increase of energy demand. Domestic demand then requires the subtraction of oil from exports, with the result that revenues from its sale decrease, and this is the reason why the government looks with great interest at nuclear power as an alternative source of energy.

To these strictly practical two reasons must also be added the factor of prestige, which is not to be underestimated. For a country that has never forgotten its imperial past and aspiring to take on new regional leadership is frustrating to see how neighboring countries that have long been colonies, such as India and Pakistan, are now notoriously in possession of the atomic while, on the contrary, all its ambitions in this regard are binding the control of the international community.

²⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch, "The Massacre in Mazar-i Sharif", *Human Rights Watch* (2008), accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/reports98/afghan/Afrepor0.htm>

Last but not least a nuclear arsenal is in possession of Israel, a country to which Iran is nothing short of hostile. What is certain is that the ultimate aim of the regime is to ensure its own survival, a goal now endangered by the rift between the religious and the "secular", of which the *bazari* (the merchants) and the industrialists are the respective expressions, by corruption and by bureaucratic inefficiency. This is in light of these that the nationalist card, the traditional glue that holds together the heterogeneous Iranian society, it is probably the only one the regime can play to avoid the effects that a possible foreign attack could have on the already shaky internal equilibrium; the provision of nuclear power becomes in this case a direct expression of national pride.

Part III

The Bahrain Case.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a small Sunni ruled Gulf State, actually an island offing the shores of Saudi Arabia and linked to it by King Fahd Causeway²⁷⁰. Its size is 3.5 times the extent of Washington D.C²⁷¹ and its population, a little more than 1.200.000 inhabitants²⁷², is constituted by a majority of non-Bahraini²⁷³. The majoritarian religion is the Muslim one, with a majority of Shia. It has highly developed communications and transport facilities and a highly diversified economy, whose leading sectors are finance, construction and aluminum production; 70% of State incomes²⁷⁴ and 11% of GDP²⁷⁵ rely on oil production and refining.

A characteristic of Bahraini people has always been the strong political commitment. A British protectorate until 1971, in two years the country had its first constitution providing the election of both a National Assembly and both the Council of Ministers²⁷⁶; despite the good premises the 1973 elections were the last ones until 2002. During those years demonstration held by people claiming for the respect of the Constitution have cyclically affected the country. The discontent of Bahraini blew up again in 2002 when the new King Sheikh Hamad bin ‘Isa Al Khalifa announced new elections. The new National Action Chart provides the existence of a bicameral Parliament, with the members of the lower House to be elected and the members of the higher House to be appointed by the King²⁷⁷; having the higher House more power than the other one and being its members undoubtedly faithful to the ruling family, it proves to be very hard to the elected members to effectively carry on their purposes.

The issue of representation is particularly lies at the heart of Shias, that despite they represent the majority in the country they are not allowed to work in a large part of the establishment – for example they are not allowed to serve in the police or in the military – for the suspect they are influenced by Iran in order to depose the ruling family have long time contributed to their marginalization. The recent uprising in other Arab countries gave new hope to Bahraini

²⁷⁰ King Fahd Causeway Authority. <http://www.kfca.com.sa>

²⁷¹ “Bahrain”, *CIA – The World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

²⁷² *Ibid*

²⁷³ Only 46% of population is Bahraini

²⁷⁴ “Bahrain”, *CIA – The World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁷⁶ Federal Research Division, *Bahrain*, 97-98.(Kessinger Publishing, 2004)

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*.

activists to make hear their voice and to assert their right. People claim for wider political representation and democratization, opposing to an establishment holding massive control on country richness and resources.

Yet, however, the most of Western people barely knows a two-year people uprising is still going on in Bahrain. Those same international authorities that immediately intervened to peace the Libyan turmoil and those same broadcasting stations that daily followed the events of Tahrir Square are blatantly silent about what is going on in this small Gulf island. Activist are daily tortured and arrested for having express their opinion against the Government; doctors are forbid to make their work and to give assistance to the pacific protesters that are daily beaten and shot by the police force; people is afraid to go to the hospital if wounded and in need of care, because the police periodically burst in medical facilities in order to identify and arrest people suspected of having taking part to the protest; preminent leaders of the civil right movement are now serving time after having being shortly summed for opinion crimes and they are not allowed to see nor their attorneys nor their families.

Despite the almost complete international silence, Bahraini are going on with their struggle, but the most opposing powers they have to face are coming from outside the country.

1. Uprising background.

Protests in Bahrain explode on February 14, 2011²⁷⁸, now known as the "Day of Rage". What the protesters were asking for was the respect of the Constitution of 1973, unilaterally changed by the king without taking into account the will of the people expressed through a referendum in 2001 to set up an elective unicameral parliamentary system, and wider representation and equality for the marginalized Shia majority.

It is precisely the "institutional" reason to make the front of the demonstrators very broad and inclusive of anyone who cares about the respect for the institutions, without distinction of class or sect - although there is a surge in participatory Shias. Following appeals on social media hundreds of people spontaneously flock in the street of the capital Manama, where the police was trying to block the main access roads to the squares to avoid the crowd to aggregate. Despite demonstrators proved to have peaceful intentions the police was armed with tear gas and rubber bullets, and did not hesitate to use to disperse the crowd.

The main source of information on the following events is the Report of Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry²⁷⁹, collecting testimonies and evidences of the harsh reaction of the government against peaceful protestors. On the first day of protests the movement faced the first casualty, the young Ali Abdulhadi Almeshaima Saleh Jaafar, killed by a shot to the back²⁸⁰; the next day during his funeral procession it was the turn of Fadhel Salman Ali Salman Ali Matrook, shot by police who opened fire man-height²⁸¹.

Indignation drove people to converge to Pearl Roundabout, the intersection of the main streets of the capital; in the first hours of the afternoon the traffic was completely congested, and several thousands of people gathered there started to encamp with the purpose to spend the night there. The army ranked tanks and troops near the roundabout with the intention of threaten protesters; many left the field, but there are also those who remain there to spend the night. The police burst in at 3:00 AM on the 17th: witnesses spoke of clouds of tear gas shrouding the field surprising the sleeping protesters, of systematic attacks on medical devices, ambulances and journalists and of beatings, despite the presence of several women and children. The end result was of three dead and hundreds injured, crowding Salmayan Central Hospital and not allowed nor to enter or exit the structure, whose gates were blocked by the police. Protesters make their way to the

²⁷⁸ "Bahrain activists in 'Day of Rage'", *Al Jazeera English* (2011), accessed February 3, 2013.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/02/2011214925802473.html>

²⁷⁹ Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry. <http://www.bici.org.bh>

²⁸⁰ Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, 228 (2011). <http://www.bici.org.bh/BICIREportEN.pdf>

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

hospital in protest against the violation of their rights, and in the late afternoon they were more than 4000²⁸².

2. The international reaction.

2.1. The GCC reaction.

On March 14, 2011 the troops of Peninsula Shield Force, the military side of GCC that is supposed to intervene only in the case of external aggression of one of its members, crosses King Fahd Causeway²⁸³; men taking part to the operation are 1500, 1000 of them of Saudi belonging and 500 from the United Arab Emirates²⁸⁴. They officially entered the country in order to protect government installations and oil facilities²⁸⁵, even if it is easily understandable they are actually intervening in support of the local ruling family with the aim to harshly repress the revolt. The violence of the clashes between protesters and police forces embittered and two different versions of their nature emerged: while local opponents immediately justify their resentment against what they perceived as a real foreign occupation and a conspiracy against unarmed people, a note by the Bahrain government declared the violence started after a group of protesters attacked unarmed police officers, that resulted severely injured²⁸⁶.

By the way such a military deployment, led by an international force that is supposed to intervene with defense purposes only in order to crush a peaceful and unarmed revolt in a foreign country did not encountered the international blame. This proves to be even more evident if we think that the Bahraini seems to be the only case in which democratic claims for wider representation in an Arab country have been successfully hushed up toward military means²⁸⁷.

A similar commitment of GCC finds its explanation in the key interests of its most preeminent member, it is to say Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom has always been particularly sensitive when its own interests are menaced, and it does not hesitate to resort to strong-arm tactics when it comes to defend them. Riyadh is actually facing a delicate historical phase. The Al-Sauds are

²⁸² Chulov, "Bahrain's quiet anger turns to rage", *The Guardian* (2011), accessed January 30, 2013.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/17/bahrain-quiet-anger-turns-rage?INTCMP=SRCH>

²⁸³ "GCC troops dispatched to Bahrain to maintain order", *Al Arabiya* (2011), accessed January 30, 2013.

<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/03/14/141445.html>

²⁸⁴ Cloud and Banerjee, "Saudi Arabian, gulf forces enter Bahrain", *Los Angeles Times* (2011), accessed January 30, 2013. <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/mar/15/world/la-fg-bahrain-troops-20110315>

²⁸⁵ Spector, "Analysis: Saudi Arabia's intervention in Bahrain brings even higher fever", *Daily Maverick* (2011), accessed January 30, 2013. <http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2011-03-15-analysis-saudi-arabias-intervention-in-bahrain-brings-even-higher-fever>

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Jacobs, "Bahraini Reform and the Saudi Veto", *Fikra Forum English* (2012), accessed February 30, 2013.

<http://fikraforum.org/?p=1869>

experiencing the first generational change in history of the Kingdom, with the young princes replacing the old sons of Abd al-Aziz in the power management²⁸⁸, and this change would probably lead to the revision of the old alliance system. The rhetoric of its main competitor in the game to gain the regional leadership, the Islamic republic of Iran, is becoming more and more aggressive; the pleas to the international Shia communities not to give up their struggle²⁸⁹ for representation in Sunni-ruled Gulf states that denies them equal rights to the rest of the population that are coming from Iran seriously worries Saudi establishment.

The obsession for the possible evolution of Bahraini uprising in a Shia-led revolt, mainly due to the misperception of the conflict as the umpteenth Iranian move to broaden its influence in the region and to the reduction of the extent of the protest to the classical dichotomy “Iran Shia proxies” versus Sunni ruling class, could prove to be a fatal mistake to the Saudis²⁹⁰. Bahraini opposition movement was born as a non-sectarian one, led by a disfranchised majority claiming for its right to political representation and economic equality²⁹¹; to stress its Shia component and to overlook the others may result tactically disadvantageous to the Saudis.

As a matter of fact the current situation is a juicy opportunity to the Islamic Republic to express again its condemnation of the violent repressive means of its opponents and to present itself as the champion of democracy, while lacking it at the domestic level²⁹². Aware that a material support to Bahraini uprising would probably lead to a direct military confrontation it is not in the position to face and that this would give the Saudis the chance to enlarge its influence in the area, by highlighting the aggressiveness of GCC initiative and the lack of any US firm condemnation about it Tehran proves to be very wise²⁹³. Iran was, in fact, the first one to firmly condemn Peninsula Shield Force intervention.

²⁸⁸ chap.1

²⁸⁹ Tehran Mehr News Agency, “Saudi Intervention In Bahrain Is Playing With Fire: Iran's Parliament Committee”, *Payvand* (2011), accessed January 30, 2013 <http://www.payvand.com/news/11/apr/1009.html>

²⁹⁰ Takeyh, Saudi Arabia's Missteps into Bahrain, Council on Foreign Relations (2011), accessed January 30, 2013 <http://www.cfr.org/bahrain/saudi-arabias-missteps-into-bahrain/p24379>

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

2.2. Why does Bahraini uprising deeply concern Saudi Arabia?

All Gulf countries are historically obsessed with local Shia and their supposed mastermind, it is to say Iran. Saudi Arabia however is particularly concerned both with the sectarian issue and with its consequences in the other GCC countries, especially as concerns Bahrain. Saudi and Bahraini average citizens experience a lower wealth level than other Gulf countries, and they both have a long history of opposition movements and attempts to overturn power. Bahrain population share common origins with the Saudi, and the impact of its uprising affect Saudi Arabia more than other Gulf countries; aspiration of Bahraini Shia majority could renew the requests of Saudi discriminated Eastern province Shia, with risks to the wealth of the country²⁹⁴.

Nevertheless these elements alone can not fully explain the reasons that led Riyadh to push for GCC intervention. The real reason for Saudi Arabia has demonstrated to be concerned with Bahraini situation to such an extent is the general deterioration of its influence in the area. US military presence, increased after Gulf War I, goes to the detriment of its role of security keeper. Secondly, domestic crisis the country is currently facing damages the image it gives on the outside: the perception of other Gulf Countries is that if Riyadh's focus on its own internal issues it would not be able to safeguard their security anymore. In addition some countries such as Qatar and UAE are making attempts to escape the influence of Saudi orbit, in order to gain their own political independent role. Now that its role as the regional warrantor of stability is called into question Saudi Arabia can not take the chance of a successful uprising in a Shia majority country at its door, and this menace has to be removed before its influence extends to Saudi domestic opposition groups.

The fear of Iranian engagement in helping Arab Shia minorities is excessively perceived by Sunni Gulf monarchies, with the House of Saud heading the list. The sectarian proximity between Iran and Bahraini majority does not necessarily imply an active support coming from Teheran, even if Riyadh is firmly stressing this fact. Iranian ideological support to Bahraini cause and its opposition to Peninsula Shield Force intervention: in the words of Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi "the unexpected interference of foreign forces in popular uprisings in different countries, including Bahrain, whose people are peacefully after their legitimate demands, can lead the region toward a crisis that will have dangerous consequences"²⁹⁵.

²⁹⁴ Eastern Province is rich in production field, refineries and oil platforms.

²⁹⁵ Ghajar, "Saudi Intervention in Bahrain Provokes Iran", *Inside Iran* (2011), accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.insideiran.org/critical-comments/saudi-intervention-in-bahrain-complicates-iran%E2%80%99s-involvement/>

If Bahraini uprising will succeed the consequences for Iran would be the maintenance of the status-quo and of the current relations with the House of Khalifa, and the split of opposition front would represent a chance to Tehran to extend its ideological influence on the country. On the contrary, the consequence for Saudi Arabia will be the reawakening of domestic sectarianism and the worsening of its precarious stability. In conclusion Saudi Arabia has a lot to lose, while Iran has not only less to lose but also something to gain²⁹⁶.

3. A silenced revolution.

3.1. The Arab media silence. *Al Jazeera* and *Al Arabiya*.

Thinking about the main source of information about the Arab Spring uprisings and their developments, a name immediately comes to people's mind: Al Jazeera. As a matter of fact the Qatar-base broadcasting station has deeply highlighted those events, both in its English and in its Arabic version. For the visibility given to the uprisings it has been credited of having had a key role in their success, having favored the acceleration of the events by giving them a worldwide echo. Khlaed Hroub, an eminent Palestinian scholar, declared the Arab Spring is "a real people's uprising against decades of repression" and that it "owes its rapid spread to the influence of Al Jazeera, the voice of the silent majority in the Near East"²⁹⁷. However, the fact the Al Jazeera is not giving the Bahraini situation the same attention it gave to Egypt, Libya or Tunisia is undeniable, especially as far as regards Al Jazeera Arabic.

To demonstrate this assumption it can be useful to compare the attention given to Bahrain to the media coverage given to the events another Middle Eastern country, Syria, is actually facing. The backgrounds of the revolts are really close. In Bahrain the "Bloody Thursday", the day of the police night raid at Pearl Roundabout resulting in more than two hundred injured and three killed²⁹⁸, occurred on February 17, 2011; violent protests and confrontation between opponents and government-loyal forces began in Syria on March 15, 2011²⁹⁹. Even if they are both countries ruled by religious minorities, religious elements participating to the first stages of the uprisings have been soon marginalized. People requests are based on the lack of equal political representation, and not

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Scolz, "Al Jazeera English and the Arab Spring – testing Claims of bias", *Exchange Diplomacy* (2012), accessed January 30, 2013 <http://www.exchangediplomacy.com/al-jazeera-english-and-the-arab-spring-testing-claims-of-bias>

²⁹⁸ Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry Report (final revision December 2011) <http://files.bici.org.bh/BICReportEN.pdf>

²⁹⁹ Gunning, "Background to a Revolution", *n+* (2011), accessed January 31, 2013 <http://nplusonemag.com/background-to-a-revolution>

on religious issues; both countries recently experienced changes in the leadership, but the promises that both the two new leaders made have not been honored. For these reasons, both the uprisings are supposed to have been treated the same way. On the contrary a wide coverage has been given to Syrian civil war, while Bahrain uprisings and the relative human rights violations have substantially been ignored.

Also Al Arabiya, the direct rival of Al Jazeera in the region, is taking a peculiar attitude toward Bahrain. Located in Dubai, it was founded in 2003 thanks to an investment of 300 million US\$ by the Saudi-controlled pan-Arab satellite TV MBC, Lebanon's Hariri Group and other investors from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Gulf states³⁰⁰. Rather than substantially ignoring what is going on in Manama Al Arabiya decided to the road of the report – reporting the official version of the issue given by the government, it is to say that the demonstrators are actually religious fundamentalists armed and backed by Iran in order to carry on a Shia revolution in Bahrain³⁰¹. This is not surprising, considering a strong presence of Saudi elements in the board of investors. Also in the case of Al Arabiya the attitude towards Syria is diametrically opposite respect to the attitude towards Bahrain. The Dubai-based TV has often played the role of spokesperson in support of Syrian cause, reporting the declaration of GCC leaders calling for humanitarian aid for Syrian civilians and for a solid Gulf Unity³⁰².

The main possible explanation for the different coverage of the two uprising is three³⁰³. Firstly, Bahrain is a Shia majority country ruled by a Sunni royal family. If we consider this aspect, the silence of their networks on the reasons of the opponents is to be linked not only to the common sense of belonging to the Sunni community connecting the GCC countries leaders to the Al Khalifas but also, and this is the core point, to the entrenched sense of fear gripping the big Gulf leaders while thinking of their own Shia minorities³⁰⁴.

The risk of the success of Bahrain opposition front is a new wave of minorities' claims all over the Gulf, and the Saudis are particularly sensitive to the issue; in addition, a Shia-ruled Bahrain would represent a key pawn to the Iranian plans to gain the dominance of the region. Secondly, Bahrain is a monarchy enjoying good ties with other Gulf royal families for its membership in the GCC. This implies its perception of the management of power and opponents minorities is very

³⁰⁰ Feuilherade, Profile: Al Arabiya TV, *BBC News* (2003), accessed January 29, 2013 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3236654.stm

³⁰¹ Hashem, "The Bahrain Blackout in Arab Media", *Al Monitor* (2013), accessed January 31, 2013. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/01/bahrain-arab-spring-protests.html>

³⁰² "Al Arabiya: Saudi Arabia calls for 'strong and solid' Gulf union", *Shia International News Association* (2012), accessed January 30, 2013. <http://www.shafaqna.com/english/view-points/item/10589-al-arabiya-saudi-arabia-calls-for-%E2%80%99strong-and-solid%E2%80%99-gulf-union.html>

³⁰³ Scolz, "Al Jazeera English and the Arab Spring – testing Claims of bias", *Exchange Diplomacy* (2012), accessed January 30, 2013 <http://www.exchangediplomacy.com/al-jazeera-english-and-the-arab-spring-testing-claims-of-bias>

³⁰⁴ Chap 1, 1.1

close to the one of the other Gulf monarchies that adopts the same repressive approach toward them. These two first points are useful to understand why the two main Arab-language TVs have no interest in giving emphasis to what is actually going on in Bahrain.

The third elements can be useful to understand why, on the other hand, the media coverage of Syrian civil war is so extensive. Syria pertains, with Iran and Hezbollah, to a so-called “axis of resistance” opposing a so-called “axis of moderation”, to which the GCC states and Jordan belong³⁰⁵. The latter axis maintains good ties with Western countries, especially with the USA, as far as economic and military issues are concerned; at least at a commercial level they cooperates, to a relative extent, also with Israel. The first one, on the contrary, historically entertained very bad terms with the West and the aggressive politics of its members have always posed serious threats to the predominance of the Gulf States in the region. In such a perspective, to recall the attention on the possible success of an uprising against a Shia establishment proves to be very useful to the interests of Shiite-ruled Gulf countries.

3.2. The Western media silence.

Arab media are not the only one to be silent about Bahrain. If we look at the extent of the coverage of other Arab revolts in comparison to the attention given to Bahrain by Western countries we will notice a huge disparity³⁰⁶. For this purpose it can be useful to give some concrete examples.

In 2011 year-end summary ABC News highlighted the Syrian, Libyan, Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings; Bahrain was not mentioned at all (<http://abcnews.go.com/watch/this-week/SH559082/VD55160223/this-week-1225--this-year-in-politics>). *Time* magazine dedicated its 2011 “Person of the Year” cover to “The Protesters”: the cover story cited not only Tunisians, Egyptians, Syrians, Mexicans, Yemenis but also Italians, Spanish, Greeks, British; Bahrain is cited only once³⁰⁷. In an article reporting the result of a nine-months survey on the public opinion feelings about the political concerns and the degree of satisfaction with the power changes conducted by Dr. James Zogby and his team in seven Arab countries and Iran, he included the results of Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE; Bahrain is not mentioned at

³⁰⁵ Scolz M., Al Jazeera English and the Arab Spring – testing Claims of bias, *Exchange Diplomacy* (2012), accessed January 30, 2013. <http://www.exchangediplomacy.com/al-jazeera-english-and-the-arab-spring-testing-claims-of-bias>

³⁰⁶ Cavell, “Bahrain: How the US Mainstream Media Turn a Blind Eye To Washington’s Despotism Arab Ally”, *Global Research* (2012), accessed February 1, 2013. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/bahrain-how-the-us-mainstream-media-turn-a-blind-eye-to-washington-s-despotism-arab-ally/30176>

³⁰⁷ Andersen, “The Protesters”, *Time Magazine Person of the Year* (2011), accessed February 1, 2013. http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101745_2102132_2102373-5,00.html

all³⁰⁸. Considering that we are talking about magazines, journalists and TV shows of undisputed notoriety and disposing of the adequate extent of foreign contributors and links worldwide it results very hard to believe this silence is mere coincidental. Numbers are not sufficient to explain such an ignorance of the issue. Thinking percentagewise, if in 300.000 Bahraini on 1.200.00 have joined the protests at least 41 million Egyptians should have been in Tahrir Square to reach the same proportion³⁰⁹. This implies, then, that Bahraini protesters actually represent the largest Arab opposition front. But despite this Bahrain uprising remains substantially ignored by the main international media.

³⁰⁸ Zogby, The Arab Spring effect, *The Huffington Post* (2011), accessed February 1, 2013
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-zogby/the-arab-spring-effect_b_1155359.html

³⁰⁹ Cavell, "Bahrain: How the US Mainstream Media Turn a Blind Eye To Washington's Despotism Arab Ally", *Global Research* (2012), accessed February 1, 2013. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/bahrain-how-the-us-mainstream-media-turn-a-blind-eye-to-washington-s-despotic-arab-ally/30176>

Conclusions

Persian Gulf area is probably facing one of the most delicate phases of its long history. The necessity to cope with the limits the lack of democratization and the challenges of modernity combine with even wider claims for representation on the part of domestic minorities. This implies, then, the revision of both its domestic and foreign politics. These elements affect to a wider or a minor extent the whole region, but it is to each country to identify the issue which solution is a priority and to bone up on it.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar understood that to secure their wealth is the mean through which assure themselves stability. Both countries are aware that natural resources at their disposal are exhaustible and they are acting in the direction of economic diversification, by reinvestment their huge oil revenues both in the public and in the domestic sector³¹⁰. Gulf States highly depend on imports from western countries, especially as concerns agricultural products (50% ³¹¹of the whole imports), and the achievement of a biggest self-sufficiency will assure them stability even in the case of a change in the alliance system.

On the other hand Israel and Iran are deeply concerned about their own security. The priority to Islamic Republic seems to be the support to the anti-Israeli front³¹²; on the other hand, Israeli priority seems to remove the menace to its own existence³¹³ represented by Iranian nuclear program. In this moment military and economic partnership with Washington is more than ever essential to Tel Aviv, because the level of the perception of its insecurity has never been so high. The impact of a military confrontation opposing Israel and Iran would affect the current balances not only at regional but also at global level. Firstly because the confrontation does not exclude the possibility to resort the atomic, with consequences on the whole area; in addition, Israel would probably require US help for it has no allies in the region.

From it personal point of view, Washington seems to stand there watching the events. The failure of both Afghani and Iraqi mission proved to the US they are not the superpower they used to be anymore; these two experiences proved that the success of the action in case of a military

³¹⁰ “Opportunità di investimento in Arabia Saudita”, *Mercato Globale* (2011), accessed February 3, 2013. http://www.mglobale.it/Paesi/Mediterraneo_E_Golfo/Opportunita_Investimento/Opportunita_Di_Investimento_In_Arabia_Saudita.kl

³¹¹ Hallam, “International Investment in Developing Country Agriculture – Issues and Challenges”, *AgriRegioniEuropa* (2010), accessed February 3, 2013. http://www.agriregionieuropa.univpm.it/dettart.php?id_articolo=580

³¹² “Iran/Salehi: sostegno a resistenza in Libano e Palestina priorità politica per Teheran”, *Iran Italian Radio* (2012), accessed february 3, 2013. <http://italian.irib.ir/notizie/politica5/item/103108-iran-salehi-sostegno-a-resistenza-in-libano-e-palestina-priorit%C3%A0-politica-per-teheran>

³¹³ Marelli, “Scontro Israele-Iran: "La minaccia è più seria che mai", *affaritaliani.it* (2012), accessed February 3, 2012. <http://affaritaliani.libero.it/esteri/scontro-israele-iran-la-minaccia-pi-seria-che-mai160812.html>

intervention is no more assured, and they are now reluctant to intervene if not strictly necessary. The present crisis affects also the US: Obama administration has to face and solve the problems at home first, so the priority goes to the domestic issues.

Bahraini people are the one paying for the mixture of sectarian rivalries, political interests and fights for regional leadership deeply affecting Gulf countries. Manama is now a fundamental pawn in the game between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the main competitors for regional leadership. If at first the goals of Bahraini revolution were shared by the majority of population, now the Shia component of the opposition front is getting more and more predominant: “Saudi monarchy sustains State repression, while Iran is acting like the protector of the Shias of the kingdom³¹⁴”. By the way, there is no clear evidence Tehran is actively supporting Bahraini Shias; on the contrary, a persisting instability in the area could prove to be more useful to Iran than the effective success of the riots. In any case, Iranian sympathy for Bahraini cause is evident, at least because it represents a serious threat to Saudi own stability and a menace to US presence in the area. Losing the friendship of the leadership of the country that hosts the Fifth US Fleet would mean the end of the control Washington exercises on the Gulf, and the nightmare of a Shia re-awakening at home in conjunction with Bahraini one profoundly concerns the Al Sauds.

So why is Bahrain so important? Representing a sort of border line between Shia and Sunni world, the overthrow of Al Khalifas would represent the overturn of balances in behalf of Shias and the destabilization of the whole area. This small island is the set where a sort of Cold War between Iran and Saudi Arabia for regional leadership is occurring; this is the reason why Washington should be wiser in defining its line towards the issue, because both impulse and wait-and-see policies would let excessive leeway to the competitors and eventually endanger its key interests in the region.

³¹⁴ Liimatainen, “La rivolta in Bahrein, tra Iran e Arabia Saudita”, *Limes Online* (2012), accessed February 3, 2013. <http://temi.repubblica.it/limes/la-rivolta-in-bahrein-tra-iran-e-arabia-saudita/32856>

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