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30123 Venezia

TURKEY IN THE EYES OF
THE ARABIAN GULF
MONARCHIES: DISCUSSING
THE IMAGE OF TURKEY
THROUGH THREE GULF
NEWS AGENCIES.

Relatore

Ch. Prof. Duccio Basosi

Correlatore

Ch. Prof. Matteo Legrenzi

Laureando

Andrea Corrado Cesaro

Matricola 841728

Anno Accademico

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ABSTRACT

Negli ultimi trenta anni numerosi eventi si sono susseguiti nell'area mediorientale, che hanno indotto una serie di cambiamenti in tale regione. In particolare, il 1979 è stato un anno di grande rottura in quanto la rivoluzione islamica iraniana ha reso evidente la nascita di un vero e proprio mondo musulmano, eliminando il carattere comune panarabo che era stato elemento dominante durante le decadi precedenti, e ha distinto le due maggiori fazioni al suo interno, ossia la comunità sunnita da quella sciita. In questa frattura la penisola arabica, soprattutto l'Arabia Saudita, divenne il centro della comunità sunnita, affermandosi definitivamente come potenza regionale e, grazie anche agli sviluppi del mercato petrolifero, globale.

Sempre sul finire degli anni '70 iniziò un processo di riformismo della politica economica globale. Alle teorie keynesiane in favore di un *capitalismo controllato* si sostituì la dottrina neoliberale sostenuta da economisti quali Milton Friedman, capi di governo e autorità finanziarie. Questo cambiamento portò nuovi equilibri a livello mondiale, influenzando a sua volta le dinamiche proprie del Medio Oriente. In altre parole, la diffusione delle cosiddette *riforme strutturali* condizionò le priorità e le politiche economiche attuate dall'establishment politico dei Paesi arabi.

Parallelamente, la Turchia viveva una situazione socio-politica assai turbolenta, caratterizzata da tensioni sociali e ricorrenti colpi di Stato. Infatti, alle soglie del nuovo decennio, il 12 settembre 1980, l'élite militare di Ankara depose il governo retto da Necmettin Erbakan e completò il terzo golpe della storia moderna della repubblica turca. Tre anni dopo, tornando a un sistema democraticamente eletto, il neo Primo Ministro Turgut Ozal diede inizio a una favorevole congiuntura caratterizzata da una sostenuta crescita economica e da un forte consenso politico incentrato sulla sua persona, fenomeno difficilmente riscontrabile fin dalla nascita della repubblica. Si dovranno aspettare i primi anni 2000 e l'affermazione elettorale di Recep Tayyip Erdogan per osservare nuovamente una fase di consolidata stabilità politica unita a un'efficace industrializzazione.

Attraverso i mutamenti susseguitisi in queste ultime decadi, alcuni Paesi, tra cui la Turchia e le monarchie del Golfo Persico, hanno assunto un ruolo preminente nello scenario mediorientale, divenendo attori chiave per determinare e influenzare le dinamiche politiche, sociali ed economiche dell'intera regione. Inoltre, eventi recenti, in primis lo scoppio delle Primavere Arabe nel 2011, hanno accentuato la dinamicità del contesto locale, portando alla cosiddetta fine dell'idea di *eccezionalità* del mondo arabo, concetto secondo cui quest'area geografica fosse immune a ogni tipo di evoluzione in senso democratico delle forme politiche istituzionali. Grazie ai sopracitati presupposti, questo lavoro ha scelto di focalizzarsi su questi soggetti, analizzandoli e domandandosi quale fosse il loro attuale rapporto attraverso lo studio della stampa del Golfo.

Tenendo saldo quest'obiettivo, i primi due capitoli forniscono il background teorico necessario per comprendere adeguatamente i maggiori temi che interessano i Paesi considerati e l'intera area araba.

Il primo capitolo si concentra sulle origini storiche e le caratteristiche socio-culturali della Turchia e delle monarchie del Golfo Persico. Descrivendo i passaggi fondamentali della formazione della Repubblica turca e dell'affermazione dei vari sceicchi nei rispettivi regni ed emirati, emergono una serie di elementi comuni assai rilevanti per ciascuno degli attori coinvolti: in particolare, l'Islam ha rappresentato l'humus culturale condiviso dalla maggior parte delle comunità mediorientali; il consolidamento di un moderno stato-nazione e di una identità nazionale sono state priorità altrettanto condivise fin dagli inizi del '900, momento in cui avvenne il collasso dell'Impero Ottomano; infine, l'intervento da parte di potenze occidentali negli affari della regione è stato un dato di fatto per ogni nuova realtà politica araba. Tenendo conto degli elementi comuni evidenziati, il capitolo si concentra sui Paesi protagonisti dello studio in questione. Dapprima l'Arabia Saudita è presa a modello per le restanti monarchie del Golfo, al fine di mostrare approfonditamente la relazione tra religione e intervento straniero nella formazione dello stato-nazione saudita. Infatti, la famiglia Saud stipulò uno stretto legame con la comunità Wahhbita, fazione religiosa all'interno del mondo sunnita, per assicurarsi

una legittimità interna e, parallelamente alla stessa maniera, con le autorità britanniche e poi statunitensi per garantire un appoggio estero al proprio regime. Attraverso lo studio del caso saudita è possibile osservare gli effetti socio-politici esercitati dai fattori considerati e la loro profonda interconnessione. Volgendosi verso le questioni turche, è possibile ritrovare le stesse tematiche al centro della vita socio-politica del Paese. Peculiarità della coscienza identitaria turca è una complessa coesistenza tra valori secolari, retaggio delle influenze occidentali, e della tradizione islamica. Le ripercussioni di tale rapporto si riscontrano chiaramente sia a livello sociale sia politico istituzionale, giustificando un ruolo di particolare rilevanza e prestigio all'esercito. Grazie ai concetti delineati in questo primo capitolo, è possibile iniziare ad assumere una prospettiva comparativa dei Paesi e delle caratteristiche presenti nel Golfo Persico e in Anatolia.

La seconda sezione analizza gli aspetti economici, completando il bagaglio teorico necessario. Punto di partenza è il concetto di *rentier state*, legato ai Paesi produttori di materie prime e in particolare del petrolio. Infatti, l'iniziale macro distinzione evidenzia le nazioni produttrici di greggio da quelle invece importatrici di risorse energetiche. Tale caratteristica comporta solitamente un diverso sviluppo del sistema produttivo nazionale, inducendo in linea generale nei Paesi esportatori di combustibili fossili un'economia *allocativa*, e negli stati privi di tali risorse un'economia *produttiva*. Le monarchie del Golfo Persico sono tra gli esempi classici di *rentier state*, mentre la Turchia ha sviluppato da sempre un diverso sistema economico, basato principalmente su prestiti internazionali e su modelli industriali occidentali.

Per ampliare il quadro generale nel quale le economie, turche o arabe che siano, si sono sviluppate, il secondo capitolo introduce i principi alla base della teoria neoliberale e spiega come essi abbiano influenzato i soggetti considerati. Da un lato le monarchie del Golfo hanno attenuato parzialmente il loro forte carattere *rentier* cercando di consolidare settori quali quello finanziario, bancario e delle costruzioni per diversificare le proprie economie e facilitare una maggiore integrazione con le economie globali. In altre parole, all'interno dell'area arabica è presente un deciso mix

tra *rentierism* e neoliberismo. Dall'altro, al contrario, Ankara ha tendenzialmente seguito nel corso dei decenni le linee guida offerte dal pensiero economico dominante occidentale. A partire dagli anni '80 il governo retto da Turgut Ozal ha accettato le politiche di deregolamentazione e privatizzazione, le quali, sebbene turbolenze politiche durante l'ultima decade del Novecento abbiano comportato l'ennesima battuta d'arresto per la crescita turca, sono state adottate anche dal governo conservatore dell'*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP), eletto nel novembre 2002. I successi economici dell'AKP saranno proprio uno degli elementi di forza di questa fazione politica, capace di mantenere la sua supremazia parlamentare per quasi tre lustri. Ovviamente, il carattere comparativo dell'analisi degli attori in questione emergerà anche nella trattazione degli aspetti economici.

Il terzo capitolo è il cuore del lavoro svolto. Suo obiettivo è di rappresentare l'immagine attuale della Turchia attraverso la stampa del Golfo. A tal fine sono considerate le edizioni in inglese di tre testate giornalistiche: rispettivamente *Al Jazeera*, *Al Arabiya* e *Saudi Gazette*. L'importanza dei media è espressa tramite la spiegazione del cosiddetto *Al Jazeera phenomenon*, il quale ha radicalmente mutato lo standard e lo stile dell'informazione prodotta nel mondo arabo. La concezione di *soft power* legata al finanziamento di mezzi d'informazione qualitativamente affidabili e slegati ufficialmente da logiche di regime ha preso piede nella regione grazie alla volontà dello Sceicco Hamad Al Thani. Il successo dell'emittente del Qatar è fuori dubbio e il tentativo da parte di Paesi limitrofi di promuovere altrettante agenzie di stampa è la dimostrazione concreta del ruolo attualmente rivestito dai media arabi.

L'immagine tratteggiata della Turchia rispecchia i tre macro settori della vita dello stato, ossia il campo politico, economico e sociale. In ogni giornale è presente una forte interconnessione tra questi aspetti. Si possono però distinguere alcuni argomenti ricorrenti e comuni alle tre testate giornalistiche. In particolare, lo scenario politico è dominato dalla figura di Recep Tayyip Erdogan e dai successi conseguiti dal suo partito, l'AKP.

I media del Golfo s'interrogano sul significato delle continue vittorie

elettorali del partito conservatore e forniscono loro interpretazioni per giustificare tale fenomeno. Tuttavia non esitano a menzionare potenziali scenari di crisi, dovuti, ad esempio, a una possibile rivalità all'interno del partito stesso e ai rischi di un eccessivo autoritarismo legato alla persona di Erdogan. L'immagine economica è a sua volta caratterizzata dal riconoscimento di una crescita del PIL senza precedenti nella recente storia repubblicana, ma minata da debolezze strutturali che non garantiscono orizzonti di stabilità per il sistema-paese turco. Soprattutto il cronico indebitamento verso istituzioni internazionali, quali il Fondo Monetario Internazionale (FMI) e la Banca Mondiale (BM), e il rischio di alti tassi inflazionistici, pongono il governo di Ankara davanti un delicato contesto economico difficilmente districabile. In ultimo, lo scenario sociale non è meno controverso dei precedenti. I temi caldi posti in rilievo sono essenzialmente tre: la questione della donna, la coesistenza di valori e pratiche islamiche all'interno di un contesto repubblicano ufficialmente secolare e, infine, il grado di libertà di stampa. E' interessante notare, già a prima vista, che questi argomenti sono tutti nodi spinosi per gli stessi Paesi del Golfo Persico, nonostante questo è possibile riscontrare un ampio dibattito e articoli di denuncia su tutte le testate giornalistiche considerate.

Per concludere l'analisi svolta è possibile trarre alcune considerazioni in merito all'utilità di aver delineato l'attuale immagine della Turchia. Condividendo il pensiero del think tank *Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfi* (TESEV), solo istaurando un solido dialogo tra i maggiori attori regionali e globali, ossia Turchia e monarchie del Golfo Persico, è possibile raggiungere una conoscenza reciproca in grado di guidare interessi comuni e partnership economiche e politiche. In tal modo, questo lavoro si pone come fine quello di indagare l'attuale stato dell'arte, o meglio la condizione della relazione tra questi soggetti, cercando di evidenziare gli aspetti del dialogo più significativi. Inoltre, la discussione conclusiva fornirà considerazioni sui rapporti interni tra le varie monarchie del Golfo, sul dibattito inter-arabo su questioni legate al secolarismo e all'Islam, sulle prospettive economico-politico dell'area mediorientale e sull'immagine che gli stessi Paesi arabi vogliono fornire al mondo per mezzo dei propri canali d'informazione.

INTRODUCTION

This work aims to draw up the current image of Turkey through an analysis of three Gulf news agencies, *Al Jazeera English*, *Al Arabiya English* and *Saudi Gazette* respectively. In doing so, it will question in a broader sense how the GCC monarchies treat and present events relating to Turkish affairs. In order to base solidly this investigation, an extensive comparative description of the Turkish and Gulf socio-political and economic features will be discussed.

In other words, this paper investigates on a particular aspect of the general Middle Eastern framework. This region, known as MENA (Middle East and North Africa), comprehends a vast area, which range from the Western Maghreb, crossing Mashrek, Anatolia and the Arabian Peninsula, to the Eastern territories of Persia. The 20th century posed a number of relevant challenges to the inhabitants of these lands, resulting major changes and shaping the modern face of the region. Insofar, MENA nations became central both into regional and global affairs.

Above all the potential reasons, three fundamental motivations justify the need to inquiry and analyse extensively players and events of this specific geographic area: firstly, the phenomenon defined as “end of exceptionalism” that began in 2011 when the Arab Springs spread out; secondly, the harsh relationship between West and East, or rather between Western culture and Islamic precepts and values; thirdly, the adaptation of a Western directed political economy, namely neoliberalism, to the Middle Eastern economic framework.

Deepening these issues, the former concerns the idea that the entire Middle East missed any democratic evolution and, on the other hand, it consolidated authoritative regimes incurring in few political changes in contemporary history¹. Furthermore, the term “exceptionalism” does not refer just to a democratic/undemocratic discourse, but it includes a broader sense of stagnation due to marginal participation and lack of economic

¹ Fawcett, Louise, 2011, “*International Relations of the Middle East*”, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, Chapter 4, “*The Middle East Since the Cold War*”, p. 93.

integration with other global partners. This assessment has been denied in 2011² when the Arab Springs broke up across the region. Turmoil and social unrests toppled long-living dictatorships in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, while striking riots occurred among neighbour countries such as Syria and Bahrain. Despite uncertain and unstable political consequences resulted by the recent events, these uprisings showed up a vivid and active background of the Middle East relying to the past the idea of an immutable socio-political context.

Concerning the second element that refers to the West-Arab relationship, it denotes social, political and cultural aspects respectively. Several scholars addressed often this topic giving different interpretations³. For instance, Emiliani's work covers historically the connection and the mutual geopolitical influence between Western and Arab players; while authors such as A. Destro, S. Bozdogan and R. Kasaba address the cultural and social factors, which challenged and shaped the European as well as the Middle Eastern societies. Insofar, throughout the last century a fundamental dichotomy took place, resulting, for example, in a complicated coexistence between secularism and Muslim values. The former is a direct exported cultural product from the Western thought, while the latter is probably the most relevant heritage from the Islamic tradition. Over the decades and depending on the geographical territories, political establishments embraced differently this set of values, re-interpreting constantly the relation between Western and Middle Eastern world. Nowadays, this relationship is still an on-going affair characterized by open-spaces and unresolved matters.

Turning to the third reason, it concerns the adaptation of the MENA countries to a neoliberal economic system. From the late 1970s onwards, this doctrine became the most popular think tank across political elites and businessmen worldwide, fostering a new attitude in the political economy

² Ibid. Chapter 4, "*The Middle East Since the Cold War*", and Chapter 5, "*Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East*".

³ Emiliani, Marcela, 2012, "*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*", Roma, Editori Laterza; Destro, Adriana, 2012, "*I volti della Turchia*", Roma, Carocci Editore; Bozdogan Sibel and Kasaba Resat, 1997, "*Rethinking Modernity and national identity in Turkey*", Seattle/London: University Of Washington Press.

carried out by sovereign states⁴. The entire Middle East had to deal with this phenomenon, despite implementing differently policies and strategies. In accordance with R. Karadag⁵, L. Fawcett⁶ or, even, N. Tocci⁷, economic integration tendencies, or rather the globalisation as such, became a shifting factor for the Arab states, which in one way or another led some nations on the edge of the global scene. Turkey and the Gulf states are among those countries that benefitted at most from neoliberalism.

Practically, this work will be divided in three chapters. The first one will address the origins and the socio-political features of Turkey and the GCC monarchies. The aim will be to highlight a common background for these subjects, offering a solid knowledge on main issues and concepts relating to such countries. Throughout the readings of M. Emiliani⁸, L. Nocera⁹ and L. Fawcett¹⁰, three similar matters will give ground to begin a comparative analysis. Namely colonial heritage meaning the relationship with the Western powers, identity and state formation and, finally, the consideration of Islam and its role in the creation of the new society and the political institutions were all relevant issues to deal with for Turkey and the Gulf monarchies respectively. Afterward, authors such as M. Campanini¹¹ will provide further sources in order to deepen the relation between Islam and the Arab socio-political system; in particular, the relevance of the religion for consolidating the identity and state consciousness across the Middle Eastern region. Second part of the first chapter will distinguish two

⁴ Harvey, David, 2005, *"A Brief History of Neoliberalism"*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁵ Karadag, Roy, 2010, *"Neoliberal Restructuring In Turkey: from State To Oligarchic Capitalism"*, Max-Plank-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, December 2014 <https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/43284/1/635645955.pdf>

⁶ Fawcett, Louise, 2011, *"International Relations of the Middle East"*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.

⁷ Tocci Nathalie, Taspinar Ömer, Barkey Henri J., Soler i Lecha Eduard, and Nafaa Hassan, October 2011, *"Turkey and the Arab Spring. Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy from a Transatlantic Perspective"*, Article from Mediterranean Papers IAI, <http://www.gmfus.org/archives/ideational-and-material-power-in-the-mediterranean-the-role-of-turkey-and-the-gulf-cooperation-council/>

⁸ Emiliani, Marcela, 2012, *"Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991"*, Roma, Editori Laterza.

⁹ Nocera, Lea, 2011, *"La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell'AKP"*, Roma: Carocci.

¹⁰ Fawcett, Louise, 2011, *"International Relations of the Middle East"*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press

¹¹ Campanini, Massimo, 1999, *"Islam e politica"*, Bologna, Il Mulino, Chapter 2, "I fondamenti storici della politica".

sections: one focus on the GCC countries, their historical state formation and on Saudi Arabia as main study case; while, the latter, investigating on the Turkish context, the creation of the modern Turkey identity and the harsh equilibrium between secularism and Islamic legacies. Both sections will present the socio-political framework as a strongly interconnected network, where each issue influence and is influence by one another.

The second chapter will discuss the economic aspects of the previously mentioned players. Similarly as the former part, it will offer a comprehensive theoretical background in order to develop a detailed comparative analysis. Criteria to distinguish initially Turkey and the Gulf monarchies will be the “rentier state paradigm”, theorized by authors such as H. Mahdavi¹², H. Beblawi and G. Luciani¹³. Indeed, being Turkey an oil-importing country, it develops some major economic divergent features comparing with the Gulf economies, which instead are deeply connoted by rentier characteristics. Furthermore, an introductory discussion of neoliberalism will provide a fundamental tool to interpret the current framework of these nations. Scholars such as D. Harvey¹⁴ will provide extensive materials to picture the main peculiarities of this economic doctrine; while others, i.e. K. Oktem¹⁵, W. Hale¹⁶, M. Emiliani¹⁷ and R. E. Looney¹⁸, will furnish notable details relating to the specific cases of Turkey and the GCC countries. Thanks to the concepts discussed so far, the last part of the chapter will attempt to solve two main questions: concerning the Gulf economies, “assuming the effect of the oil-based economy, how did the GCC react to the neoliberal pressure?”; while relating to Turkey will be inquired “if the neoliberal policies implemented by the AKP governments,

¹² In Yates, Douglas A., 1996, *“The rentier state in Africa, oil rent dependency & neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon”*, Trenton, Africa World Press.

¹³ Fawcett, Louise, 2011, *“International Relations of the Middle East”*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.

¹⁴ Harvey, David, 2005, *“A Brief History of Neoliberalism”*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵ Öktem, Kerem, 2011, *“Turkey since 1989: angry nation”*, London: Zed books.

¹⁶ Hale William, Özbudun Ergun, 2010, *“Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey”*, New York, Routledge.

¹⁷ Emiliani, Marcela, 2012, *“Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991”*, Roma, Editori Laterza.

¹⁸ Looney, E. Robert, October 1990, *“Structural and Economic Change in the Arab Gulf after 1973”*, Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 514-535, Taylor & Francis, Ltd. December 2014 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283396>

since the early 2000s, are a continuation or a fracture compared to reforms proposed by the military junta, the Ozal government of the 1980s and the following parties of the 1990s". Solving the former question, several aspects will come up showing an economic, political and cultural interconnection between rentierism and neoliberalism. On the contrary dealing with the Turkish framework, throughout an historical approach will be covered the recent past of Anatolia, beginning from the Ozal government of the early '80s up to the current days. In doing so, considerations will be pointed out in order to figure out which policies are continuations and/or fractures over the last three decades.

The third chapter will address the principal topic of this work. Namely, it wonders which image of Turkey is drawn up by the Gulf media. Due to the increasing role of Ankara, regionally and globally respectively, this section questions how the GCC countries perceive this fact. Specifically, this final part will begin with the presentation, in accordance with Zayani's¹⁹ and Rushing's²⁰ publications, of the so-called *Al Jazeera phenomenon*. The relevance of the Gulf media for the entire Arab world comes up by observing the innovative style introduced since the Al Jazeera broadcasting, which influence neighbour countries and news agencies. Therefore, three online platforms will be considered to draw up the current image of Turkey: the already quoted *Al Jazeera*, the Dubai-based *Al Arabiya* and the Jeddah-based *Saudi Gazette*. The English edition of each web-newspapers will be taken into consideration and they will offer extensive articles and online resources to address three main fields of the Turkish framework: the political, economic and social contexts of Anatolia. Aiming to develop an exhaustive discussion, this analysis will highlight recurring headlines and common issues among the considered media.

¹⁹ Zayani, Mohamed, 2005, "*The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*", London, Pluto Press.

²⁰ Rushing, Josh, 2007, "*Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World*", New York, Palgrave MacMillan.

**CHAPTER 1: ORIGINS AND SOCIO-
POLITICAL FEATURES OF TURKEY AND GCC
COUNTRIES**

1.1 GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THE MIDDLE EAST AT THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

The current Middle East area was formerly part of the Ottoman Empire. Since the beginning of the 20th century the modern state-nation formation begun across the region through international agreements such as the Sykes-Picot Treaty (1916) and the San Remo conference (1920), which showed the European will to intervene directly into the Middle Eastern affairs²¹. Plus, this attitude favoured the Arab nationalist movements, which were mushrooming in the same time. These groups reflected the Western cultural influence and a cover support from those foreign powers: fact demonstrated by the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, happened from July 14th 1915 and January 30th 1916, that welcomed a massive Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire promising in exchange the independence of the Arab lands sponsored by the UK protection²². Another relevant factor to the collapse of the multi-ethnic Ottoman domination concerned the harmful consequences resulted by WWI: indeed, the Sultanate joined the imperial Germany in the Great War and the defeat of that coalition provoked the breaking point for the Istanbul regime²³.

Main socio-political similarities and particularities raised across the region due to this renewed scenario composed by a deep fragmentation among a set of mandate territories and neo-countries. Despite the initial strong influence of the Western countries, i.e. France, Britain and to a lesser extend Italy as well, that kept on controlling large part of the former Ottoman Empire, each Arab state had to deal with many weaknesses concerning their state-building process. Among all, issues concerning the relationship with the colonial powers, the consolidation of legitimate national institutions, the formation of specific national identities and, specifically to the Arab countries, the inner balances between Muslim communities were priorities to be faced.

²¹ Emiliani, Marcela, 2012, "*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*", Roma, Editori Laterza.

²² Fawcett, Louise, 2011, "*International Relations of the Middle East*", Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.

²³ Nocera, Lea, 2011, "*La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell'AKP*", Roma: Carocci.

Still in the aftermaths of WWII and during the deepest phase of decolonization through the 1950s and 1960s, the Arab countries implemented policies in order to achieve a certain degree of independence from the ex-colonial power and to shape and consolidate their own national identity. In this regard the state institutions formation and economic development represented priorities to reach: throughout those decades the enlargement of the bureaucratic apparatus and the entrenchment of industrialization processes were fundamental policies to implement.

Furthermore, the role of the religion remained a central debate both to legitimate both the state formation and international stances. Proposing different political paths and international strategies, leaders as Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser fostered a secular idea of pan-Arabism, while others as the tribal family of the Al-Saud spread the notion of *Wahhabism*, before to unify several tribes around the Arabian Peninsula, forming the current Saudi Arabia, and then to diffuse a sense a pan-Islamism among the Middle East nations.

In accordance with this shifting framework, both Turkey and the Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf dealt with all the issues previously mentioned: namely colonial heritage meaning the relationship with the Western powers, identity and state formation and, finally, the consideration of Islam and its role in the creation of the new society and the political institutions.

1.2 ISLAM AND SOCIO-POLITICAL SYSTEM

In order to figure out the importance of Islam for the socio-political construction of the Arab nations, it must be covered briefly the main beliefs of this religion, highlighting some concepts which influenced the society as such and the political institutions.

In accordance with Peter Mandaville²⁴, Islam, or at least some particular conservative schools of thought, does not recognize the distinction between religion and politics, assuming that the concept of sovereignty belongs just from God alone. This undermines any kind of legitimacy to political mankind institutions and it induces the split between the *dar al-Islam* (the reign of Islam) and the *dar al-harb* (reign of war): obviously, the former regards the territories under control of the Muslim authority, while the latter lived by infidels might be a potential enemy. Furthermore, another useful notion to point out refers to the idea of *jihad*, namely the “holy war”, or just “struggle”, that might happen both between the Muslim versus the non-Muslim world and inside any Muslim believer, who should respect and follow all the religious precepts, but he could be lured towards an unfaithful behaviour. These main terms and shared beliefs lead to the formation of the idea of *umma*, literally “community of believers”. Nonetheless, this common ground did not prevent the developing of rivalries between Arab states nor the spread of other ideologies throughout the decades of the 20th century, but rather it offered “a general sense of belonging to a geographically broad and culturally diverse faith tradition”²⁵ that induced under some circumstances common feelings and policies carried out by the Arab leaders.

Historically, the Muslim communities established a set of monarchies, called caliphates and governed by a caliph, who was entitled of the material and spiritual power representing Mohammed. According to Prophet legacy, the uniqueness of God, *Allah*, did not envisage the possibility to form a break between material and spiritual powers and in this regard the caliph

²⁴ Fawcett, Louise, 2011, “*International Relations of the Middle East*”, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, Cap. 8 “*Istam and International Relations in the Middle East: From Umma to Nation State*”.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 171.

had to guide the entire Muslim community behaving for a common wellness²⁶. Practically, in the aftermaths of the Mohammed death some fundamental division of the Islamic faith raised up due to different interpretations about the decisional mechanism to choose a new caliph and Muslim main spokesman. For instance, through these lens it can be explained the fracture between Sunni and Shia: the former group claimed that the most relevant Muslim intellectuals and influent persons had the duty to represent the entire Islamic world through a consultative process and, in doing so, the Sunnis considered themselves as the most rigorous with the Mohammed legacy; while the latter gave another interpretation welcoming the authority of Ali, one of the first Mohammed's follower, as the only one able to replace the Prophet icon²⁷. Due to the without odds Ottoman expansion across the Arab territories, the major caliphate was held in Istanbul up to the collapse of the Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Due to the willing of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the caliphate has been abolished formally in 1924 and a deep break between secularism and Islamism rose as major issue for the upcoming decades in the entire Muslim world.

As previously mentioned, several times Islam and its identity has been used as a tool to mobilize mobs and international consensus among Muslim countries in order to achieve certain political aims. Already in the late 19th century, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-97), one of the major Muslim theologians, claimed the importance of Islam to reinvigorate the *umma* consciousness and to foster anti-colonial resistance. In doing so, he founded the *Salafi* movement that re-interpreted according a conservative perspective the Muslim faith. For this reason Al-Afghani considered his group as a tool useful for a cultural "revolution" of the Muslim world rather than political²⁸. In his eyes the cultural "revolution" had to face the relationship between the Muslim tradition and the concept of modernity. Thanks to his theoretical work, he combined the meanings of the two terms

²⁶ Campanini, Massimo, 1999, "*Islam e politica*", Bologna, Il Mulino, Chapter 2, "I fondamenti storici della politica".

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Emiliani, Marcela, 2012, "*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*", Roma, Editori Laterza, p. 14.

ending the idea that modernity was referred just to the Western world²⁹.

Beside the common faith, another fundamental pan-regional ideology, the so-called Nasserism due to the Egyptian Colonel Nasser, developed mainly through the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, in these two decades the Egyptian establishment proposed its national-secular model to the neighbour countries, emphasizing the historical and cultural affinity of all Arabic-speaking peoples and leading to a short-lived political union between Egypt and Syria, known as the United Arab Republic (1958-61). Due to its secular values and socialist affinity, the Nasser's pan-Arabism established a problematic balance with the Muslim sections of the Egyptian society, for instance banning the Muslim Brotherhood, and the other religious-based nations.

Saudi Arabia can represent a useful study-case of religious-based country. Indeed, since the initial state formation in 1932 the Saudi political system was characterized on the alliance between a leading tribal family, the Al-Saud, and some fellow communities that through the religious legitimization supported the effort to unify diverse tribal regions into a single polity. In other words, "*Saudi Arabia would seek to assert itself as a leader of the Muslim world, not only because of its geo-political clout, but also because of the presence on its borders of Islam's two holiest cities, Mecca and Medina [...]*"³⁰. This short quotation can point out the importance of Islam not just for the national-state formation, but for the pan-regional aims of a single country as well.

Due to the death of Colonel Nasser in 1970 and the failure of the major reforms of his political economy plan (i.e. enlargement of the administrative apparatus or the implementation of the policy known as Import Substitution Industrialization), the pan-Arabism wave step back and, since the 1970s on, an "Islamic Revival" spread across the region.

Indeed, movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or the

²⁹ Ibid. p. 14.

³⁰ Fawcett, Louise, 2011, "*International Relations of the Middle East*", Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, Cap. 8 "*Istam and International Relations in the Middle East: From Umma to Nation State*", p. 173.

Ikhwan in Saudi Arabia³¹, claiming the threat of losing the Islamic identity through excessive Westernization and secularization, succeed to raise their voices around most of the Arab world. Focusing on the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, it has been a middle-class phenomenon that proposed an alternative path obeying systematically to the Islamic precepts in all the aspects of the personal, public and institutional life. Thus, this organization appealed the sensibilities and the aspiration of the newly educated middle class, ensuring both a cultural buffer to the rapid modernization and the centrality of Islam in Arab identity and society.

Meanwhile, the active promotion of a reinvigorate pan-Islam consciousness spread thanks to the Saudi foreign policy, which since the early 1970s started to finance and support activities as mosque-building and religious education programs around the Muslim world. The Saudi establishment was able in doing so benefitting of the more and more profitable revenues coming from the oil market, especially in the aftermaths of the 1973 oil crisis, and due to US patronage, justified by the American governments adducing the prevention of any Soviet influence in the area. To remake the fact that the Saudi pan-Islam did not mean a general support for the Muslim faith as such, but rather it promoted *Wahhabism* as only doctrine to spread across the region. Mohammed Ibn Abd al-Wahhab theorized this radical and puritan perspective of Islam, which recognized just the Sunni community as true icon of the Muslim world and discrediting other groups such as the Shias³².

Despite this upcoming pressure from the Islamist world, the year 1979 can be considered as watershed for the entire Middle East. The Iran's Islamic Revolution has been a successful attempt to remove a secular regime by Islamic forces, led by the Ayatollah Khomeini who was the main spokesman against the pro-Western policies carried by the Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. At least two consequences came out from this coup d'états: the former concerns the impact of the revolution on the entire

³¹ Mitchell, Timothy, 2013, "*Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*", New York, London: Verso.

³² Emiliani, Marcela, 2012, "*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*", Roma, Editori Laterza, p. 44.

Muslim community as such, while the second one regards how the new Khomeini's regime affected the balances inside the Muslim world, namely the distinctions between Sunni, Shia and so on.

The first effect means that since the 1979 the Muslim world idea raised at a global stage, leaving behind the previous definition of Arab countries that was used so far. The term "Arab" and the "pan-Arabism" have been considered linked to the secular view proper of the 1950s and 1960s pushed by Colonel Nasser. While the renewed notion of "Muslim" assumed the meaning of a *political Islam* fostering the aim of a society and a political framework based on the ideas and precepts of the Islamic culture, opening a third path between the ideological bipolar blocs proper of the Cold War period.

Furthermore, as second consequence the year 1979 signed a breaking point in the balance between the Middle Eastern countries. Ending the so called "twin-pillar policies" implemented by the United States, the Islamic revolution in Iran divided the Muslim world along two paths: on one hand, the Sunni community governing around the Gulf area, above all Saudi Arabia; on the other hand, the rising Iranian Shia elite contrasted the previous Sunni hegemony. Indeed, Teheran begun to cultivate new partnerships, forming new alliances and cooperation programs: groups as the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Palestinian Hamas received direct finance and support from the Iranian aid plan; furthermore, the Iranian elite recognized the Syrian Alevi regime of Hafez al-Assad establishing a stable axis between these two countries.

The issues above described concerning the relation with the Western powers, identity and state formation, plus the role of Islam are all relevant aspects of the socio-political life and construction of the modern Middle East. Each state developed its own features, creating both similarities and differences with regard to the other neighbours. Before to conclude, in accordance with the Marcella Emiliani's analysis³³, six main considerations can be underlined concerning the socio-political formation of the modern Middle East: the first one mentions the fact that the state-nation pattern has

³³ Ibid. p. 23-24-25.

been originated in Europe through historical and cultural phases, which lacked in the rest of world. Thus, this institutional model has been “exported” as product by the colonial powers towards the controlled territories. Secondly, the national identity was not proper of the Ottoman population, which was composed by a set of ethnical and religious communities in such a way to coexist in the same place and the racist-based nationalist rhetoric altered the traditional balance. As it has been previously treated, these first two factors induced major problems in the Middle Eastern context. Moving to the third consideration, despite the fragilities above mentioned, the state-nation institutional pattern has been adopted across the Arab region, but it meant most of the times the affirmation of authoritative regimes avoiding any stance of political and social representation of the population. Similarly, the fourth point highlights the aspect that the Western model meant often the affirmation of secular values to remove the traditional Muslim past. The fifth consideration referred to the tendency of each Middle Eastern state to limit its own activity to the economic field hoping to emulate the Western progress and development³⁴. The last one points out the fact that the proper features of the Arab region mixed with state-nation influences allowed the consolidation of particular state regimes such as the Islamic Republic of Iran and the cases labelled as rentier states.

With no exception, Turkey and the Gulf monarchies dealt with these topics. Highlighting their characteristics, it is possible to figure out their socio-political framework and which common points can be found. Doing so, the next two sections of this chapter cover respectively the GCC countries and, then, Turkey.

³⁴ In doing so, different strategies have been attempted: from the state-planned policies of the Nasser administration, passing through the rentier economic trends of the oil-producing countries, to the neoliberal reform changes from the ‘80s onwards.

1.3 SAUDI ARABIA AND THE REST OF GCC COUNTRIES

1.3.1 Historical introduction of the Gulf monarchies state formation

Along the Arabian Gulf, also known as Persian, a set of kingdoms and emirates emerged thanks to the affirmation and strengthen of tribal families, which succeeded over the time to enforce their power and guarantee their own political survival. These autocratic regimes founded since 1981 the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a network and common cooperative strategy to achieve global gains and a stable balance for each Council member³⁵. The GCC countries enlist six nations, namely Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman and Kuwait. Generally speaking, there might be highlighted several main similarities between them, especially on the fields concerning the economics, politics, culture and religion³⁶. Leaving behind any deep analysis of the political economy of the GCC countries (topic which will be addressed and debated in the next chapter), here it needs to be described the state formation process, the role of the religion, the relevance of an Islamic identity and how foreign powers intervened in this region in order to point out the social and political features of these monarchies. Resulting from the description of these issues, it will be possible to present the current political framework of Gulf States and their social environment. Introducing the state formation of each monarchy and its historical evolution, it will be deepen later on the analysis on the Saudi case study.

Beginning with Kuwait and Bahrain, these countries are usually presented together due to their strict interconnections. These monarchies are governed by respectively the Al-Sabah and Al-Khalifa dynasty. These families belong from Arabian ancestors, similar to the Saud community, and since the 17th century entrenched their power around the Kuwait harbour. Due to political rivalries, the Al-Khalifa moved out in 1764 from the native

³⁵ Fawcett, Louise, 2011, *“International Relations of the Middle East”*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.

³⁶ Nonneman, Gerd, 2006, *“Political reform in the Gulf monarchies: from liberalisation to democratisation? A comparative perspective”*, Dhuram University, February 2015 <http://dro.dur.ac.uk/472/1/NonnemanV3.pdf>

homeland and conquered the Bahrain archipelagos, formerly populated by Shia dwellers, founding its reign. In the meantime the British trading interests set the context to affirm their authoritative regimes: to protect and facilitate business in the area the UK establishment welcomed the affirmation of those families and, in fact, Bahrain became the first British protectorate in 1892 (ended in 1971), while Kuwait gained that status in 1899 (ended in 1961)³⁷.

Turning to the events happened in Oman, the sultanate led by the Al-Bu Said benefitted by the British action and their geostrategic position as well: despite raw material resources in Oman has been discovered just in last decades of the 20th century, the Al-Bu Said dynasty assured its supremacy already since the 1744 exploiting the trading through the Hormuz Strait. Controlling this passage, they became interlocutor with the imperial UK authorities, who sponsored their regime against potential rivalries living along the hinterland of Oman, namely the Ibadi community³⁸.

The original idea to create the so-called United Arab Emirates (UAE), known formerly as *trucial states*, belong to the sheikh Zayed Ibn Khalifa of the Al-Nahayan family from Abu Dhabi. He began to foster this network to define the different spheres of influence of each emirate. The concrete genesis of the UAE happened between 1968 and 1971 when the British declared their will to withdraw their military basis placed on the East side of the Suez Canal ending any direct control over these small states. Insofar the *trucial states* became an international issue and throughout a series of referendums the political scenario evolved, leading to the current network formed by seven emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, Fujairah and Ras al-Khaimah³⁹.

Concerning the Qatar state formation, the Al-Thani family became major stronghold in the aftermaths of 1877 when they defeated the Al-

³⁷The oil reserves will be a key reason for the importance of these states, but this issue will be deeply treated in the second chapter and, therefore, it is not mentioned in the paragraph. Emiliani, Marcela, 2012, “*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*”, Roma, Editori Laterza, p. 235-236-237-238-239.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 239-240.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 242-243.

Khalifa of Bahrain. The rivalry between these two communities induced UK to intervene avoiding any violent escalation and recognizing de facto the Al-Thani regime over the Qatari peninsula in 1916. At that time, the regime's weakness favoured a patronage with the rising power of Abdel Aziz Ibn Saud and his *Wahhabis* movement. Therefore, consequently the Al-Thani adopted precepts and values of that Muslim belief hoping to entrench their power. Nonetheless, Qatari establishment could achieve a safe and stable survival just when massive oil resources have been found across the national territories. The development of a proper "rentier state", as it will be seen in the second chapter, assured the Al-Thani regime from any potential collapse⁴⁰.

1.3.2 Saudi Arabia as study-case: religion and foreign intervention in the state formation

Authors as Timothy Mitchell⁴¹ and Marcella Emiliani⁴² covered the historical process of state building around the Arabian Peninsula. Thanks to their analysis, it can be figured out the main socio-political features of that area; in particular Saudi Arabia, the biggest and major regional power among the Council members, has been deeply discussed by them.

In 1902, Abdel Aziz Ibn Saud conquered the city of Riyadh, future capital of his kingdom, in central Arabia, beginning a war without odds against other local warlords and tribal families to keep controlling those territories. The future king Saud benefitted by two factors, both an external and an internal one. The former aid came from a foreign power, namely the British, that financed the war expenditures; while the latter came from a religious movement, the *muwahhidun* (meaning the adherents to *Wahhabism*), who supported ideologically and military the Saud's expansion plan. The Al-Saud/*Wahhabis* partnership entrenched its roots on the contract signed in 1744 between Al-Wahhab, theoretical creator of that religious doctrine, and Mohammed Ibn al-Saud, major strongman of the Saud family of that time, who agreed on a mutual protection by both sides:

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 243-244-245.

⁴¹ Mitchell, Timothy, 2013, "*Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*", New York, London: Verso.

⁴² Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, "*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*", Roma, Editori Laterza.

the Saud family had to safeguard the *Wahhabis* community and to spread its values in order to gain the legitimacy to govern the Arabian Peninsula⁴³.

Thus, already in the early 20th century two fundamental trends of the Persian Gulf area begun: a constant and then increasing foreign intervention on issues related to the Middle East politics and, furthermore, the attempt by the tribal elites to use religion and its pressure groups to achieve political legitimacy and assure their support across the population.

Indeed as Mitchell clarified, welcoming the *muwahhidun* values Ibn Saud guaranteed to himself the help of the Ikhwan, known also as Brotherhood – “an egalitarian movement attempting to replace the increasingly threatened life of Arabian tribal nomadism with settlement and agriculture, and the degenerate practices of saint worship and excessive veneration of the Prophet with the strict monotheism of *tawhid*”⁴⁴. Sustaining the doctrine of *jihad*, as formerly explained as the conflict between Muslim and non-Muslim world, the Ikhwan joined Ibn Saud in his expansionist war around the Arabian Peninsula, conquering before in 1913-14 the eastern Arabia and then in 1925 the kingdom of Hejaz in the west. Once Mecca and Medina, the holy cities part of the Hejaz territories, came under control of the Saud family, the Ikhwan made effort to impose their form of purified Islam, both destroying some memorials and places of worship considered improper and inducing Ibn Saud to set up committees “policing the spread of “harmful ideas” and participation in anti-government meetings”⁴⁵.

In other words, Ibn Saud and the Ikhwan movement used each other to obtain their own interests: easily the Saud family strengthen its position assuring a stable consensus, while the Ikhwan behaved as a pressure group spreading their voice and, among all, values across the Arabian Peninsula. Despite this original balance and common gain, already from the late 1920s the scenario shifted and these two actors went through a phase of tension: in the aftermaths of the conquest of the Hejaz, the Muslim movement pushed

⁴³ Ibid. p. 45.

⁴⁴ Mitchell, Timothy, 2013, “*Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*”, New York, London: Verso.p. 209

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 210.

to start a new jihad versus the northwards territories of Jordan, Kuwait and Iraq. These lands were currently under the British domination, key reason to discourage any attempt of invasion and potential threat for the alliance between the Saud family and the UK establishment. Thus, once the Ikhwan upraised in 1927 against the restraints on their expansionist purposes, Ibn Saud crushed their revolt thanks to the British intervention.

As consequence of the potential unreliable support by the Islamist movements, the recent formed Saudi regime looked for support from foreign allies. Formerly the British and then the Americans became main partners of the Saud family. The reason of such a great welcoming of this patronage was the oil production and its market. Oil companies such as the American Standard Oil of California (now Chevron) started to negotiate agreements concerning oil field concessions and the relative fuel production and exportation to the Western markets. Describing these partnerships through the Saudi perspective, Ibn Saud made a compromise with the religious establishment: *the “muwahhidun” leadership would tolerate the role of the foreign oil company, and in return their programme to convert Arabia to the teachings and discipline of “tawhid” would be funded with the proceeds from oil*⁴⁶.

Furthermore, the new established Arabian American Oil Company⁴⁷, known as ARAMCO, paid the revenues from the oil trading directly to the Saud family meaning that the royalties were received not to a national government, but to a single household. Benefitting by this increasing amount of revenues, an international support and a rather stable internal consensus based on the *Wahhabism*, Ibn Saud has been able to proclaim himself as king of the new established Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, previously provinces of Hejaz and Nejd. Importantly to underline the fact that it has been the only case that a nation took its name from a specific family name.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 210

⁴⁷ The American company Standard Oil of California established ARAMCO in 1933 as the California Arabian Standard Oil Company, which has been renamed in 1944 as Arabian American Oil Company. For a deeper description of the ARAMCO's formation check note 15 page 210 in Mitchell T., *“Carbon Democracy”*, 2013, Chapter *“McJihad”*.

1.3.3 Balance between religious and foreign clout over the decades: Effects on the socio-political framework

The following decades saw a switching framework between these actors. Still the Saud family's priority was its own regime survival, dealing with both the foreign interests and the Islamist groups. Nonetheless, the oil companies, representing the Western powers interests, and the "*muwahhidun*", meaning the most Islamist section of the society, tried to extend their own willing to each other. The results of these interconnections changed over the time leading to different political consequences. Since the aftermaths of WWII, through the 1950s, 60s and then 70s onwards, depending on the scenario and the capabilities owned by the political elite, the Saudi regime has been able to reinvigorate as well as to setback its relationship with both Islamist groups and Western powers.

During the 1950s King Ibn Saud renewed his support the to Ikhwan movement, renaming them as National Guard. Thus, once again the Saudi establishment strengthened the relation between religious and state institutions, giving to the "*mujahideen*", namely "*those engaged in jihad*"⁴⁸ fighting for the Ikawan movement, a status of legitimacy proper of an official national army.

Due to the pan-Arabism wave pushed by Colonel Nasser, in the early 1960s King Saud welcomed some stances like the nationalization plan of the foreign oil companies, first of all ARAMCO, and the creation of the oil cartels, respectively the OPEC and the regionally OAPEC, between the main oil state producers. This behaviour upset the American government that begun to openly support Prince Faisal as new leader of the Saudi regime in order to overthrow his brother in charge. Indeed, from 1964 Prince Faisal got in office implementing a reactionary policy and stepping back from the requests of the reformists and secular modernisers concerning a written constitution, an elected parliament and a reinvigorate programme of industrialization.

Especially since the late 1970s on, the complicated relation between

⁴⁸ Mitchell, Timothy, 2013, "*Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*", New York, London: Verso. p. 211

inner religious consensus and foreign power protection came under particular stress by a set of circumstances. An increasing level of corruption and repression of the political rights, plus the evergreen US partnership, put the Saudi regime at the centre of critics. The climax of this internal tense situation happened in November 1979 when armed rebel groups took control of part of the territories around Mecca and Medina and, the following month, occupied the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Still the “*muwahhidun*” through religious schools and mosque preachers played a significant role to give voice to protest. The harsh crackdown of the governmental troops succeeded to prevent the end of the Saudi dynasty, despite the killings of hundreds of protesters⁴⁹.

Besides the internal opposition, the Saudis had to face the critics coming from the Shia Iranian elite, which completing the first successful Islamic revolution raised the claim of being the new spokesmen of the Muslim community.

Last factor that harshened the Saudi political scenario was the collapse of the oil price since mid-1980s, namely 1984-85. Indeed as already noted since the state formation of the kingdom, the oil revenues were a fundamental resource of money, allowing the Saud family to enforce their influence both inside and outside the national borders. As exit strategy for this increasing pressure on the regime, the Saudi government favoured the participation of the young Saudis in the conflict going on in Afghanistan caused by the Soviet invasion in 1980. Basically the Saudi political elite emphasized the idea of crusade, or rather *jihad*, against a secular communist enemy, the Soviet Union, in order to create an external threat trying to avoid criticism for the national policies and foreign partnerships. Despite these efforts, the 1990s presented many difficulties as well: the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait induced once again the Saudi regime to welcome a Western, mainly American, intervention in the Gulf region to defeat the Saddam Hussein’s forces. Even if the First Gulf War benefitted by a vast multilateral consensus between both Western and Arab countries, the conflict consolidated the American strategy to intervene directly into the Middle

⁴⁹ Ibid.

East. As the presence of a Western secular power increase in the area, in accordance to an Islamist perspective the Islamic identity might suffer a potential threat, blaming critics to the regime behaviour. This might destabilize the balance between internal consensus based on the common faith values and consciousness and foreign power protection.

1.3.4 Interconnections between socio-political factors

Summing up the factors barely analysed, they can be enlisted as three interconnected subjects, which established different kinds of balances depending on the specific circumstances of each historical moment and effecting heavily the socio-political environment of the Middle Eastern nations.

Considering the Saudi case-study, these actors are respectively the Saud family, who since the beginning of the 20th century gained control over the Arabian Peninsula, the Islamist movement of the “*muwahhidin*” that spread the *Wahhabism* doctrine across part of the Arab world, and, finally, the Western foreign powers that in one way or another facilitate or complicated the affirmation of certain political class favourable to enforce profitable trade agreements.

The interconnections between each other can be easily highlighted: the Saudi political regime based its legitimacy sustaining and strengthening the Muslim identity, which offered precepts and values useful to shape the social structure; practically, King Saud and his successors welcomed the partnership with foreign allies, which could guarantee military and financial support. As well, the Saudi dynasty can be seen as a tool for the other two actors. Indeed, influencing the Saud family the “*muwahhidin*” movement achieved the possibility to broadcast easily its doctrine; on the other side, the British and, then, the Americans obtained a direct influence on the oil production, gaining a fundamental advantage on the market with regard of the potential rivals.

Nonetheless, the Western countries and the Muslim groups were interconnected producing relevant consequences for the political scenario. Despite as the commercial relation between Saudi Arabia and the US can

clarify that the priority for the Western governments concerned the oil production and its market, the European and American elites agreed on the role of the Muslim faith for the state and identity formation around the Middle East. Quoting a declaration made by president Eisenhower in 1956 concerning the Saudi political establishment and its role versus the Islam values can be shown the degree of connivance coming from the Western politicians: “*Arabia is a country that contains the holy places of the Muslim world, and the Saudi Arabians are considered to be the most deeply religious of all the Arab groups. Consequently, the King could be build up, possibly, as a spiritual leader*”⁵⁰. Agreeing on the promotion of a Muslim identity through proclaims and political diffusion of Islamic movements, the aim was the prevention of any consolidation of neither socialist parties nor ideological support towards communist regimes in any of the Arab countries. Indeed, the Eisenhower’s quotation previously mentioned can historically understood remembering the Suez crisis of 1956 and the great influence that Colonel Nasser gained that year, becoming a pan-Arab hero.

In the post-Cold War period, *political Islam* became somehow from an old ally to new threat to stem. In accordance with an Islamic perspective, both the Soviet Union and the United States could represent two ways of secularism, which could undermine an authentic Islamic identity. Thus, as the Soviets were considered an enemy to defeat in Afghanistan during the 1980s, according the same way of thinking the American troops in Iraq in the 1990s and then in the 2000s and the US influence in all the Middle East can be considered as potential threat to the independence of Islamic values. This harsh relationship between foreign clouts, active role of the Islamist groups and Muslim identity put each political regime in a delicate position to assure a balance to guarantee its own survival. The GCC countries are not exception in this framework, but rather the Saudi case study showed the complicated scenario the Saud family had to deal with over the decades.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 212

1.4 TURKEY: BACK TO THE ORIGIN OF THE REPUBLIC

1.4.1 Historical framework of the early 20th century

One of the major consequences of WWI has been the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Destabilized by the Great War, the Ottoman establishment had to face many centrifugal forces, which were leading to the fragmentation of the Middle East lands. European powers favoured nationalistic stances across the region, while an even harder war started against Greece in the early 1920s⁵¹. In this intrigued scenario Mustafa Kemal, a high official of the Ottoman army, succeeded to prevent the defeat caused by the Greek invasion and posed a watershed in the formation of modern Turkey. Seeking to avoid any direct foreign influence, he drew up the current national borders including the Anatolian territories, from Hatay on the South-West to Van on the South-East or from Kars on North-East to Istanbul, the old Ottoman capital, on the European side of the Bosphorus Strait.

Once the territorial integrity has been assured, Mustafa Kemal had to deal with the heavy heritage coming from the Ottomans and the formation of a renewed socio-political system. In the recently formed Turkish Republic as well, the same issues regarding the state and identity formation, the balances between different sets of values and ethnicities among the society, were main concerns for the political class.

Contrary to what we have seen in the Gulf countries, Mustafa Kemal paved a divergent way opening the doors to a democratic regime and to a sharply cut with the Islamic past. On one side, officially on the 1st November 1922 the Sultanate was abolished and since the 29th October 1923 the Turkish Republic was established. Doing so, the Turkish official implemented a series of reforms to remove the Arab linkages from the newly formed Turkey, for instance replacing the Latin alphabet instead of the Arabic letters used so far or, even, introducing the Turkish language during the *azan*, the call of the believers to pray, instead of the usual Arabic.

⁵¹ Nocera, Lea, 2011 “*La Turchia contemporanea : dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell'AKP*”, Roma: Carocci.

On the other side, the Muslim caliphate was also banned spreading secular values to model the new style of the Turkish society. This sudden openness to democratic values did not mean the actual affirmation of consolidate democracy, but rather it meant that officially the state sovereignty was held by a national assembly elected by indirect universal suffrage, following a sort of “parlamentarism” as the Western liberal democracies offered according their institutional pattern. Besides the promotion of this republican view, Mustafa Kemal became the stronghold of the political life and the icon for the revolutionary “new Turkish citizens”. Thus in this regard he renamed himself with the surname of Ataturk, the Turkish father. Only through a charismatic and authoritarian leader and leaving behind any political pluralism, the Kemalist vision could re-structure and modernize the society⁵². To figure out the prestige that Ataturk succeeded to achieve, authors as Bozdogan and Kasaba pointed out even the early critics of Turkish modernization and Kemalism “*concentrated their criticisms on the Ottoman leaders who preceded Mustafa Kemal or on those who followed him, and not on what Kemal himself attempted to do*”⁵³.

Despite this initial radical swift, the relation between secularism and Islamism heritage as well as matters related with the reshaped Turkish identity did not end so easily. Over the decades these issues produced different results, afflicting heavily the socio-political framework.

1.4.2 Deepening the Turkish state formation: identity, secularism and Islam

In order to clarify the state and social formation of the modern Turkey, it needs to debate the main assumptions of the Turkish identity, generated by the dualism between the secular perspective and Islamist one and the matters relative to ethnicities and minorities that composed the society.

In accordance with the anthropologist Adriana Destro⁵⁴, secular values

⁵² Ibid. p. 19

⁵³ Bozdogan Sibel and Kasaba Resat, 1997, “*Rethinking Modernity and national identity in Turkey*”, Seattle/London: University Of Washington Press, Cap. “*Once There Was, Once There Wasn’t: National Monuments and Interpersonal Exchange*”.

⁵⁴ Destro, Adriana, 2012, “*I volti della Turchia*”, Roma, Carocci Editore.

offered a different path to base a renewed identity and a breaking ideological tool to remove the traditional Ottoman legacy. With this regard in the initial period of the Turkish republican consolidation, it has been sustained an ideal opposition between old and anachronistic heritages coming from the past centuries due to the Islam faith and the modern and pragmatic pattern presented by the Western world. This belief was not a new-born idea proclaimed by the Kemalist establishment: indeed, since the reforms introduced by Sultan Selim III in the late 19th century and social movements as the Young Turks of the early 20th century, the European countries were somehow seen as model offering a specific institutional and ideological state-system. Thus, Atatürk can be considered as a leader that, welcoming a certain trend started in the previous decades, implemented and gave effort to some kinds of secular reforms in order to restrain the religious influence on the society and culture⁵⁵. In other words, the Kemalism aimed to remove the archaic state-system banning Islam from any political affair and relying it to the private sphere of everyone. The result planned was to reinvigorate the cultural and political scene, where the nation-state institutions (and not the religious authorities) had to be the main actors of the public life.

The notion of laic and laity, respectively in Turkish “*laik*” and “*laiklik*” and theorized by the French culture, were ideal lights in reformist wave carried out by Mustafa Kemal during the 1920s and 1930s: quoting Berkes⁵⁶, the aim pursued was “*the unification of a dichotomic system that existed in the legislative, educative, social and cultural fields*”. Despite the official declaration of intentions, the first Constitution (1924) affirmed on article 2 that “Islam was the state’s religion” meaning that Turkey still considered to a certain extent a high importance to the Islamic values. A more strict secular policy has been implemented since the late 1920s when in 1928 the 2nd article was abolished and a wave of reforms started. Muslim confraternities and Koranic schools were shut down and, besides, Western social habits and customs were introduced. These changes concerned the time and Gregorian calendar in 1926, Latin letters and numbers in 1928,

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 214

⁵⁶ Nocera, Lea, 2011, “*La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell'AKP*”, Roma: Carocci, p. 26.

weight and metric measure system and, gradually, the male and female dress-code⁵⁷.

The Republic then influenced the social composition damaging some groups and conservative classes, while favouring the claims of other parts of the society previously unable to raise their voice, such as feminist associations. Mentioning this latest example, laic policies, concerning the women's condition and fostering the gender political equality, highlighted the gap between this new republican attitude and the traditional patriarchal social lifestyle. On one side, efforts have been made to affirm a new woman's role in the Turkish society, but on the other side familiar and working ties kept following a masculine domination. Thus, here it can be figured out how identity tried to shape the social framework, changing former heritages⁵⁸, but opening challenges that are still far to be achieved nowadays.

Other ways have been attempt to remodel the Turkish identity. For instance, the creation of a civil society consciousness has been cultivated through a historic review⁵⁹ and the institution of a set of cultural houses, the so called "*Halk evleri*" and "*Halk odalari*", which emphasized a common literature across the Anatolian territories to diffuse a feeling of Turkishness among the different communities⁶⁰.

Especially the communities living across the national borders were other key issues to deal with. Namely, the second relevant aspect of the modern Turkish identity process regarded the ethnical composition of the society. Indeed, fundamental feature of the Ottoman Empire was its multi-ethnic character, allowed by the presence and coexistence of multi-linguistic and multi-confessional groups inside the imperial borders. On the contrary, the republican state system, based on a deeply nationalist approach, disregarded the former mixed social framework. It enforced a specific idea

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Destro, Adriana, 2012, "*I volti della Turchia*", Roma, Carocci Editore, p. 215.

⁵⁹ In order to implement an organic review of the Turkish history it has been founded the so-called Turkish History Institute, in Turkish "*Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyet*", later re-named as "*Türk Tarih Kurumu*". – Nocera, Lea, 2011 "*La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell'AKP*", Roma: Carocci.p. 27.

⁶⁰ Nocera, Lea, 2011 "*La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell'AKP*", Roma: Carocci.

of Turkishness, represented by the majority of Sunni-Muslim dwellers of Anatolia. Thus, already in the first decades of the 20th century raised the minorities' issue. The communities not strictly labelled as Turkish were banned neither from any involvement nor representation in the republican institutions. The identity of the "modern Turkish citizens" was consolidated by the identification of potential rivals of the secular Kemalist vision. Furthermore, assimilationist attempts were carried out versus minorities such as the Kurds, Armenians and Christians. This scenario can be explained through the lens of nationalism, which were spreading culturally from Europe and regionally caused by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the caliphate. Thus, the Kurdish stances towards their own self-independence have been repressed by Kemalist authorities, which denied their language and cultural tradition. Similarly, the Armenian community suffered a massive displacement program between 1915-17 and dealt with a violent repression by the Turkish army from the Republican foundation as well. It has been justified claiming the potential threat of this community to the national territorial integrity and it caused up to one million deaths just during the two-year plan happened between 1915-17⁶¹.

Due to the hardness of the identity and internal state formation process, between the 1920s and 1930s Mustafa Kemal Atatürk behaved in the international scenario to strength the Turkish stability and its national sovereignty. Avoiding any direct confrontation with foreign nations, such as the potential dispute with Britain over the city of Mosul (currently in Iraq) resolved thanks the intervention of the League of Nations in 1925⁶², he promoted a series of agreements of friendship or, at least, neutrality with the surrounding neighbours: in 1928 it has been signed a no-aggression treaty with Italy, in 1930 a reconciliation accord with Greece, plus in 1934 it has been grant a mutual defensive partnership with Romania, Yugoslavia and Greece too. Few years later, Turkey defined its position with some regional actors, namely Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, signing together the Saadabad Pact in 1937⁶³. This foreign policy guaranteed favourable relationship with France and Britain, former threats during the Independence War (1919-23),

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid. p. 35

⁶³ Ibid. p. 35

and it gave the chance to participate in the international arena constituted by the League of Nations. Despite these positive results, generally speaking the Turkish political establishment carried a shy role at the global stage, especially during the early decades of the republican foundation. Already during WWII, Turkey avoided to take any side up to the ending phase of the conflict: respectively in March 1941 it was agreed a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union, two months later, in Jun 1941, a similar pact was signed with Nazi Germany, while in the final moments of the war Turkey got closer to the Western powers, becoming a state founder of the United Nations and defining its foreign policy and strategy for the upcoming decades. Summing up, Turkey followed historically a trend focused mainly on its internal affairs relative to identity consolidation, minorities' integration and secular-Islam relations; while at an international stage paved a secondary role, aiming to assure its political survival, but avoiding any intrepid strategy⁶⁴. As we will see later on, recently Turkey and its political class changed this behaviour, drawing a much more active economical and geopolitical policy both globally and regionally.

1.4.3 Addressing the debate concerning the military role and their influence on the political scenario

One particular aspect of the Turkish political system that cannot be disregarded concerns the role played by the army, which was entitled by Mustafa Kemal to be the guarantor of the republican values and of the entire nation.

The anthropologist Michael E. Meeker⁶⁵ offers an interesting analysis, which can enrich the debate developed so far and, further, it gives an interpretation about the role of army.

In accordance with the scholars previously mentioned, i.e. Nocera⁶⁶ and Destro⁶⁷, to discuss identity and state formation in Turkey, Meeker

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Bozdogan Sibel and Kasaba Resat, 1997, *"Rethinking Modernity and national identity in Turkey"*, Seattle/London: University Of Washington Press, Cap. *"Once There Was, Once There Wasn't: National Monuments and Interpersonal Exchange"*.

⁶⁶ Nocera, Lea, 2011, *"La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell'AKP"*, Roma: Carocci.

⁶⁷ Destro, Adriana, 2012, *"I volti della Turchia"*, Roma, Carocci Editore.

recognized the duality between the “old” Muslim Ottoman legacy and the secular modernization process pushed by the Republic. These trends would be considered one looking at the past, while the other looking at the future. Moreover, the former based on bottom-up strategies of popular mobilization, on the contrary the latter relied on top-down strategies of institutional organization⁶⁸. In spite of this strict assumption, the author also raised doubts about the mutually exclusiveness of these two ideological and political alternatives. Basically, he questioned if “*have the citizens of the Turkish republic, or, for that matter, the citizens of any modern state, ever faced such a clear set of mutually exclusive choices?*”⁶⁹.

In order to discuss this topic, Meeker analyses the architectural meaning and references used since the post-republican foundation in the construction of monumental buildings such as the Ataturk Memorial Tomb completed in 1953 in Ankara. He highlight the fact that “*the Kemal’s mausoleum, which is the most important site of the republic, the nation is not conceived of through its history, ideology, laws, or constitution. Rather, the argument of a language of familiarity and intimacy has been reformulated in the terms of citizen and nation*”⁷⁰. In Meeker’s eyes, it means that exist a deep interconnection between the old heritages of the Sultanate and the new republican identity construction. Identity cannot disregard the importance of the familiar and cultural habits of the past: just re-shaping and re-interpreting these traditions, the republican soul could be consolidated⁷¹.

Furthermore, Meeker noted the fundamental difference compared to the past that is claimed in entrance of the Kemal’s monumental grave: “*Hakimiyet kayıtsız şartsız milletindir*”, meaning “Without condition or restriction, sovereignty belongs to the nation”⁷². Here, the concept of nationhood is brightly remarked. The nation survival and protection is the final aim of the Turkish republic and this belief should be entrenched in

⁶⁸ Bozdoğan Sibel and Kasaba Resat, 1997, “*Rethinking Modernity and national identity in Turkey*”, Seattle/London: University Of Washington Press, Cap. “*Once There Was, Once There Wasn’t: National Monuments and Interpersonal Exchange*”, p. 158.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 158.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 171.

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 174.

⁷² Ibid. p. 172.

citizens' mind. As the author clarified *“the message announces not the democratic principle of popular representation but the condition of external constraints that impinges on each individual, not at least of whom would be the founder himself. Personhood is constituted within the space and time of nationhood”*⁷³.

Thanks to this passage, the importance of the Turkish national army can be figured out. Indeed, to prevent any *“condition of external constraints”* and to protect *“the space and time of nationhood”* the Turkish army found its *raison d'être* and the justification for intervening freely in the political arena.

Adducing reasons concerning the safeguard of the secular republican values or the integrity of the Kemalist revolutionary soul, the military carried out successfully four coup d'états in less than half century⁷⁴.

Kerem Oktem⁷⁵ deepened his thesis covering the recent history of Turkey and focusing on the constant tension due to the military clout over the affirmation of a consolidate democratic system. This tension has been generated by the active presence of the so called “guardian state”, *“an all-powerful coalition of the judiciary, the bureaucracy and the military [...], which is upheld by interpersonal contacts at the highest levels”*⁷⁶. The basic tool to intervene into politics has been a “divide and rule” attitude that destabilized the socio-political sections of the society. For instance, ethnic tensions have been facilitated in mid-1950s as well as rivalries between far-right nationalistic movements and socialist ones through the 1970s and then 1980s. Once this state of tension came into high gears an overt military intervention was justified to re-establish order and peace. This case happened four times in the recent history of Turkey: respectively in 1960, 1971, in 1980 and then 1997. Despite the particularities of each situation, *“in all these interventions the guardians act with a rationality of purpose to sustain power. From incitement of mass violence to widespread torture by proxies and security services, all possible methods are permitted as long as*

⁷³ Ibid. p. 172.

⁷⁴ Öktem, Kerem, 2011, *“Turkey since 1989: angry nation”*, London: Zed books.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 7.

they justified by the ends of “saving the state”, which is often just a euphemism for the perpetuation of power”⁷⁷.

As well as the complexity of the relation between republican secularism and religious tradition, the intrigued political scenario and the military’s role cannot be oversimplified. Indeed, in the aftermaths of every coup d’état the military hand back the power to an elective political class: with this regard, on one side, the “guardians” were able to keep key social groups, i.e. part of the intelligentsia, the middle classes and the Istanbul-based industrial bourgeoisie; while on the other side, in several occasion political parties succeeded to come in power stepping back the influence of the army⁷⁸. Those are the cases happened in the 1950s with the election of the Democratic Party led by Menderes, in 1970s with the short-lived left-wing government held by the Republican People’s Party, in the 1980s thanks to the electoral victory of Turgut Ozal and, finally, in the early 2000s with the Justice and Development Party affirmation led by the rising figure of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Interestingly, these high phases of democratic institutional life coincided with favourable economic growth and a relative active regional and international policy; while, once this profitable framework slowed down, each elected government usually turned increasingly towards an authoritative style inducing a renewed intervention by the army.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 8.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

1.5 COMPARATIVE CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SOCIO-POLITICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE GCC COUNTRIES AND TURKEY

These previous sections served as basic ground to develop any kind of comparative analysis and debate concerning the Arab Gulf monarchies and Turkey. Beginning from the description of the socio-political context of these two subjects, it has been pointed out the concept of identity and its consolidation process, the need of a solid state formation and, finally, the role of Islam and its balance with the secular values and new Western socio-political models. Besides, both actors dealt with their specific relationship with foreign powers and regional neighbours since the early phase of independence.

In this regard a comparative discussion can be underlined. Religion, namely the Islamic faith, has been a key variable in the socio-political formation in both Anatolia and around the Arabian Gulf. It means that Islam has been a fundamental tool in the consolidation of a national identity and, as a consequence, for the construction of the nation-state. Nonetheless, the political elites favoured a divergent approach considering the religion's role into the political scenario. The Saudis and the rest of the Persian emirates entrenched their legitimacy welcoming Islamic movements and values and proclaiming themselves as leaders of the entire Muslim world. Previously, it has deeply discussed the mutual influence between the Saud family and the *Wahhabis* doctrine⁷⁹: on one side, the Saud dynasty adopted the proper precepts and behaviours of the Muslim *muwahhidun*, assuring their support and a certain degree of political stability; while, on the other side, *Wahhabis* groups were able to spread their doctrine across the Arabian communities and territories. In this regard Islam has been fundamental to create an identity consciousness around the Saudis, feeling that guaranteed the possibility to consolidate a monarchical apparatus both in Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Arabian nations.

In the Turkish context the Islamic faith played a relevant role as well,

⁷⁹ Mitchell, Timothy, 2013, "*Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*", New York, London: Verso.

despite a complete different approach of the political elite towards this issue⁸⁰. Indeed, contrary to what happened in the Persian Gulf, Mustafa Kemal and the new political establishment gave a sharp cut to the past coming from the Ottoman Sultanate and the Muslim tradition. Founding in 1923 the Republic of Turkey, a pro-Western and secular attitude step in leaving behind the cultural and religious heritage⁸¹. The deep interconnection between secularism and Islam has been presented by Michael Meeker⁸², who also claim the importance of both values in the formation of the Turkish identity. If the republic's foundation originally meant an end regarding the imperial legacy, aiming to facilitate a renewed model of Anatolian citizen, modern Turkey opened the way, through several decades and despite many obstacles such as several coup d'états and authoritative governmental attempts, to a democratic entrench and a pluralistic state consolidation⁸³.

Concerning the foreign policy of these subjects, two different trends can be shown: the Gulf monarchies welcomed an international protection allowing a direct intervention of foreign powers, namely Britain and then US, in internal issues⁸⁴. The result has been an intrigued behaviour carried by the Saud family to guarantee same amount of gains both to radical Muslim groups and foreign allies. These sides were too relevant to be dismissed by the Saudis regime⁸⁵. On the contrary, the Turkish political class avoid any brave attempt at the international stage: once reconciliation agreements have been signed with regional neighbours in the aftermaths of the republican foundation, the Turkish regime carried mainly a shy foreign policy focusing its interest on internal matters such as the minorities'

⁸⁰ Öktem, Kerem, 2011, *"Turkey since 1989: angry nation"*, London: Zed books.

⁸¹ Destro, Adriana, 2012, *"I volti della Turchia"*, Roma, Carocci Editore.

⁸² Bozdogan Sibel and Kasaba Resat, 1997 *"Rethinking Modernity and national identity in Turkey"*, Seattle/London: University Of Washington Press, Cap. *"Once There Was, Once There Wasn't: National Monuments and Interpersonal Exchange"*.

⁸³ Nocera, Lea, 2011, *"La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell'AKP"*, Roma: Carocci.

⁸⁴ For a general discussion on this topic check chapters *"The Middle East since the Cold War"* and *"Middle East Security: Continuity amid Change"* in Fawcett, Louise, 2011, *"International Relations of the Middle East"*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.

⁸⁵ Mitchell, Timothy, 2013, *"Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil"*, New York, London: Verso.

issues⁸⁶.

In accordance with Hakan Koni⁸⁷, it can be seen a closer look at the socio-political relationship between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. This partnership can be explained highlighting the Saudis foreign policy to enforce its role of Muslim leader and theoretically according with the theory of complex interdependence. Using the term of “complex interdependence”, the author means a synthesis of the traditional realist approaches and more modernist theories of the international relations⁸⁸: besides the nation-state, other intergovernmental, nongovernmental, transnational, social and cultural actors participate on the international arena, which is not unconditionally under a state of anarchy. Rather, economic, cultural and social issues can facilitate favourable relations between states and international subjects. Through this theoretical lens the Turkish-Saudi Arabian patronage grew up aiming an *“increasing degree of cooperation, solidarity and partnership centered on certain economic, diplomatic, social and cultural activities with a good deal of Islamic content”*⁸⁹.

Without contradicting the general pro-Western trend followed by the Turkish governments over the decades, in mid-1970s few events reverse the usual Turkish policy: the Cyprus crisis in 1974 and the oil shocks, respectively in 1973 and 1979, pushed the Anatolian political class to seek new partnerships with the Arab neighbours rather than the traditional Europeans and Americans. Thus claiming a common Islamic background, Turkey and Saudi Arabia agreed cooperation plans and economic aid programs. Basically, the Saudis spread their influence through three tools: multinational (MNCs), nongovernmental (NGOs) and international organizations (IOs) actors⁹⁰.

The first instrument provided an economic assistance, especially in the banking sector, reinforcing the Turkish finance system. Leaving behind

⁸⁶ Nocera, Lea, 2011, *“La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell’AKP”*, Roma: Carocci.

⁸⁷ Koni, Hakan, 2012, *“Saudi Influence on Islamic Institutions in Turkey Beginning in the 1970s”*, Middle Eastern Journal, Volume 66, No. 1.

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 98

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 97

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 102

for a while the economical effects of the Turkish-Saudi partnership (this issues will be covered in the next chapter), MNCs offered an indirect assistance to the Islamic political movements and their activities. As Koni noted “*Albarake Turk and Faisal Finance* (two of the Saudi multinational institutions) *funded the paper expenses of more than 50 publishing companies, newspapers and magazines know for their religious activities*”⁹¹.

The second tool, the NGOs network, favoured an integration process between Islamic associations and activists. In 1965 King Faisal founded the World Muslim League (WML), which became one of the major actor in “*donations and funding for activities, the organization of conferences and youth camps, publications and the construction of mosques and Islamic centers*”⁹². In this regard it has been established the Turkish-Saudi Arabian Friendship Association and a direct Saudi financial support has been given in the construction of Turkish worship monuments such as the Turkish National Assembly Mosque and the Kocatepe Mosque.

Finally, the IOs provided platforms and forums between states in order to develop coalitions and linkages among certain issues. For example the OPEC and OAPEC reinvigorated the geo-political strength of the oil-producing countries, inducing a revolutionary phase in the oil industry. Turkey as oil-importing nation had to deal with the oil shock crisis of the 1970s. So, one of the best ways to avoid the oil crunch has been by establishing close relations with oil-producing countries, above all the Arab-OAPEC members. According the same perspective, the increasing Turkish involvement into the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) aimed to an economical and diplomatic privileged status with the Arab partners, benefitting, on one hand, by lower oil prices, financial grants and credits to face the growing energy expenditures and, to the other hand, a diplomatic support concerning the Cyprus crisis and the case over the Turkish minority in Bulgaria⁹³.

These three institutions, through a similar Muslim consciousness,

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 104

⁹² Ibid. p. 104

⁹³ Ibid. p. 107

allowed the interconnection between Turkey and the Gulf region. Specifically financing activities and offering diplomatic support, linkages have been deepened. Despite divergent political paths, key issues proper of the social framework entrenched a common ground between these subjects. Thanks to the analysis focused on the early phases of state formation, Islam's role and identity consolidation that has been pointed out in this chapter, it can be possible to understand the general socio-political framework where the relationship between these actors grew up. Before wondering if and to what extend a mutual influence took place between Turkey and the Gulf monarchies and how the Gulf media treat the Turkish politics, it needs to be covered another relevant aspect. Namely the description of the economic features of these nations: both of them can be enlisted as neoliberal countries, nonetheless they carried out reforms packages that led to different political economic state-system. This topic, barely mentioned, will be covered and discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2: COMPARING ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

2.1 AN INTRODUCTIVE DISCUSSION

The first chapter analysed the socio-political framework of Turkey and Arabian Gulf countries. The analysis focuses on the formation of state identity, the importance of Islam and the influence of foreign powers in both of these. In this chapter the economical aspects are addressed, in particular models and the ideologies that induce a certain political economy through reforms and tendencies. Thus, completing a comparative description and to be able to discuss the current situation of the Middle East.

As in the previous chapter, the features of the Gulf and Turkish political economy will be divided into two sections: the former will focus on the GCC countries, while the latter on Turkey. Basic criteria to develop this analysis consist in the major distinction between oil-producing and oil-importing countries. This key differentiation leads to a set of predictable consequences⁹⁴, which cannot be disregarded especially considering the political economy of Arab states. Furthermore, the next step concerns the neoliberal wave, which from the 1980s onwards spread globally⁹⁵. Questions will be raised about Arab Gulf monarchies and Turkey: respectively, “assuming the effect of the oil-based economy, how did the GCC react to neoliberal pressure?” and, “if the neoliberal policies implemented by the AKP governments, since the early 2000s, are a continuation or a fracture compared to reforms proposed by the military junta, the Ozal government of the 1980s and the following parties of the 1990s”.

This chapter will debate and, hopefully, solve these issues.

⁹⁴ Luciani, Giacomo. 1987 *“Allocation VS Production State: a Theoretical Framework”*. London-New York Croom Elm; and Beblawi Hazem, 1990, *“The Rentier State in the Arab World”* in Luciani, Giacomo *“The Arab State”*, London, Routledge.

⁹⁵ Harvey, David, 2005, *“A Brief History of Neoliberalism”*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2.2 A FUNDAMENTAL DISTINCTION: OIL-PRODUCING AND OIL-IMPORTING COUNTRIES, FEATURES AND EFFECTS

Many scholars⁹⁶ assume the fact that oil is the major force in world industry. Since the beginning of the 20th century, when Winston Churchill decided that the British imperial fleet had to consume oil rather than coal, this raw material became a key consideration at a political and geostrategic level. Authors such as Timothy Mitchell⁹⁷ and Giacomo Luciani⁹⁸ largely discuss the effects of oil in state formation and how it influences the creation of political institutions.

Historically, the oil industry went through different phases and the main powers and equilibriums changed over time. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Western powers, in particular Britain, implemented a strategy of “divide and rule” to fragmentize the former Empire in order to guarantee freedom of navigation, avoiding excessive concentration of power and resources in a single state, and easier access to oil resources. This common interest among all the more industrialized nations led to the foundation of oil cartels, which were the leaders of oil production up to the early 1970s. The creation of the current national border of Iraq and its oil company, the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC), were an emblematic example of the Western “divide and rule” attitude and the kind of foreign oil venture that took place since the early decades of the 20th century⁹⁹. Basically, during the San Remo Conference, held in 1920, the previous Ottoman provinces of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra came under a common British mandate, renaming the entire country as Iraq. As a result,

⁹⁶ Luciani, Giacomo. 1987 *“Allocation VS Production State: a Theoretical Framework”*. London-New York Croom Elm; and Beblawi Hazem, 1990, *“The Rentier State in the Arab World”* in Luciani, Giacomo *“The Arab State”*, London, Routledge.

⁹⁷ Mitchell, Timothy, 2013, *“Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil”*, New York, London: Verso.

⁹⁸ Luciani, Giacomo. 1987 *“Allocation VS Production State: a Theoretical Framework”*. London-New York Croom Elm; and Beblawi Hazem, 1990, *“The Rentier State in the Arab World”* in Luciani, Giacomo *“The Arab State”*, London, Routledge.

⁹⁹ Luciani, Giacomo, in Fawcett, Louise, 2011, *“International Relations of the Middle East”*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2011, cap. *“Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East”*.

the authorities in Great Britain assured their direct control over the rich oil fields in Kirkuk and the Northern part of the country. Meanwhile, the IPC represented foreign interests as well: the shareholders were the major Western oil companies, which controlled profit for their national governments, particularly the British, American and French¹⁰⁰. Furthermore, the IPC has been considered as a model of joint venture oil production, which allowed mutual economic gain and equal access to resources for both Europeans and Americans. Equally important, foreign companies benefitted from strong bargaining power in relation to neo-independent nations as well¹⁰¹.

As already mentioned in the first chapter¹⁰², oil facilitated modern state formation across the Arab world both directly and indirectly: oil revenues consolidated the power of political classes and royal families; while, indirectly, the Western countries, moved by economic gains and profits relative to the oil industry and production, agreed and favoured the fragmentation of the Middle Eastern lands. From this perspective, “*most historians would agree that the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain, and possibly even Kuwait would not have survived as independent entities without their oil*”¹⁰³. Similarly, Luciani adds, “*oil has been instrumental in encouraging the definition of boundaries and accepting international arbitration in contested cases*”¹⁰⁴.

Before having a closer look at Gulf and Turkish economic framework, the theoretical background regarding the effects of oil on politics should be examined: namely, the concept of the “rentier state paradigm”¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 108.

¹⁰¹ For an extended discussion on the oil industry and its evolution check Leonardo Maugeri, 2006, “*L’era del petrolio*”, La Feltrinelli Editore.

¹⁰² Mitchell, Timothy, 2013, “*Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*”, New York, London: Verso.

¹⁰³ Luciani Giacomo, in Fawcett, Louise, 2011, “*International Relations of the Middle East*”, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, cap. “*Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East*”, p. 109.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 110.

¹⁰⁵ Luciani, Giacomo. 1987 “*Allocation VS Production State: a Theoretical Framework*”. London-New York Croom Elm; and Beblawi Hazem, 1990, “*The Rentier State in the Arab World*” in Luciani, Giacomo “*The Arab State*”, London, Routledge.

According to Mahdavy¹⁰⁶, Beblawi and Luciani (1987), the main schools of thought regarding the rentier state notion will be analyzed. Mahdavi formulated this idea concerning the patterns of development and the features of states in economies dominated by external rents: because of the huge enlargement of the raw materials (mainly oil) market, many exporting states reached a certain status in the international scene due to their land richness. At the beginning of 1950s, Arab oil-exporting countries in the Middle East represented the ideal study-case of this state setting. Nonetheless the generic rentier states definition is “those countries that receive on a regular basis substantial amounts of external rent”¹⁰⁷ does not limit the inclusion of study-cases of this state typology. The “theory of rentier state” is useful to scholars who are interested in patterns and problems of development to raw material-rent-dependent states throughout the developing world¹⁰⁸. According to Mahdavy (1970) the rentier state status specifically concerns the effects of the oil sector; he claims Kuwait and Qatar are extreme examples of this phenomenon due to the limited capabilities for industrialization and few alternatives to rentierism. Beblawi and Luciani (1987) focused their analysis on the definition of “rentier economy” in which rent plays a major role deriving from external revenues to the national economy. This perspective is driven by the assumption of the importance of the impact of recent economic developments, in particular the oil sector boom, on the nature of the state. On the contrary Beblawi and Luciani refuse any abstract notion of state in line with Mahdavy and they clarify two different meanings of this term: the first one is referred to as the overall social system subject to government or power; the other one concerns “the apparatus or organization of government or power that exercises the monopoly of the legal use of violence”¹⁰⁹. Consequently these authors define the rentier state as a subset of a rentier economy, describing the relationship between the state institutions and the economic scenario. On the contrary, Marcella Emiliani gives a partly different connotation to the

¹⁰⁶ Yates (1996) covers the main schools of thought summing up all the different perspectives of scholars as H. Mahdavi, H. Beblawi and G. Luciani.

¹⁰⁷ Yates, Douglas A., 1996, “*The rentier state in Africa, oil rent dependency & neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon*”, Trenton, Africa World Press, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 13.

meaning of the rentier economy: as far as the national authorities receive the oil incomes it is possible to talk about rentier state, while if these revenues are controlled and managed by private owners, such as in the case of Saudi Arabia and in the other GCC monarchies, then the definition will be rentier economy¹¹⁰.

Beblawi (1987) mentions four main features in order to classify any country as rentier state: the predominant rent situation; the origin of this rent must be external; there can only be a few people engaged in the generation of rent, while the majority are involved in its distribution and consumption; finally, the government must be the principal recipient of the external rent. Besides, Luciani adds another key characteristic claiming that the “external rent liberates the state from the need to extract income from the domestic economy”¹¹¹. As previously highlighted by H. Mahdavy (1970), countries that profit from oil-exporting revenues also earn the opportunity to embark on large public expenditure programs without resorting to taxation. This framework leads to a state of “allocation”: as opposed to the “production state” that relies on taxes from the domestic economy for its income, the “allocation state” does not depend to its own industries skills. As consequence, these two state typologies implement different economic policies. The “productive state” aims at a stable and profitable economic growth ensuring revenue. Conversely, the “allocation state” does not make any effort to implement successful economic policies. A divide between the production and manufacturing of different goods is disregarded. Countries that export raw materials are high vulnerable to potential fluctuation of the market prices. Furthermore, the raw materials sector is usually controlled by foreign multinational enterprises, which remove a large section of any revenue generated from the exporting state. This peculiarity of the rentier states develops a bias towards raw materials-importing countries (developed countries), which are able to take part in domestic political decisions.

As already mentioned, this framework does not allow the equal distribution of earnings among a country’s citizens because only a few

¹¹⁰ Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, “*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*”, Roma, Editori Laterza, p. 229.

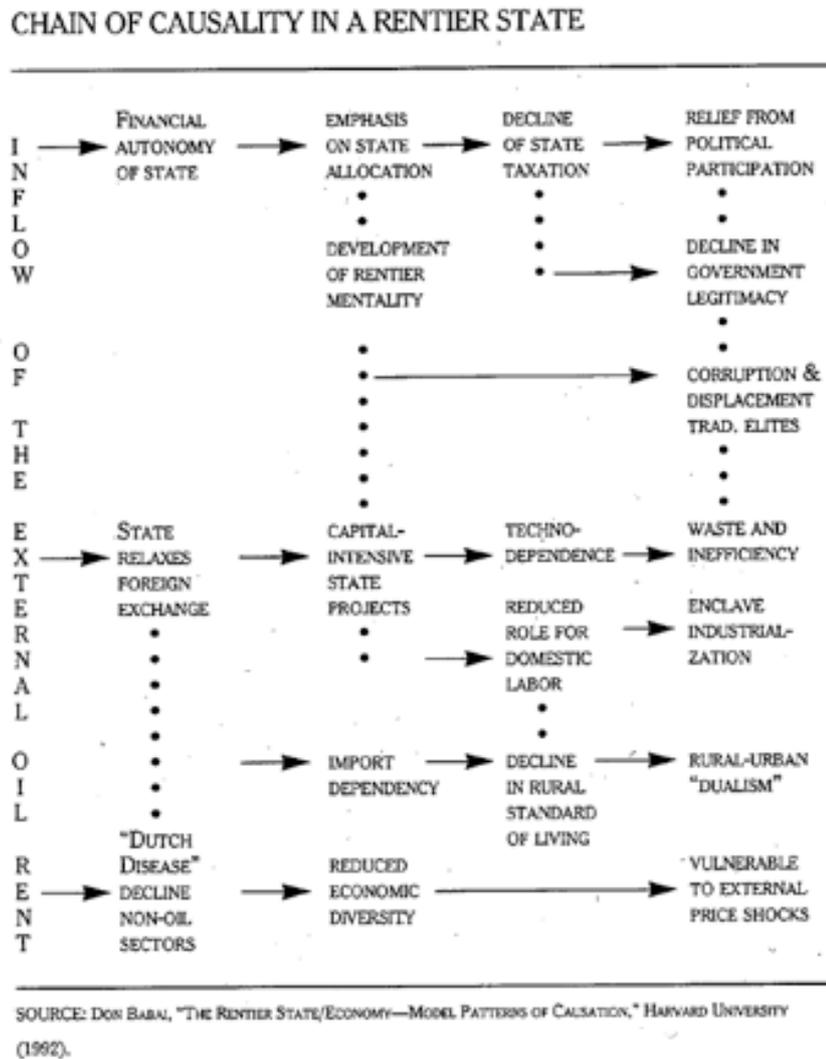
¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 15.

individuals are engaged in the generation of rent. Consequently, mainly authors such as Beblawi and Luciani¹¹² adduce the result that this economic framework leads potentially to a democratic deficit in these countries. These scholars describe this threat through the following explanation: many governments have huge revenues from international trades, so, they are not charging taxes to their citizens at the expense of a democratic representation (inverting the American' slogan "no taxation without representation"). "*External rent liberates the state from the need to extract income from the domestic economy*"¹¹³ and it may produce a democratic void. Local rentier elites shape their behaviour on the expectation of ever-increasing revenues in the future and on the personal benefits based their status, thus they behave in a manner, which will profit them personally to the expense of any potential socio-economic change.

¹¹² Yates, Douglas A., 1996, "*The rentier state in Africa, oil rent dependency & neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon*", Trenton, Africa World Press.

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 14.

Picture 1: The Rentier State System¹¹⁴



Picture 1 shows the main consequences coming from the relevant inflow of the external oil rent: namely huge oil-exporting revenues lead to the financial autonomy of the state, the harmful phenomenon known as “Dutch Disease” and the state relaxes foreign exchange. Both these features damage the economic and political scenario. Indeed the financial autonomy produces a state of allocation developing a rentier mentality and declining political participation and government legitimacy. The “Dutch Disease” concerns the decline of the non-oil sectors, reducing any economic diversity and facilitating external price shocks. The last issue reduces the role of domestic labour and it shapes industrial enclaves.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 36.

Another aspect already discussed in the first chapter concerned the pan-Arabic and pan-Islamic feelings spread across the Middle East during the 20th century. Both sentiments can be viewed through the lens of the oil policy¹¹⁵. Nasserism and pan-Islamist feelings did not concern specifically oil, due to their ideological roots in a common Arab or Islamic consciousness. Nonetheless, crude oil has been a relevant factor inducing certain kind of international balances. Namely, the distinction between oil-producing and oil-importing countries influenced the way these nations considered each other: the oil monarchies conceived the Nasser foreign policy as a tool to gain control over oil resources ensuring its political hegemony. Thus, the rentier states in particular “*devoted greater attention to asserting their respective national consciousness [...]*”¹¹⁶; also strengthening a common identity i.e. as Arabic, Islamic, Shia or Sunni, but presenting themselves as leaders of their particular community. In this respect Egypt has been at the forefront of the pan-Arabic identity, as has Saudi Arabia, and to a lesser extent the rest of the GCC countries, of the Sunni pan-Islamic feeling, while Iran has been the Shia leader since the late 1970s.

Furthermore, once the pan-Arabism feeling of unity reduced, leading to the decline of Egyptian clout across the Middle East, the dichotomy between oil-rich, or oil-producing, and oil-poor, or oil-importing, countries became an increasingly important factor to consider. Indeed, the states benefitting by large external rent-revenues profited from this favourable condition to spread their influence at an international level through spending policies. According to Luciani¹¹⁷, “*in the 1970s the rentier states felt it was prudent to be generous outside, as well as inside, their boundaries. They, therefore, created institutions to redistribute a share of the rent internationally and engaged in granting direct subsidies to neighbouring governments*”. Ultimately, the Turkish-Saudi relationship analysed by

¹¹⁵ Luciani Giacomo, in Fawcett, L., 2011, “*International Relations of the Middle East*”, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, cap. “*Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East*”, p. 119.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 120.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 120-121.

Hakan Koni¹¹⁸ represents a concrete example of employing rentier state foreign policy towards neighbouring countries, which were usually oil-importing economies. This way of thinking typical of Sunni political elites evoked and practically financed the “Islamic revival”.¹¹⁹

2.2.1 Focus on the Oil Effects on the GCC and Turkish economic paths

Focusing on the theory of “rentier state paradigm” and the socio-political and economic effects of the oil industry, the previous theoretical section offered a solid background to develop some consideration about the Gulf and Turkish context.

While GCC monarchies are considered within the rentier states group, Turkey is perceived as one of the major oil-importing nations. This fact influenced the behaviours and the political economy of these countries. For instance, it has been previously mentioned the increasingly close relationship between Turkey and the OIC during the 1970s due to the oil price fluctuations and the Turkish energy hunger¹²⁰.

Using once again the formation of Saudi Arabia as a State, as an emblematic case study for the rest of the Gulf monarchies, it can be seen through the lens of rentierism as well: indeed, the four basic features drafted by Beblawi and Luciani¹²¹ of a rentier state can be highlighted. The rent situation predominates above other economical sectors. Despite changes and the nationalization processes, which took place in the 1970s, the oil revenues come from an external source linked directly to the increase within oil market trends. Moreover, the Saudi oil industry, in accordance with the general trends of the oil production, involves few people in the generation of the rent and, even more importantly, the national government, namely the

¹¹⁸ Koni, Hakan, 2012, “*Saudi Influence on Islamic Institutions in Turkey Beginning in the 1970s*”, Middle Eastern Journal, Volume 66, No. 1.

¹¹⁹ The “Islamic revival” has been discussed in the first chapter as the pan-Islamic wave begun from the 1970s onwards. Briefly, the idea of *political Islam* claims that the Muslim values and precepts have to shape and order the socio-political national institutions.

¹²⁰ Koni, Hakan, 2012, “*Saudi Influence on Islamic Institutions in Turkey Beginning in the 1970s*”, Middle Eastern Journal, Volume 66, No. 1.

¹²¹ Luciani, Giacomo. 1987 “*Allocation VS Production State: a Theoretical Framework*”. London-New York Croom Elm; and Beblawi Hazem, 1990, “*The Rentier State in the Arab World*” in Luciani, Giacomo “*The Arab State*”, London, Routledge.

Saud family, is the main recipient of the revenue¹²².

Origins of these features have been shaped already since the beginning of the 20th century, when Ibn Saud and his followers gained power from the oil trading: large and direct economical profits to finance the political expansion, plus the Western effort to stabilize the region in order to protect the market, provided the ground for the Saud family to establish an authoritative power across a major part of the Arabian Peninsula. Still following the link between political authoritarianism and rentier economic system theorized by the rentier scholars, the Saudi elite represented over the decades a successful case where the same dynasty kept on controlling political power, avoiding any democratic evolution of the national institutions¹²³. Only recently have, the Gulf countries allowed political participation throughout the so-called *shura* mechanism, which is “*a style of authoritarian rule coupled with consultation (shura) which is meant to integrate and involve as much as possible all components of society. Shura is not democracy [...], but he (the king) listens to his people through formal or informal channels [...]*”¹²⁴.

Contrary to the Gulf rentierism, Turkey dealt with a different scenario. The scarcity of raw material resources¹²⁵ induced a divergent political and economic path. Politically, in the aftermath of WWII, specifically in 1946, the Turkish establishment allowed a multi-party electoral competition opening the gates to a democratic consolidation. The fragilities, which in part have been treated in the first chapter, did not prevent the consideration of the Turkish system as one of the most successful attempts of democratic regime formation across the Middle East.

Economically, Turkey provided a strategy to develop a productive

¹²² Mitchell, Timothy, 2013, “*Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*”, New York, London: Verso.

¹²³ Nonneman, Gerd, 2006, “*Political reform in the Gulf monarchies: from liberalisation to democratisation? A comparative perspective*”, Durham University, February 2015 <http://dro.dur.ac.uk/472/1/NonnemanV3.pdf>

¹²⁴ Luciani Giacomo, in Fawcett, Louise, 2011, “*International Relations of the Middle East*”, Oxford and New York, OUP, 2011, cap. “*Oil and Political Economy in the International Relations of the Middle East*”, p. 117.

¹²⁵ The major part of resources available in Turkey is situated in the South East region, the native lands of the Kurdish community. Öktem, Kerem, 2011, “*Turkey since 1989: angry nation*”, London: Zed books.

system. Focusing on internal issues, the political class initially favoured the modernization of areas around the three main cities of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir all based on the Western part of Anatolia. Later the Southern territories and cities such as Adana and Gaziantep known as the “Anatolian tigers”¹²⁶ became the centre of economic development. In doing so, international cooperation fundamentally with Western countries offered loans and aid to carry out development plans. No raw materials could be sold internationally, so the creation of a manufactured export was a priority for the Turkish economy.

Despite these comparative considerations between Turkey and the Arab Gulf monarchies, the “rentier state paradigm” cannot satisfy an entire organic analysis. Thus, a broad discussion needs to address the issues relating to the neoliberal wave that spread from the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s at a global level. The critical approach presented by David Harvey¹²⁷ will allow the theoretical background to develop a further analysis concerning the issue of Turkey and of the Gulf countries, which will be heavily debated in the next section.

¹²⁶ Nocera, Lea, 2011, *“La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell'AKP”*, Roma: Carocci.

¹²⁷ Harvey, David, 2005, *“A Brief History of Neoliberalism”*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2.3 INTRODUCING NEOLIBERALISM: A SPECIFIC NOTION OF “FREEDOM” AND THE “NEOLIBERAL STATE PARADIGM”

Between 1978 and 1980 a number of political leaders and heads of major banking corporations profoundly changed the world economic system, influencing both politics and culture. These major players, such as the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the US President Ronald Reagan, the Chinese communist leader Deng Xiaoping and the chief executive of the Federal Reserve (FED), Paul Volcker, welcomed a renewed economical approach, leaving behind the post-WWII system and opening the path to so-called neoliberalism. This process did not take place over night, rather a set of decisions and policies made by different leaders allowed this change, which presented a heterogeneous character depending over time and geography.

Thanks to the Bretton Wood conference, held in 1944, pro-Western countries shaped a new world order, introducing both economical international institutions, i.e. the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and generating political institutions such as the United Nations (UN). The fundamental idea claimed at that time was the implementation of an “embedded liberalism”, which saw one of its main proponents, the economist John Maynard Keynes. Following the Great Depression in the 1930s and, in the aftermath of WWII, there was a general sentiment that in order to achieve peace and a stable economical framework a deal between capital-owners and workers needed to be reached. Insofar as, States had to actively intervene in the economic field, implementing Keynesian fiscal policies in order to prevent bad economical trends and to ensure high-rates of employment¹²⁸. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s these policies produced gains and favoured the European and Japanese reconstruction, offering an alternative path compared to the Soviet model. Nonetheless, some common points could be pointed out: namely, a mixed

¹²⁸ Harvey, David, 2005, “*A Brief History of Neoliberalism*”. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

relationship between state intervention and market freedom, along with the enlargement of political participation and a welfare state system by democratic institutions¹²⁹.

For several reasons, above all the impossibility of maintaining a fixed balance between US dollar price and gold, in the late 1960s the results of the “embedded liberalism” slowed down, reducing the capitalist accumulation and increasing degrees of unemployment and inflation. In other words, it was starting a “stagflation” crisis that covered the entire 1970s and led to the end of the Keynesian consensus.

Two economical thoughts offered potential ways of facing the stagflation phase: the leftist one, despite the strength of communist and socialist parties across Europe, was not a viable path in the eyes of Western elected political elites. They welcomed the theoretical approach promoted by Friedrich von Hayek and his followers (i.e. Ludwig von Mises and Milton Friedman) of the Mont Pèlerin society. These scholars, labelled as neo-liberalists due to their alignment with traditional liberal and neoclassical theories, emerged in the second half of the 19th century¹³⁰. They believed in the market supremacy, despite describing it differently compared with the original metaphor of the “invisible hand”¹³¹. This was considered to be the best tool to mobilize active and positive human behaviour and to spread the benefits among society. Furthermore, private property rights, together with individual rights and enterprises liberties had to be guaranteed by the political establishment, even through coercive means. However, harsh claims banned any kind of state intervention mainly into the economic field, thus cultivating a deep opposition to Keynesian

¹²⁹ Dahl and Lindblom, *“Politics, Economy and Welfare. Planning and Politico-Economic Systems Resolved into Basic Social Process”*, Harper & Row, New York 1953, in Harvey (2007).

¹³⁰ Harvey, David, 2005, *“A Brief History of Neoliberalism”*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹³¹ This metaphor introduced by Adam Smith was denied by the neoliberal doctrine. Rather, an important difference took place distinguishing the traditional liberal theory and the neoliberal one. The former highlighted the market as a “free trade exchange among economic players”, while the latter focused on the “competition among the actors” as fundamental feature of the market as such. To deepen the analyses check Foucault, Michel, 2005, *“Nascita della biopolitica”*, *“Lezione del 14 febbraio 1979”* e *“Lezione del 21 febbraio 1979”*, Milano, Feltrinelli Editore.

policies¹³².

The Mont Pélérin society met the favour of some American businessmen and, later on, academically entrenched its theoretical perspective at the University of Chicago, where Milton Friedman became one the major spokesmen of the so-called Chicago boys¹³³.

Four dominant figures drove the vigorous neoliberal movement. Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, elected in 1979 and 1980 respectively, began radical reforms concerning fiscal and social policies, opposing trade unions and all forms of social solidarity, while favouring privatization, a reduction in tax and state expenditure. The basic assumption belying this process was the idea that an individual entrepreneurial spirit could only emerge by destroying any collective spirit.

The third important figure was Paul Volcker, who sharply changed the FED's attitude on a worldwide scale. While disapproving of the Keynesian policy carried out since the New Deal¹³⁴, he welcomed a monetarist approach aiming at reducing the percentage of inflation, without considering the consequences on the employment rate. In accordance with Harvey's analysis¹³⁵, in October 1979 the FED posed a positive US dollar real interest rate, leading to a nominal interest rate just below 20% in 1981. This decision produced an upside-down shock, known as "Volcker shock", resulting in a watershed both for the US and international market. American industry went through a deindustrialization phase remodelling the entire economic system, while main borrower countries, usually developing nations, suffered a high risk of insolvency due to their huge loans with

¹³² Harvey, David, 2005, *"A Brief History of Neoliberalism"*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹³³ The Chicago Boys were a group of young economists mainly from Chile. They rejected any Keynesian approach of the economics and from the 1970s onwards they occupied leading positions in governments, banks and economic institutions worldwide. To deepen the discussion relating to Milton Friedman and his theoretical thought checks Foucault, Michel, 2005, *"Nascita della biopolitica"*, *"Lezione del 21 marzo 1979"*, Milano, Feltrinelli Editore.

¹³⁴ To face the Great Depression of the 1930s, the US president F. D. Roosevelt accepted Keynesian principles to recover the American economy, financing public infrastructures and hoping a reduction of the unemployment level. This economic plan has been labelled as "New Deal".

¹³⁵ Harvey, David, 2005, *"A Brief History of Neoliberalism"*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 23.

international institutions and the American banks. The solution proposed to these states concerned packages of structural adjustments, which followed neoliberal criteria. Thus, the “Volcker shock” was relevant in diffusing neoliberal policies and a neoliberal state system on a global scale.

The Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping was the fourth important figure involved. In 1978 Deng Xiaoping opened the gates of his country to foreign firms and investments. By introducing one fifth of the world population to the market, he allowed a wide enlargement of the resources available and new potential consumers. He shaped a third hybrid path between the strict distinction of liberal-Western and socialist economy.

Conclusively, the result of all these events and political decisions led to the definition of the so-called neoliberal state. Some main cultural values became milestones: favouring “[...] *strong individual private property rights, the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning markets and free trade* [...]”¹³⁶, the neoliberal state affirmed a specific meaning to individual freedoms, i.e. freedom of action, expression, and choice, which were believed to be fundamental steps to guarantee business and entrepreneurial rights. Therefore, private enterprise was considered the key tool in developing innovation and wealth creation. Due to their importance, the sovereign state had to provide protection of these values and, as a consequence, wealth generated by the economical growth spread to society through a “trickle down” mechanism¹³⁷. The faith in free trade and a free market fostered the idea that a no-stop production growth could “*deliver higher living standards to everyone*”¹³⁸. In doing so, intellectual property and technological changes had to be protected and encouraged. Furthermore, in terms of culture, the individual became the main player, behaving “freely” across national borders in order to enrich himself and the entire economic system. Margaret Thatcher’s statement “no such thing as society, only individual men and women”¹³⁹ expressed the former concept: individual freedoms demolished any collective aspect of the society,

¹³⁶ Harvey, David, 2005, “*A Brief History of Neoliberalism*”. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 64.

¹³⁷ Ibid. p. 64.

¹³⁸ Ibid. p. 64.

¹³⁹ In Harvey (2005), p. 23.

forming simply, an economic integration between single people and their respective family. This extreme form of individualism carried a moral judgement on the human behaviour in terms of its potential economic success or failure. According to Harvey, “*while personal and individual freedom in the marketplace is guaranteed, each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being*”, that means “*individual success or failure are interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings (such as not investing significantly enough in one’s own human capital through education) rather than being attributed to any systemic property (such as the class exclusions usually attributed to capitalism)*”¹⁴⁰.

In a practical sense, the neoliberal state represents a continuous effort in order to implement an efficient privatization and deregulation process. These two policies should provide a competitive framework, removing the old and heavy bureaucratic state-apparatus in order to liberate the efficiency and productivity skills of the economical subjects producing higher quality goods and reducing production costs. The privatization of assets resulted in increased access and the participation of businessmen and private enterprise into the management of national companies and their resources. Besides, it facilitated the access to traditional sectors, such as the health and education systems, within the market mechanism. Regarding the wave of deregulation, it promoted investments and financial transactions aimed at generating higher gains for investors.

These policies, plus the renewed individual cultural perspective, upset the economical scene: the financial market became instrumental for any positive trend and an individualistic approach shaped the movement of the market. Considering the United States as emblematic example, until 1970s American General Motors represented an icon of the national economy and their status followed the same path. On the contrary, since the 1980s Wall

¹⁴⁰Harvey, David, 2005, “*A Brief History of Neoliberalism*”. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 65-66. The theoretical background of Harvey’s analysis concerning the development of the human capital refers to the political thought of Michel Foucault, who firstly conceptualizes the neoliberal effects on the relationship between individual freedoms, society and economic principles. To deepen this issue check Foucault, Michel, 2005, “*Nascita della biopolitica*”, “*Lezione del 21 marzo 1979*”, Milano, Feltrinelli Editore.

Street became the economical core of the US market, but its status no longer matched. Profits could be secured through financial and speculative instruments, regardless of real industrial production¹⁴¹. Meanwhile, financial assessments could influence, either positively or negatively, economic trends of companies operating within industrial production¹⁴². This underlines a split between classical liberal and neoliberal theory the former considered the possibility of taking risk, namely losing money, once an investor bought any kind of financial assets; in contrast to, neoliberal institutions which avoided distributing potential losses to creditors. Instead, they induced reform phases and insolvency pitfalls to the debtors. This approach led to the phenomenon of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs): international institutions, mainly the IMF and WB, promoted SAPs to borrower countries, which were obliged to sign these reform agreements in accordance with the neoliberal criteria before receiving the loan amount¹⁴³.

At the same time, other players in the world market also adopted an individualistic perspective. In other words, firms and private companies had their legal status acknowledged, which allowed them to be actively involved as single unit within the economic system. Nonetheless, international cooperation forums, such as the G7¹⁴⁴ and the World Trade Organization (WTO), were established to facilitate integration and to achieve a safer balance worldwide. This led to diverse political and economical effects. While enterprise rights and freedoms were still assured. However, politically the term of “freedom” did not necessarily mean democratic freedom. The neoliberal perspective considers democracy, and in particular the “*governance by majority rule*”¹⁴⁵, as a destabilizing factor and a potential threat towards economic interests. Thus, achieving a democratic system is not a priority, rather it is “*only possible under conditions of*

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 33.

¹⁴² I refer to the variations of the financial value of industrial firms, which depend on the general assessment of the market or through a ranking agencies evaluation.

¹⁴³ Ibid. p. 29.

¹⁴⁴ The G7 comprehend the most advanced capitalist nations (US, Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Canada and Italy), which collaborate to reduce barriers to exchange and homogenise the policies and common strategies. Since the 1997, it renamed as G8 due to the Russian membership.

¹⁴⁵ Harvey, David, 2005, “*A Brief History of Neoliberalism*”. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 66.

relative affluence coupled with a strong middle-class presence to guarantee political stability"¹⁴⁶. As a consequence, neoliberals endorsed a separation between economic and political institutions, avoiding democratic pressures on financial institutions such as the central bank, and offering decision-making power to experts and elites.

In the global neoliberal wave, Turkey and the Gulf monarchies are not exceptions. Nonetheless, they present differences within their own context. Therefore, the theoretical background of this political economic approach needs to be clarified, as well as the policies enforced and the socio-cultural shift produced by the neoliberals. In other words, neoliberalism has been a fundamental factor, shaping the relationship between nations and interest groups, and a relevant variable for Arabian rentierism as well as the Turkish economic model. Therefore, the next two sections of this chapter will focus on the respective case studies.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 66.

2.4 THE GCC COUNTRIES CASE: MIXING RENTIERISM AND NEOLIBERALISM

On the basis of the concepts discussed so far, some considerations as well as questions can be debated. In the introductory paragraph of the second chapter, a central question is examined, namely “assuming the effect of the oil-based economy, how did the GCC react to the neoliberal pressure?”. In resolving to answer this, not only are the economic aspects of the Gulf monarchies scrutinized, but the complexity between social and political consequences resulting from economic factors are addressed. In other words, a combined framework consisting of both rentier and neoliberal features characterize the Arabian Gulf region, where these peculiarities shape the economic, social and political fields of each nation-state.

In expanding the analysis further questions arise; “how and to what extent did the privatization and deregulation strategies influence the Arab oil industry?”; “did the Arabian crude rentierism change after the neoliberal wave broke out?”; “did the neoliberal state model shape by any means the Gulf monarchies state system?”; “how does the neoliberal cultural model fit with Muslim tradition?”.

From an economic point of view, the first two questions open up an opportunity to analyse the mutual interconnection between rentierism and neoliberalism. As debated so far, the oil industry presented a nationalization wave, which demolished hegemony, at least officially, of Western oil companies, but created a competitive framework between oil producers. Cooperation throughout international organizations, such as the OPEC or the OAPEC as well, tried to prevent negative effects, such as the devaluation of the price of crude oil, caused by this potential competitiveness. In this regard, the oil industry did not face any privatization or deregulation policies strictly neoliberal speaking. Fundamentally, Seven Sisters¹⁴⁷ were private companies directly linked to national interest in securing resources and low prices. In the aftermaths of the nationalization process during the

¹⁴⁷ For an accurate analysis and explanation of the Seven Sisters’ role check Leonardo Maugeri, 2006, “*L’Era del Petrolio*”, La Feltrinelli Editore.

1960s and 1970s, the political establishment gained control over the upper phases of the production¹⁴⁸ and became the depository of the oil revenue. Specifically to the Gulf monarchies, the Saud dynasty as well as other emirs and sovereign families were absolute monarchs, owning the resources and being direct recipients of trade profits. As a consequence, it cannot be claimed that a privatization policy truly existed within oil industry. A mixed relationship between national ownership and private business management occurred in the crude production. Similarly, there was no real deregulation in the oil market. Indeed, the competition between oil producers led to the creation of production quotas distributed among the Gulf countries¹⁴⁹. In other words, due to the marketization of the same product worldwide, who offers the lowest price will entrench its position on the market ahead of its competitors. This occurred in 1973 when Saudi Arabia decided to join an oil embargo against the United States and the Netherlands, increasing monthly the price of its crude. At the same time, Iran increased production strengthening trade and its position towards a Western market. To avoid a decreasing price circle, oil producers attempted to stabilize the market by utilizing production quotas, which had been agreed upon during international forums, i.e. OAPEC meetings.

As has been shown in the first chapter, since the initial nation-state formation of the Arabian monarchies, features of rentierism within the Gulf region have been entrenched. Over decades, these states succeeded in preventing major changes fostered by neoliberal rhetoric. The peculiarity and the extreme relevance of crude production for the global economy, probably, facilitated the Gulf political elites maintaining their status quo, incurring in a reduction of pressure from the neoliberal institutions and the Western world. Evidenced by Marcella Emiliani¹⁵⁰ defining the GCC countries and, in particular, Saudi Arabia as the best examples of rentier states. Already main scholars, as H. Mahdavi, H. Beblawi and G. Luciani, treated these nations as major case studies of rentierism, demonstrating all

¹⁴⁸ For an extended discussion on the oil industry and its evolution check Leonardo Maugeri, 2006, *“L’era del petrolio”*, La Feltrinelli Editore.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, *“Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991”*, Roma, Editori Laterza, p. 229.

the key requirements of the rentier state¹⁵¹. In accordance with the authors already cited, Emiliani emphasizes the Saudi characteristics as typically rentier: huge external revenues due to the oil trade and gained by the political elites, namely the Saud family; plus a *capital intensive*, rather than *labour intensive*, industry are all rentier indicators¹⁵².

In spite of this theoretical categorization of the GCC countries, as early as the 1990s Robert E. Looney focused his work¹⁵³ on attempts made to escape from a mere rentier economy. Assuming the GCC's willingness to diversify the source of their income as the main reason for enforcing an efficient industrialization process, the author analysed the economic trends in the aftermaths of the 1973 oil shock. Interestingly, he mentioned Gross Domestic Product (GDP) statistic of the Arab nations, mainly around the Persian Gulf, to underline the guidelines aimed by the Arab political establishments. If agricultural production remained stable at around the 6% of the total GDP, new rising sectors became central to this diversification process: for example, the construction sector increased from 7.6% in 1975 to 8.0% in 1985, while the service (i.e. housing, government services) sector from 11.2% in 1980 to 19.6% in 1985 and, finally, the distribution (i.e. commerce, restaurants, hotels, transportation, communication and storage) and banking (composed by finance and insurance as well) sector from 16.2% in 1980 to 21.8% in 1985. Besides, the oil percentage on the Arab GDP decreased constantly from 58.2% in 1980 to 39.9% in 1985¹⁵⁴. Here some fundamental considerations need to be pointed out. Firstly, this data represents an average among GCC countries, thus specific trends could diverge case by case. Secondly, despite two decades having passed since Looney's analysis, whose paper focused on the rising importance of some economic sectors (i.e. services and banking) for the Gulf economies. Insofar, banking and services are two criteria of a neoliberal economy. Interestingly, those GCC countries, which since the early 1980s have

¹⁵¹ Yates, Douglas A., 1996, *"The rentier state in Africa, oil rent dependency & neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon"*, Trenton, Africa World Press.

¹⁵² Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, *"Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991"*, Roma, Editori Laterza, p. 229.

¹⁵³ Looney, E. Robert, October 1990, *"Structural and Economic Change in the Arab Gulf after 1973"*, Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 514-535, Taylor & Francis, Ltd. December 2014 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283396>

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 515 (all data).

developed those sectors, facilitate integration with Western markets and could offer high profits. Despite the fact that the Gulf monarchies could not break the rentier paradigm, which largely depends on crude exportation, they developed those economic fields, allowing their participation in neoliberal markets through financial actions and services and renewing the image and the urban style of the Gulf region.

The third question concerns the political relationship between neoliberal doctrine and the Arab Gulf state systems. Which has been the political result of combining rentierism and neoliberalism?

The rentier economies, namely the oil revenues, gave financial strength to each political class, such as the Saud family, the al-Khalifa in Kuwait or the emirs of the *trucial States*, in order to maintain its expenditure policies and consensus over the population¹⁵⁵. This aspect shaped a certain meaning of “citizenship” and consequently of “society”: basically, the status of citizen can be achieved just through the *ius sanguinis*; being a native and coming from a local family, banning bureaucratic ways such as the more inclusive *ius soli* criteria. Being a citizen is a passive privilege, which provides the opportunity of receiving rental profits, no taxation and free services. For instance, until the 1990s Saudi Arabia did not impose any kind of direct and indirect taxes. Utilities such as water, electricity and telecommunication were free to Saudi citizens¹⁵⁶. Using the term “passivity” means that the sovereign elite expect loyalty and compliant behaviour in return for having privileged status of “citizen.” This perspective shapes a *rentier mentality* among the national population, meaning that citizens develop a speculative and lazy mind-set due to the false myth of certain rental incomes¹⁵⁷. At the same time, this notion of citizenship does not allow any integration or, even, recognition of the large worker-migrant communities living around the Arab Gulf monarchies. It creates a deep divide between locals and foreigners. Continuing with the Saudi case, while positive economic trends occur natives can benefit by larger and larger

¹⁵⁵ Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, “*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*”, Roma, Editori Laterza.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 230.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 232.

revenues increasing the gap between their wealth and that of foreign low-skilled workers. Similarly, even during negative economic trends, labour migrants are more exposed to lowering of income as well as expulsion from the country in order to guarantee proper gains for the locals¹⁵⁸. In this respect Gulf societies demonstrate features of exclusiveness and passiveness.

All these characteristics, surely proper of an undemocratic country, did not prevent the affirmation of a neoliberal state model. In accordance with the Harvey's perspective, neoliberal institutions do not mean a *sine qua non* for the creation of democratic values, which are considered as favourable factors just under certain conditions¹⁵⁹. Indeed, the neoliberal priority concerns the consolidation of individual and economic rights in order to integrate different nations into the global market. The Arabian political elites could develop mechanisms to become global economic actors, participating mainly into the financial field, thanks to the crude income resources, namely the so-called petro-dollars. Nonetheless the openness towards the Western world could present pitfalls and uncertainty for at least a couple of reasons: firstly, this openness consisted in a direct presence of foreign powers into internal affairs and the US clout over Gulf issues represent an emblematic instance; secondly, over the decades Western countries entrenched a rhetoric debate concerning the interconnection between a liberal, or rather neoliberal, economic system and a democratic state model¹⁶⁰. Both points endangered the current political balance of the Gulf monarchies: indeed, democratic pressure could challenge the status quo inducing reformist phases, meanwhile direct foreign intervention into internal affairs could destabilize the relation between population and political establishment. Once again the Saudi scenario of the early 1990s can represent a useful case study.

The Saudi regime faced a crisis for two reasons: during the mid-1980s the price of oil dropped, leading to revenue shortages and limiting national

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 231.

¹⁵⁹ Harvey, David, 2005, "*A Brief History of Neoliberalism*". Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁶⁰ Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, "*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*", Roma, Editori Laterza, p. 398.

expenditure, and in the aftermaths of the Gulf War in 1991, the regime suffered a setback of legitimacy¹⁶¹. The Saud family relied on American protection rather than national forces, against an Iraqi attack, jeopardizing the agreement concerning the protection of the inner *Wahhabi* community. As clarified in the first chapter, the mutual support between the Muslim population and the Saud dynasty has been fundamental for the state consolidation of Saudi Arabia, with similar agreements occurring among the rest of the GCC countries. Welcoming international intervention, the Saud family did not perform their duty and avoided carrying out their mission towards the *Wahhabi* community. This situation opened the path to several critics from the political classes. Two groups raised different kinds of complaints. The first group hoped for a democratic reformist phase and for the enlargement of social and individual rights in line with Western culture. The second aligned itself with the radical *Wahhabi* movements, which condemn the partnership between the Saud regime and foreign powers¹⁶². Despite divergent political ideologies, these groups produced a gradual wave of reform in Saudi Arabia, introducing small mechanism of representation, such as the *shura* system, and the setting of the first administrative elections¹⁶³. These events followed a similar path across the Gulf region, pushing issues relating to democracy and representation to the forefront all the GCC countries¹⁶⁴.

The final question of this section concerns the cultural influence of both neoliberalism and Islam. How does neoliberal cultural model fit together with the Muslim tradition? Thus, here it must be wondered how culturally and socially neoliberalism shaped Arabian societies. Western doctrine represented a potential threat against conservative Muslim faith. Nonetheless, an individualistic perspective, along with economic freedoms, could fit with the autocratic regimes around the Persian Gulf. Each political elite aimed at maximizing income and entrenching its power. In doing so, the political elite accepted more affordable market values. In readiness this

¹⁶¹ Ibid. p. 436.

¹⁶² Ibid. p. 436.

¹⁶³ Ibid. p. 441.

¹⁶⁴ Nonneman, Gerd, 2006, "*Political reform in the Gulf monarchies: from liberalisation to democratisation? A comparative perspective*", Dhuram University, February 2015 <http://dro.dur.ac.uk/472/1/NonnemanV3.pdf>

attitude drove criticism from conservative Muslim communities, which condemned over the decades the monarchical participation in Western institutions and partnerships. As has been clarified above, the financial sector became one of the major fields that saw an active participation of Gulf assets and businessmen. Interestingly, finance has been at the core of many Muslim scholars, who theorized specific ways of conducting business in order to harmonize and facilitate trade between the Western and the Arab world, as well as to stimulate business across Muslim countries¹⁶⁵. In accordance with Marcella Emiliani, the creation of international holding, commercial banks and national investment funds all based on Islamic values allowed Gulf nations to spread their economic and socio-political power over the Middle Eastern region¹⁶⁶.

The former four questions attempted to clarify how the GCC countries dealt with neoliberal pressure and the result caused by a mixing rentierism and neoliberalism. Both economic, political and cultural considerations have been pointed out in order to offer a clear image of Gulf monarchies. Thus, the analysis must go further, focusing on the specific case of Turkey, which is the other main subject to consider.

¹⁶⁵ To deepen the analysis concerning the Muslim finance I recommend “*Islam and the Moral Economy: The Challenge of Capitalism*” by Charles Tripp, Cambridge University Press, 2006. The Muslim finance is wide and complex issue, so I decide just to mention it in order to do not go too far from the main topic here debated.

¹⁶⁶ Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, “*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*”, Roma, Editori Laterza, p. 391.

2.5 THE CASE OF TURKEY: CONTINUATION OR FRACTURE OF THE TURKISH POLITICAL ECONOMY FROM THE OZAL GOVERNMENT TO THE AKP AFFIRMATION

Turkey has been described already as an oil-poor country, which induced policies in order to achieve a solid productive economic system that could compete in the international market. Since the early decades of the republican foundation, the Turkish political elites welcomed liberal values to shape the national political economy. Individual initiative and private propriety were basic assumptions to set the economic field¹⁶⁷. Following the general trend in the aftermath of the Great Depression of the late 1920s that saw the embracing of Keynesian policies, the Turkish establishment turned towards an active state role into economics, financing public enterprises and infrastructures. The unstable political scenario correlates with the economic phases, which occurred over the decades. Indeed, each government made efforts to develop industrialization processes and virtuous economic growth to prevent any downfall of the population consensus¹⁶⁸.

Already in the mid-20th century some major characteristics of the Turkish economy came out: despite the first political changes due to the openness towards a multi-party system, the general consensus towards the Western free market model did not shift. Furthermore, this mind-set induced the elites to search for economic support mainly from the United States and to endorse the Bretton Woods institutions¹⁶⁹. As a consequence, between 1948 and 1952 Turkey indicated a positive growth trend, which begun a concrete industrialization and modernization phase of the Anatolian territories. Nonetheless, bore the tendency to borrow loans from international creditors in order to finance internal expenditures¹⁷⁰.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the Turkish economy slowed down

¹⁶⁷ Nocera, Lea, 2011, *“La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell’AKP”*, Roma: Carocci, p. 32.

¹⁶⁸ Both Nocera, Lea, 2011, *“La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell’AKP”*, Roma: Carocci; and Öktem, Kerem, 2011, *“Turkey since 1989: angry nation”*, London: Zed books.

¹⁶⁹ Nocera, Lea, 2011, *“La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell’AKP”*, Roma: Carocci p. 43.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 44.

and each government in office attempted to reinvigorate national growth: if liberal policies did not assure a stable development in a long run, CHP governments pushed for a renewed state intervention and planning of the economic activities. Therefore, organizations such as the *Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı* between the early '60s up to the '70s, were set up to establish five year plans to stabilize economic trends¹⁷¹. Similarly, the entrepreneurial association known as TUSIAD (*Türk Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği*) incited the interest of the industrial Turkish elite, involving them in the political economy decision-making. In Turkey as well as in other major Middle Eastern countries (i.e. Egypt) mainly throughout that decade, the political class aimed at implementing the so-called ISI strategy, namely *Import Substitution Industrialization*, which had to entrench industrial development in spite of the continuous dependency from foreign import, activating state intervention, high trade duty and controlled currency exchange rates¹⁷². Insofar all these policies do not constitute a free market economy, Turkey did not follow a homogeneous political economy at least during the first decades of the republican consolidation.

Therefore, what economic trends and policies have been implemented since the neoliberal doctrine spread worldwide? In the last three decades, namely the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, was there any continuity or fracture concerning the political economic strategies?

2.5.1 The 1980s: from the third military coup d'état to the neoliberal wave

In the late 1970s the Turkish scenario was deeply upset by several matters, which afflicted the political, social and economic side of the nation. Almost two decades of economic fragilities that induced in January 1980 Turkey's acceptance of the first IMF structural adjustment plan, plus political turmoil due to unresolved issues concerning minorities' integration process such as the Kurds and the Alevis and social unrest caused by a polarized society gave reasons to afford the third coup d'état completed on

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p. 59.

¹⁷² Ibid. p. 59.

September 12th 1980 by the Turkish army¹⁷³. In the following three years, the military controlled regime re-shaped society, aimed at removing the old features and destabilizing factors from the Turkish context. Interestingly, the military junta implemented contradictory policies: proclaiming secularism and the Atatürk's icon as unchangeable roots, they accepted the values of political Islam to harmonize the society and to reinvigorate a sense of Turkishness¹⁷⁴.

Nonetheless, former political parties and Islamist as well as leftists' movements suffered a harsh crackdown, while gradually a renewed and controlled elective system was set up, allowing multi-party competition. One of the few organizations that escaped from the repression of the army has been the TUSIAD, meaning that oligarchic enclaves could attempt to survive adapting themselves to the changes going on¹⁷⁵. As a consequence of the national parliamentary election of 1983, Turgut Ozal was elected Prime Minister. Ozal was a technocrat of the economy ministry during the recent coup years, but the military junta did not support him during the new democratic political race. Thus, his success represented an unexpected result. He completed his education at Istanbul Technical University, and then he forged a career in the State Planning Administration and in international institutions such as the World Bank, as well as being a businessman working for national and foreign companies. The political affirmation of his party, named as Motherland Party, *"became the melting pot for the followers of Turkey's right-wing political traditions (conservative, nationalist and Islamist), held together by Ozal's charisma and his very personal and eclectic ideology [...]"*¹⁷⁶.

Thus, mixing Muslim conservatism and free market values, Prime Minister Turgut Ozal began his reform plan opening a new phase in the Turkish political economy. He aimed to stimulate an export-oriented

¹⁷³ Karadag, Roy, 2010, *"Neoliberal Restructuring In Turkey: from State To Oligarchic Capitalism"*, Max-Plank-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, December 2014 <https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/43284/1/635645955.pdf>

¹⁷⁴ Oktem (2011) deepen the description concerning the schizophrenic policies made by the military junta during the early 1980s (Chapter 2 pp. 60-64).

¹⁷⁵ Karadag, Roy, 2010, *"Neoliberal Restructuring In Turkey: from State To Oligarchic Capitalism"*, Max-Plank-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, December 2014 <https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/43284/1/635645955.pdf>, p. 13.

¹⁷⁶ Öktem, Kerem, 2011, *"Turkey since 1989: angry nation"*, London: Zed books, p. 67.

industrialization liberalizing Turkey's foreign trade and hoping to achieve similar results to those of East Asian developmental countries. Between 1984 and 1985 he implemented privatization programs of state-owned enterprises as well as the introduction of fiscal austerity measures in order to reduce public spending¹⁷⁷. Nonetheless, the government provided incentives and subsidies to *foreign trade companies* to facilitate the “export” production.

A result produced by the military crackdown throughout 1980-83, was the “*suspension of trade union activities and the destruction of the left [...]*”¹⁷⁸ activist groups. It meant no concrete opposition could come out against the economic measures introduced by the recently elected government. Besides, Ozal entrenched his relationship with relevant business families, mainly TUSIAD members, who supported directly the Motherland Party¹⁷⁹.

In accordance with both Oktem's and Karadag's analysis, the Turkish economy suffered from an inefficient private industrial sector caused by the ISI policies during the 1960s and 1970s. Based on this assumption, both scholars underline the great effort made by Prime Minister Ozal to modernize and reinvigorate the economic system: especially around the mid-1980s he “*managed to drive inflation down from three digit to one*” benefitting of GDP annual rates of more than 5%; furthermore “*he opened the way for new social classes to emerge: scrapping many of the protectionist measures and terminating state monopolies*” facilitating “*the emergence of a new class of industrial capitalists in Anatolian cities*”¹⁸⁰. In this respect, the geography of Turkish industrialization changed radically: if up to the 1970s the Western part of Anatolia, mainly the area between Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, represented the economic engine of national production, since the early 1980s onwards the so-called “Anatolian tigers”

¹⁷⁷ Karadag, Roy, 2010, “*Neoliberal Restructuring In Turkey: from State To Oligarchic Capitalism*”, Max-Plank-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, December 2014 <https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/43284/1/635645955.pdf>, p. 14.

¹⁷⁸ Oktem, Kerem, 2011, “*Turkey since 1989: angry nation*”, London: Zed books, p. 68.

¹⁷⁹ Karadag, Roy, 2010, “*Neoliberal Restructuring In Turkey: from State To Oligarchic Capitalism*”, Max-Plank-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, December 2014 <https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/43284/1/635645955.pdf>, p. 15-16.

¹⁸⁰ Oktem, Kerem, 2011, “*Turkey since 1989: angry nation*”, London: Zed books, p. 69.

(i.e. Gaziantep, Denizli, Kayseri and Adana) gained centrality in the renewed industrialization wave, in particular in textile production. Despite the difficulties they were faced with, governmental efforts produced noticeable results: the industrial production in exported goods doubled within a few years, leading Turkish incomes from foreign trades from 2.9 billion US dollars in 1980 to 12.9 billion US dollars in 1989¹⁸¹. Moreover, commercial partnership also shifted: the European Community represented the major trading partner for the Anatolian Republic up to the Ozal watershed; while later on Turkish businesses became particularly active with Middle Eastern neighbours and with the Turkic republics of Central Asia.

Covering the Turkish economic reform process of the 1980s, some considerations about the neoliberal aspect of the Ozal political economy need to be addressed. Firstly, he favoured privatization transition giving the possibility to new businessmen to affirm their positions, meanwhile he financed housing and infrastructure investment feeding GDP growth and the service sector became an important source of national income. The rising “Anatolian tigers” represented the affirmation of the new business class; the construction of the first Bosphorus Bridge was the icon of the infrastructural development; while the importance of tourism and increasing numbers of tourists to Turkey consolidated the service sector¹⁸².

Furthermore, the neoliberal reform process did not concern merely the economic field, but rather the cultural and social side as well. Indeed, as with the neoliberal rhetoric worldwide, Ozal fostered free market values to “*unleash a new mind-set of capitalist development that set free the creative forces of the market*”¹⁸³. It meant a deep restructuring perspective of production and consumption systems, “*including popular culture, lifestyle*

¹⁸¹ Karadag, Roy, 2010, “*Neoliberal Restructuring In Turkey: from State To Oligarchic Capitalism*”, Max-Plank-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, December 2014 <https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/43284/1/635645955.pdf>, p. 14. Oktem and Karadag show different data relative to this issue. Indeed, in Oktem’s analysis (2011: 69) the incomes from foreign trades increased from below 3 billion US dollars in 1980 to 20 billion US dollars.

¹⁸² I summed up data and info from three main analysis made by Nocera (2011), Oktem (2011) and Karadag (2010).

¹⁸³ Öktem, Kerem, 2011, “*Turkey since 1989: angry nation*”, London: Zed books, p. 70.

*and worldviews*¹⁸⁴. In doing so, American series and commercial Turkish TV channels offered these new lifestyle patterns.

These achievements have been reached thanks to the economic financing by international institutions: for example, in 1984 the IMF conceded the Special Drawing Rights lending 1.5 billion US dollars to the Turkish government and similarly, in 1985 the WB agreed on lending 4.7 billion US dollars through Structural Adjustment Loans¹⁸⁵. These loans created a permanent problem of structural indebtedness, which gave ground to the upcoming financial crisis in the subsequent decades. In addition, it highlighted the paradox concerning the official statement of state non-intervention into economics, while at the same time national government afforded more and more debts to support their reform phases and to solve economic and social matters¹⁸⁶.

The popularity of the Motherland Party (MP) government lasted until the mid-1980s due to positive economic trends and growth, while from 1987 MPs' appeal decreased due to the damaging effect caused by welfare-reducing policies of the neoliberal reforms. Thus, 1991 posed another watershed for the Turkish Republic, ending the MP leadership and opening the 1990s with the Social Democratic People's Party and the True Path Party on the political stage.

2.5.2 From the unstable 1990s to the AKP affirmation

Several authors agree on defining the 1990s as the "lost decade" in Turkey's history¹⁸⁷. It has been labelled in such a way due to political, social and economic characteristics. Social tensions hardened between minorities, above all the Kurds in the Southeast part of Anatolia, and national authorities, between leftist movements and right-wing groups,

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 72.

¹⁸⁵ Karadag, Roy, 2010, "Neoliberal Restructuring In Turkey: from State To Oligarchic Capitalism", Max-Plank-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, December 2014 <https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/43284/1/635645955.pdf>, p. 14.

¹⁸⁶ Karadag, Roy, 2010, "Neoliberal Restructuring In Turkey: from State To Oligarchic Capitalism", Max-Plank-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, December 2014 <https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/43284/1/635645955.pdf>; Öktem, Kerem, 2011, "Turkey since 1989: angry nation", London: Zed books; and Nocera, Lea, 2011, "La Turchia contemporanea: dalla repubblica kemalista al governo dell'AKP", Roma: Carocci.

¹⁸⁷ All authors: Karadag (2010), Öktem (2011) and Nocera (2011).

inducing a harsh repression carried out by the military¹⁸⁸. Politically, no party has been able to deal with the social unrest and the economic fragilities. Furthermore, in 1996 Necmettin Erbakan won the national election, becoming Prime Minister and bringing his conservative party, the Welfare Party, into office. His election meant the affirmation of a new influent wave of Muslim conservative values into politics¹⁸⁹. Nonetheless, it was considered a threat by the military establishment, which in fact caused the fourth coup d'état on February 28th 1997. Interestingly, this last military intervention did not provoke a destitution of the political class using military force; rather, throughout a set of memorandum the Turkish generals induced Prime Minister Erbakan to respect an anti-Islamic policy. For this reason it has been named as “postmodern coup”¹⁹⁰.

The economic trends too did not ease Turkey's political scene in the 1990s. In fact from the late 1980s onwards, extreme volatile growth rates have been recorded, plus high levels of inflation and the outbreak of several financial crises raised important economical considerations. Above all, it raised a debt trap, which produced significant public debt (from nil in 1987 to 25-30% in 2000) and a vicious circle of “*high deficits, high inflation, and high interest rates, as well as the decline of the Central Bank's foreign reserves [...]*”¹⁹¹. In accordance with of the traditional attitude towards Western countries financing this critical phase of the '90s, the Turkish political class turned once more to the international institutions for loans. As a result in 1994 and 1999 two IMF programs have been enlisted, fostering neoliberal reforms to re-shape the Turkish economy (i.e. fiscal austerity and banking regulation to decrease inflation rates)¹⁹². Nonetheless, these agreements and reform plans did not prevent the breakout of two financial crises, in 2000 and 2001 respectively.

¹⁸⁸ Öktem, Kerem, 2011, “*Turkey since 1989: angry nation*”, London: Zed books, Chapter 4.

¹⁸⁹ Hale William, Özbudun Ergun, 2010, “Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey”, New York, Routledge.

¹⁹⁰ To deepen the discussion on the “postmodern coup” check the Oktem (2011) chapter 4.

¹⁹¹ Karadag, Roy, 2010, “*Neoliberal Restructuring In Turkey: from State To Oligarchic Capitalism*”, Max-Plank-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, December 2014 <https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/43284/1/635645955.pdf>, p. 18. For a detailed discussion about the debt trap check Karadag (2010) p. 18.

¹⁹² Ibid. p. 18.

Moving into the beginning of the 2000s, a new conservative party gain the core of the political stage. Modernist members of the former Erbakan's Welfare Party established the Justice and Development Party, in Turkish *Adelet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP), on August 14th 2001. This group divided the former Muslim conservative coalition stepping back the older establishment and their political heritages; at the same time it allowed the affirmation of new leaders, above all Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was more affiliated with the Welfare Party, but distanced himself from certain anachronistic values associated with the former political class¹⁹³. The main reason for the AKP electoral victory, in 2002 parliamentary elections, concerned the great social cohesion that raised among the party from an heterogeneous social consensus: both economic elites of the "Anatolian tigers" and low-income population embraced moderate Muslim conservative values. Besides, the AKP leadership welcomed Western freedoms in order to reconcile the damaged Turkish socio-political context and to reinvigorate its international status, emphasizing "*universal rights as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, limited government, pluralism tolerance and respect for diversity*"¹⁹⁴. Following the party's rhetoric, it claimed the consolidation of a so-called *conservative democracy* and, in doing so, the AKP had to demonstrate similarities with far-right European coalitions. In accordance with the Hale and Ozbudun analysis, "*AKP appears to have successfully rebuilt the Ozal-ANAP ("Motherland Party") coalition, bringing together former centre-right voters, moderate Islamists, moderate nationalists and even a certain segment of the former centre-left*"¹⁹⁵.

Economically the AKP election gave ground to a new wave of neoliberal reforms to interrupt the fragilities of the '90s. Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan and his establishment fostered a free market economy and recognized the state's role in the economy as a mere regulatory and supervisory duty. Nonetheless, borrowing policies towards the IMF and WB continued in order to improve the Turkish economy. In other words, the

¹⁹³ Hale William, and Özbudun Ergun, 2010, "*Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey*", New York, Routledge.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 21.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 37.

AKP government did not adopt a major shift with the previous political economy; rather it reinvigorated the fiscal and monetary recommendations promoted by international institutions, aiming to integrate Turkey into the global market. Interestingly, Hale and Ozbudun described the Turkish economy as a "go-stop-go circle", which means over the decades initial periods of massive fiscal expenditure were afforded by the national government; these phases constantly led to large public deficits and high inflation rates. As a result, a balance of payments crisis burst and the Turkish authorities turned to international institutions to gain further loans passing through restrictive recovery plans¹⁹⁶.

The above mentioned crisis of 2001 specifically concerned the collapse of the Turkish financial system, which raised the need for a structural change of the banking sector. Thus, it became a priority in the AKP agenda: already a Banking Regulation and Supervisory Agency monitored a number of banks and their trends, plus a Banking Law was introduced in 2005. Thanks to these efforts the AKP succeeded in re-capitalizing private banks: re-structuring the state-banking sector as well as strengthening government finances "*by rationalising employment in the public sector, reforming the tax system and privatization*"¹⁹⁷.

Besides these reforms, a wave of privatization took place during the Erdogan election. The success of this process was achieved due to the favourable balance between AKP's political power, military clout and major family business: each one providing sufficient force to maintain its status without preventing a secure privatization phase of large holding companies such as in the energy and selling sectors¹⁹⁸. This equilibrium assured profits for Turkish businessmen and stimulated Foreign Direct Investment into the national market.

In conclusion, how might the question concerning the general trend of the Turkish political economy of the last thirty years be answered? Is there

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 101.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 102.

¹⁹⁸ Karadag, Roy, 2010, "*Neoliberal Restructuring In Turkey: from State To Oligarchic Capitalism*", Max-Plank-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, December 2014 <https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/43284/1/635645955.pdf>, p. 27.

any continuity or, contrarily, fracture between the AKP political economy and former political leaderships?

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan and his followers once again accepted free market values and adopted a cooperative attitude towards the IMF and WB with the aim of addressing national fragilities and increasing international agreement. Despite some setbacks and hard-times, the first decade of AKP political hegemony achieved economic results bringing Turkey onto the world stage. Thus, if AKP presented a certain degree of continuity in the economic field, it succeeded in stimulating national growth, which overcame the great fragilities of '90s. On the contrary, the AKP mixed Muslim conservativeness and neoliberal values. In this respect, the fundamental fracture occurred during the previous political establishments of the '80s and '90s.

Summing up the considerations addressed throughout the second chapter, both the Gulf monarchies and Turkish economic situation have been discussed. The basic criteria concerning the “rentier state paradigm” and the neoliberal state model have been clarified to debate this issue. Henceforth, Arabian Gulf countries presented (and still present) mixed features typical of both rentierism and neoliberalism; while Turkey, without any kind of rentier revenues, developed a productive economic system in accordance with the neoliberal pattern. Thanks to the analysis debated so far, a solid overview of the socio-political and economic conditions of these topics has been presented. The final section will investigate how the media in the Gulf region address Turkish politics and the image of Turkey the headlines portray. Doing so, the increasing phenomenon of the development of Gulf media will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3: TURKEY IN THE EYES OF THE PERSIAN GULF ARAB MONARCHIES

3.1 NEW PERSPECTIVES AND OPEN SPACES

The former two chapters attempted to present a comprehensive comparative analysis of Turkey and the Gulf monarchies. As already shown, the socio-political features entrenched their roots in the early phases of the identity and state formation, which set an intrigued background composed of complex relations between national consciousness, Islamic feelings and foreign intervention in regional affairs. Besides, the economic development represented a fundamental aspect of the Middle Eastern framework. In this regard, these previously treated countries tend to show divergent characteristics due to their peculiarities. Thus, it needs a further inquiry before drawing any conclusions: namely, the question of which kind of perspective has been undertaken so far by the Gulf States concerning the Turkish context. In other words, which kinds of images of Turkey come out from the Gulf press? These questions should not lead us to shortcut solutions; rather they should open a way to broaden the debate about the power of media and to what extent it can shape the socio-political scene. Furthermore, the specific development of the current news formats across the Arabian countries needs to be further investigated covering how and when they have been established. Last but not least, the question of which potential rivalries exist between news agencies in different nations should be delved into.

Moving beyond any general description, three online newspapers will provide extensive sources to reveal final considerations concerning these major inquiries. The Doha-based (Qatar) *Al Jazeera* and its international edition *Al Jazeera English* will be the starting point of any discussion due to their relevance and meaning they introduced since their foundation in 1996 and 2006 respectively. Nonetheless, the Dubai-based (UAE) *Al Arabiya* and, finally, the Jeddah-based (Saudi Arabia) *Saudi Gazette* will complete an already diversified perspective over the issues treated here. The final section of the chapter will take a closer look at the recent past, basically the last ten years of the social, political and economic scenario of Turkey. The reason behind this need is essentially the fact that the increasing strength of Ankara has both economically and internationally attracted significant

attention. Interestingly enough, this improved image allowed the Turkish elites to partially regain the Ottoman prestige whilst it offered a concrete state model for the rest of the Middle East.

3.2 THE *AL JAZEERA* PHENOMENON: A WATERSHED FOR THE ENTIRE MIDDLE EAST.

Three authors offer different perspectives to address this topic: each of them will contribute to discuss the so-called Al Jazeera phenomenon and, consequently, will provide a ground to answer the question “*why are the Gulf media relevant to consider?*”.

The first scholar is the already quoted Marcella Emiliani, who adopts an historical standpoint due to her extensive writings on the history of Middle Eastern region from the beginning of the 20th century¹⁹⁹. Secondly, the Qatari media and communication professor Mohamed Zayani further points out the importance of the Al Jazeera’s role and the revolution it induced both directly and indirectly into the regional setting²⁰⁰. Thirdly, the ex-US Marine and current Al Jazeera English correspondent Josh Rushing will add an inside perspective thanks to his considerations drew up in “*Mission Al Jazeera*”²⁰¹.

Given that the media as such has represented one of the main tools defined as *soft power* due to their effectiveness in influencing and shaping public opinion and feelings, the Qatari news agency created a breaking point for the Middle Eastern tradition. The concept of soft power with regard to the press and to the media, generally speaking, has been discussed through a set of different approaches, which range from the cinematography (i.e. the Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane* directed in 1941) to the constructivist view, proper of the international relations studies. This academic theory highlights the possibility of setting the political agenda depending on the

¹⁹⁹ Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, “*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*”, Roma, Editori Laterza.

²⁰⁰ Zayani, Mohamend, 2005, “*The Al Jazeera phenomenon: Critical Perspective on New Arab Media*”, London, Pluto Press.

²⁰¹ Rushing, Josh, 2007, “*Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World*”, New York, Palgrave MacMillan.

securitization/de-securitization mechanism of public matters²⁰². Indeed, already in the 1950s the Egyptian radio broadcast constituted a great element to spread regionally pan-Arab values reinforcing the Colonel Nasser icon²⁰³. Similarly, each Arab government kept the national news agencies under strict control, which became, more than usually, propaganda tools of the political establishments. In order to reveal the level of censorship, Josh Rushing mentions the 1990-91 Gulf War when in the aftermath of the Iraq's invasion of Kuwait the Saudi media did not cover the headlines for the first 36 hours aiming to procrastinate any national reaction²⁰⁴. This episode examines the inaccurate status of the Arab media still in the last decade of the 20th century. Nonetheless, the same event demonstrated the relevance of the renewed role of the media: the unprecedented developments in the Information and Communication Technology (ITC) allowed a media revolution and facilitated broadcast capacities. On the other hand, it also highlighted the lack of information around the Arab region. This fact once again was showed by the Saudi attitude during the beginning of the Gulf War. The educated people could reach information through international agencies such as the British BBC and the American CNN while the major part of the population had to keep on following just the limited headlines diffused by the national news format²⁰⁵. In this regard, Al Jazeera was born to fill this void, meaning that *"the Emir of Qatar was perceptive in seeing the need to tap into that hunger and to communicate with these people"*²⁰⁶.

Moving a step back, it should point out the framework where Al Jazeera has been founded and why specifically in Qatar. As it has been discussed in the first chapter, the Qatari peninsula is a former poor area, where the Al Thani dynasty entrenched its power since the late 19th century. The inglorious past of this country had a turning point during the first decades of the 20th century when massive oil and gas resources were found

²⁰² I refer in particular to the Copenhagen School and to the works theorized by Waever. Collins, Alan, 2009, *"Contemporary Security Studies"*, Oxford University Press, 2nd ed.

²⁰³ Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, *"Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991"*, Roma, Editori Laterza.

²⁰⁴ Rushing, Josh, 2007, *"Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World"*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, p. 132.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 132.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 133.

across the national territories. This sudden change led by worldwide raw material trading consolidated the Al Thani regime. Moreover, it prevented confrontation with regional powers, above all Saudi Arabia, and assured international protection over the political class²⁰⁷. Especially mid-‘90s onwards, besides the impressive economic growth, a major political change occurred: in 1995 a bloodless coup declared Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani as the new Emir of Qatar. He immediately fostered a “liberal” reform phase in his country. In accordance with the Zayani’s words, “*the Emir has been attempting his country into a liberal constitutional monarchy. Qatar projects an image of a country that is keen on modernizing itself and the Emir has, in fact, brought liberal reform which includes holding elections for a chamber of commerce, having municipal election and allowing women to vote*”²⁰⁸. Despite the American perspective used by Josh Rushing in his work, he adopts a similar point of view with Zayani’s in terms of unparalleled reform implemented by the new Emir Hamad Al Thani²⁰⁹.

The icon of this sudden change was Sheikha Al Mahmoud, who guided the Qatar’s Ministry of Education and covered in her figure all the new aspects fostered by the Emir. Two issues jumped on the top of the political agenda. The former concerning the national education system, where the Emir empowered a free education program for each Qatari citizen from kindergarten to university, aiming to develop a highly educated population. The latter, on the other hand, regarded “the state information system” and, in doing so, Al Jazeera (AJ) was established by the Emir Al Thani himself. In November 1996 the new satellite television channel Al Jazeera broadcasted. The Emir benefitted from the short-lived joint Saudi-BBC venture, which failed to be the first Arabic version of the BBC World Service, but it had successfully provided well-trained human resources to compose the initial AJ crew. Thus, the first Arab free-press agency of all Middle East began reporting and commenting on international events. Once again the Emir’s intervention consolidated the independency of the Doha-

²⁰⁷ Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, “*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*”, Roma, Editori Laterza.

²⁰⁸ Zayani, Mohamed, 2005, “*The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*”, London, Pluto Press, p. 11.

²⁰⁹ Rushing, Josh, 2007, “*Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World*”, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, p. 120.

based agency by abolishing the Ministry of Information in 1998. As Rushing maintains, this created an atmosphere of free speech “*giving Al Jazeera’s reporters and producers greater freedom and license to ask tough questions and challenge conventional wisdom, a practice the ministry once made illegal and dangerous*”²¹⁰.

Two main features characterized the AJ reporting style and created the background for the great success of the broadcasting station: firstly, the quality of the headlines and, secondly, the focus on every major topic, unlike the previous stance that left out controversial matters, relevant to the current political issues²¹¹. This attitude meant keeping the eyes open over problematic concerns for the entire Middle Eastern region. For instance, AJ programs and reports covered matters regarding government corruption, human rights conditions across Arab regimes, persecution of dissenters in autocratic nations, Islamic law and Islamic fundamentalism, and even included the fragile equilibrium between Islam and the Western democracy state-pattern²¹². The willingness to avoid being limited by censorship policies has come out from the AJ motto, which in English might translate as “the opinion and the other opinion”²¹³. As a result, the effort to give voice to divergent political factions led increasingly more critics to delve into a wide range of subjects. Interestingly, traditional pro-Arab actors as well as Western entities raised their critics against the Qatari television channel. Arab leaders accused AJ for allowing Israeli officials in their studios and offering them the chance to participate actively in the open public debates, which meant the recognition of Israel as such and not as a mere enemy to refuse and discredit. Upsetting, then, several Arab governments and introducing an innovative effort of accountability, AJ did not reach to the standard levels for joining the Arab State Broadcasting Union due to an alleged weakness in its Arab consciousness. Nonetheless, in the aftermath of 9/11 and especially during the second Gulf War in Iraq that started in 2003,

²¹⁰ Ibid. p. 122.

²¹¹ Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, “*Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*”, Roma, Editori Laterza, p. 432.

²¹² Zayani, Mohamed, 2005, “*The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*”, London, Pluto Press.

²¹³ Both Zayani, Mohamed, 2005, “*The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*”, London, Pluto Press; and Rushing, Josh, 2007, “*Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World*”, New York, Palgrave MacMillan.

AJ has been accused to be the “official” broadcasting station of the Al Qaeda terrorist group and later on of each major armed Islamic group. As Rushing reports²¹⁴ the West and, in particular, the US establishment labelled AJ as an unpleasant press agency and, even, adducing sometimes a role of sponsorship towards jihadist movements. Fact that induced a direct US bombing-attack over the Kabul-based AJ press centre in 2001²¹⁵. Despite these opposite sources of criticism, AJ has been accused to be a one-side story telling and to disregard potential dangerous issues for the Qatari establishment. Insofar AJ has been considered as threat, bilateral relations between Qatar and countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan and Egypt suffered setbacks and hard times²¹⁶.

In spite of these fragilities, the AJ’s success is undeniable. Thanks to the composite character of the debate and to daring issues presented in front of a vast audience, AJ has been recognized as one of the most influential top brands worldwide²¹⁷. Therefore, especially neighbour countries around the Arabian Gulf had to deal directly with the so-called Al Jazeera phenomenon, reforming their attitude towards the media as such and creating their own news agencies. In this regard, some attempts failed, while others succeeded to affirm themselves as reliable: in the aftermath of the American occupation of Iraq started in 2003, a US-Arabic television channel, named as *Al Hurra*, broadcasted, but failed due to its scarce accountability over the Iraqi population²¹⁸. On the contrary, news agencies such as *Al Arabiya* obtained enough credibility to counterbalance the AJ media hegemony.

However, the main factor to consider is not merely the Al Jazeera phenomenon as an event concerning the evolution and the progress of the Arab media; rather it has a strong political impact both globally and

²¹⁴ Rushing, Josh, 2007, *“Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World”*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan.

²¹⁵ Both Rushing, Josh, 2007, *“Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World”*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan; and Zayani, Mohamed, 2005, *“The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media”*, London, Pluto Press.

²¹⁶ Zayani, Mohamed, 2005, *“The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media”*, London, Pluto Press.

²¹⁷ Rushing, Josh, 2007, *“Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World”*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, p. 160.

²¹⁸ Ibid. p. 177.

regionally²¹⁹. Its innovative reporting style allowed it to influence the Middle Eastern agenda, giving specific interpretations of the headlines. One of the most recent examples regards the Arab Spring started in 2011, which was highlighted for its pan-Arab nature facilitating the creation of a common ground for the turmoils, but disregarding those facts that could damage directly the Gulf regimes (i.e. the uprising around the streets of Bahrain)²²⁰. Another indirect result of the AJ broadcasting was the reinvigorated public debate over controversial topics: the overt denouncement of the diffuse sexual harassments against Egyptian women by the independent Egyptian Dream TV channel has been a clear sign of weakening traditional Arab taboo²²¹.

In doing so, the Qatari establishment extended its political power at the expense of neighbour countries. Saudi Arabia probably represented the biggest competitor and, surely, the Arabian regional power. Nonetheless, it suffered the effective Qatari foreign policy based on its free press channel and a tangible US military partnership²²², which assured to the small peninsula to become a relevant regional actor. In this regard AJ did not concern merely the media field, but it has been part of a broader Emir's project.

Summing up, both national governments and Arab public opinion dealt with the consequences introduced since AJ went on air in mid-'90s. New broadcasting stations mushroomed in the last decade and each of them had to face higher and renewed information standard levels. The Dubai-based Al Arabiya rose as main competitor of the Qatari Al Jazeera, but other news agencies added contributes to the media debate.

Furthermore, thanks to the Sheikh Hamad Al Thani's willingness an

²¹⁹ Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, *“Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991”*, Roma, Editori Laterza; Rushing, Josh, 2007, *“Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World”*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan; and Zayani, Mohamed, 2005, *“The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media”*, London, Pluto Press.

²²⁰ Emiliani, Marcella, 2012, *“Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991”*, Roma, Editori Laterza, p. 433.

²²¹ Rushing, Josh, 2007, *“Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World”*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, p. 142.

²²² Rushing interestingly quote the Emir's decision to host the US military base “CentCom” nearby Doha as rationale choice to strength the US-Qatar relation, being recognized as regional actor at the expense of the Saudi hegemony (p. 147).

English edition of AJ, namely *Al Jazeera English* (AJE), have been formed in November 2006. This new AJ's arm, composed by international reporters and correspondents, challenged major foreign media formats, such as BBC World and CNN International, renovating a global competition in the information sector. Indeed, holding the same principles of accountability, trusteeship and high information quality, AJE aims to give voice in particular to the "global South" and to those issues usually disregarded by Western news agencies²²³. Therefore, due to the dedication of the AJE staff-members, the Qatari format succeeded to affirm its role internationally as well.

Moving from this scenario, other Gulf agencies formed their international editions such as *Al Arabiya English* and the Jeddah-based *Saudi Gazette*. Concluding, in particular these last two press-headlines, plus AJE, will offer the sources to cover and draw up the Turkish image on the Gulf media. In doing so, it will be inquired if any difference might emerge among the news agencies considered and if there might be found an unique policy concerning Turkish politics.

²²³ Ibid. p. 194.

3.3 FOSTERING A COMPREHENSIVE DIALOGUE: TURKEY AND GULF COUNTRIES TALKING ABOUT EACH OTHER

To figure out a general framework concerning the Turkish image presented by the Gulf media, a plentiful amount of articles and perspectives comes out from different pieces. Nonetheless, defining specific lens of analysis major considerations over relevant topics might be underlined. Furthermore, the previous two chapters gave ground to a solid comparative description of the Turkish and Gulf context and they offered fundamental knowledge to understand and debate the most intrigued issues of nowadays. Therefore, four aspects need to be addressed to draw up a proper image of Turkey: namely those factors regard foreign policy, economic growth, political management of the AKP governments and its leader Tayyip Erdogan, and, finally, the features of the Turkish democracy referring this last argument to the press freedom and human rights conditions in Anatolia.

The importance to set a comprehensive dialogue between these actors previously analysed comes out from many scholars and think tanks. In particular, papers made by the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV)²²⁴ of Istanbul highlight the regional role of Turkey and the Gulf countries, defining them as principal subjects for the entire Middle Eastern balances²²⁵. Moving forward from this assumption, professors and collaborators of the TESEV think tank such as Saban Kardas²²⁶ foster the idea to promote an intense dialogue among these

²²⁴ The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) is an independent non-governmental think-tank, analysing Turkey's most pressing social, cultural, political and economic issues. Based in Istanbul, TESEV was founded in 1994 to serve as a bridge between academic research and the policy-making process in Turkey by opening new channels for policy-oriented dialogue and research. For further details checks <http://www.tesev.org.tr/>

²²⁵ Kardas, Saban, November 2012, *"Turkey and the Gulf Dialogue in the Middle East"*, TESEV Foundation, Istanbul, Last access February 2015 http://www.tesev.org.tr/Upload/Publication/efe57ebc-ca34-4e94-a7e0-04b6b721e3bb/Turkey%20and%20Gulf%20Dialogue_Saban%20Kardas.pdf; and TESEV Foreign Policy Programme, 2012, *"The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East 2012"*, TESEV Foundation, Istanbul, Last access February 2015 <http://www.tesev.org.tr/assets/publications/file/Perceptions2012.pdf>; and TESEV Foreign Policy Programme, 2013, *"The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East 2013"*, TESEV Foundation, Istanbul, Last access February 2015 <http://www.tesev.org.tr/assets/publications/file/14012014171159.pdf>

²²⁶ Kardas, Saban, November 2012, *"Turkey and the Gulf Dialogue in the Middle East"*, TESEV Foundation, Istanbul, Last access February 2015

nations to create a favourable partnership and guiding upcoming policies. These strategic talks between Turkey and the GCC monarchies began with bilateral meetings since the 1970s and increased through the 1980s regarded especially political and economic aspects: politically, both actors aimed to safeguard their foreign policy towards neighbour countries, finding for instance a natural alliance against Shia state of Iran or even the recently unstable scenarios of Iraq and Syria; while, economically the Gulf nations helped to diversify the traditional Turkish policy consisting in favouring relationship with Western economies and institutions, opening new channels and resources for Turkish businessmen²²⁷. In spite of this 30-year relation, the TESEV think tank inquiries on the mutual perspective of these countries on each other and if this standpoint is realistic or not²²⁸. Indeed, turning back to the recent past of these nations, they do not present a long-run path in the international relations arena: respectively, Turkey has been mainly focused on internal affairs due to its socio-political instability; while the GCC countries jumped at the global level thanks to the oil boom and in particular in the aftermaths of the 1973 oil-crisis. Thus, without discrediting those scholars who label Turkey and the Gulf states as regional powers, these nations can somehow still be defined as newcomers of the current global scenario²²⁹.

In this regard the analysis of the media contents becomes central to figure out the degree of knowledge and the state-of-the-art of the public debate over any specific issue and, in particular, concerning the Turkish framework. Assuming the intrinsic soft power of the media in shaping

http://www.tesev.org.tr/Upload/Publication/efe57ebc-ca34-4e94-a7e0-04b6b721e3bb/Turkey%20and%20Gulf%20Dialogue_Saban%20Kardas.pdf

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Kardas, Saban, November 2012, *"Turkey and the Gulf Dialogue in the Middle East"*, TESEV Foundation, Istanbul, Last access February 2015

http://www.tesev.org.tr/Upload/Publication/efe57ebc-ca34-4e94-a7e0-04b6b721e3bb/Turkey%20and%20Gulf%20Dialogue_Saban%20Kardas.pdf; and TESEV Foreign Policy Programme, 2012, *"The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East 2012"*, TESEV Foundation, Istanbul, Last access February 2015 <http://www.tesev.org.tr/assets/publications/file/Perceptions2012.pdf>; and TESEV Foreign Policy Programme, 2013, *"The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East 2013"*, TESEV Foundation, Istanbul, Last access February 2015 <http://www.tesev.org.tr/assets/publications/file/14012014171159.pdf>

²²⁹ Kardas, Saban, November 2012, *"Turkey and the Gulf Dialogue in the Middle East"*, TESEV Foundation, Istanbul, Last access February 2015 http://www.tesev.org.tr/Upload/Publication/efe57ebc-ca34-4e94-a7e0-04b6b721e3bb/Turkey%20and%20Gulf%20Dialogue_Saban%20Kardas.pdf, p. 5.

directly the public opinion and indirectly national policies as well as attitudes towards specific issues, a comprehensive dialogue can be fostered just in accordance with an accurate reading of major news agencies production.

Practically, the three Gulf platforms (Al Jazeera English (AJE), Al Arabiya English (AAE) and Saudi Gazette (SG)) will offer the sources for an outlook over four aspects of the Turkish politics: foreign policy, economic growth, AKP phenomenon relating to the Turkish democratic status and the social aspects concerning the internal equilibrium between secular and religious values and communities. In doing so, the next section will draw up a clear image of Turkey covering social, political and economic fields.

3.3.1 Explaining the criteria to set available online sources

Web-editions of AJE, AAE and SG provide large online data and resources, which represent updated platforms on a widespread range of issues. Hence, articles and reports relative to the Turkish politics come out throughout key-words research. Guiding ideas to begin the analysis regarded four major topics previously mentioned have been the aim to cover with extensive considerations the socio-political and economic spheres of the current Turkish framework. Furthermore, the analysis will attempt to delve into the interconnections between the media debate and those concepts rose from the former two chapters. It means the will to actualize the media debate referring to theoretical notions relating to issues such as the relation between Islam and Western political institutions (i.e. democratic state-system), inner balances among the Muslim communities and long-run difficulties between Middle Eastern countries and Western powers. Due to the Gulf media recent foundation, at least in their English editions (i.e. AJE first went on air in 2006 and AAE in 2003), all the articles treated below have been published during the last decade, which means that the sources are updated and sometimes consider open-matters still present nowadays. Acknowledging it, the upcoming analysis does not aim to cover an all-inclusive discussion over all the potential issues enlisted in the actual

political and economic agenda. For instance, intrigued foreign policy matters such as the on-going situation around the Southern territories of Turkey and the Northern one of Syria and Iraq upset by the battling scenario between Kurdish forces and Islamist groups named as *Islamic State of Iraq and Levant* will let apart from the core of the discussion. Rather, the in-depth readings published by Gulf media offer a specific lens to draw up some reflections about principal common hot-topics, which are linked with concepts debated through the previous chapters, stimulating a comprehensive dialogue between these Middle Eastern and global players without disregarding the theoretical socio-political as well as economic background.

3.4 DRAWING UP THE TURKISH IMAGE

The online newspapers AJE, AAE and SG show a heavy interconnection in presenting the Turkish context. It means usually each argument, either social, political or economic, is strongly linked and influenced by other factors, which together composed a complex framework to deal with. Nonetheless, through an accurate reading some recurring issues raise among the amount of the information available. Three main dividing categories might clarify a distinction among all the articles: the first one relates political matters, basically focusing on the AK Party, its leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, its foreign policy and the current status of the Turkish democracy. Secondly, social and cultural topics might compose another writing typology, which highlights problems relating to the equilibrium between secular and Islamist values in the society and gender condition. Thirdly, economic articles treat both specific features of the Turkish economy and give general assessments over relevant tendencies of the Turkish economic system. This broad categorization does not prevent considerations over the mutual influence among these issues. For instance, the great importance of the economic growth in order to achieve political stability or, even, the social effects of the pro-Islamic Erdogan's policies.

3.4.1 Focusing on the political scenario

3.4.1.1 The AKP and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan

The political framework is characterized by the centrality of the AKP that is usually treated by Gulf media. More than a decade governed by a moderate pro-Muslim party in Turkey represents a unique case in Turkish history and for the entire Middle East is an undeniable relevant point to debate. At the edge of the headlines ex Prime Minister, and current neo-elected President of the Turkish Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdogan is the most quoted and debated figure among the Gulf news agencies.

Interestingly, AJE questions directly “why Erdogan’s statements make constantly headlines” and why he is so relevant at political level²³⁰. In the same piece, the AJE correspondent Umut Uras draws up a high charismatic and ambitious figure of the Turkish head of state, who is claimed to be a potential leader of the *Islamic Sunni world*²³¹. For this reason became a central player for Middle Eastern countries and his statements represent considerable opinion to discuss and interpret. Quoting few lines of the Erdogan’s profile on AJE webpage, it comes out clearly the diffuse assessment about him:

Recep Tayyip Erdogan is considered to be among Turkey's most popular and charismatic leaders. As prime minister and leader of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), he has led the resurgence of Islamic-oriented politics in the Muslim world's most secular democracy.

His popularity has been boosted further by Turkey's near-decade of economic and political stability under AKP stewardship.

The AKP party won a landslide election victory in 2002 - and within days of the victory Erdogan had been named as prime minister.

[...]

Few critics, however, would deny that Erdogan has presided over a government that has reformed and has modernised the country

²³⁰ Umut Uras, Al Jazeera English, December 25th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/why-do-erdogan-words-make-headlines-20141223125831376133.html>

²³¹ Ibid.

*faster and more effectively than most of its predecessors*²³².

The undeniable political stability and prosperous economic growth under his leadership provide concrete reasons to praise Erdogan's governments and his efforts to modernise the Republic.

SG gives even more emphasis over the Turkish president in a set of articles, which define him as “new sultan”:

*There is no doubt that Erdogan has his eye on history and wants to be ranked alongside Turkey's post-Ottoman founding father Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as one of its great transformative figures. Erdogan, a towering figure of almost two meters tall, is known to himself and followers as the “büyük usta” — the “big master” — or simply “the Sultan”*²³³.

This enthusiastic assessment is motivated once again by the economic achievements reached during the AKP leadership and by the rhetorical language of Tayyip Erdogan claiming a distinction between the republican past, characterized by political instability, coup d'états and social tense atmosphere, and the reinvigorate strength began from the AKP election in 2002²³⁴.

The Emirates press reaches the point to highlight the fashion dress code of Mr Erdogan, describing him not as a mere politician, but highlighting his status among a range of different fields²³⁵.

As considered in the introductory section concerning the Al Jazeera phenomenon, key feature of the renewed Gulf media is the accountability and the information quality²³⁶. Referring these aspects to the specific political scenario of Turkey, all the Gulf online newspapers do not limit

²³² AJ Staff, Al Jazeera English, May 27th 2011, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/turkeyelection/2011/05/2011526121054590355.html>

²³³ SG Staff, Saudi Gazette, August 29th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20140830216353>

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ AA Staff, Al Arabiya English, January 13th 2015, Last access February 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/life-style/fashion-and-beauty/2015/01/13/Turkish-designers-hail-Erdogan-as-fashion-trend-setter-report.html>

²³⁶ Rushing, Josh, 2007, “Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World”, New York, Palgrave MacMillan; and Zayani, Mohamed, 2005, “The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media”, London, Pluto Press.

their articles to celebrate the icon of President Erdogan, rather address potential controversial matters and discuss open-issues of the current framework. In particular, AJE and AAE stimulate media discussions and multilateral perspectives. For instance, in the aftermath of Tayyip presidential victory, happened in the summer of 2014, AJE gave voice to the warnings over a dangerous authoritative shift of the Turkish political system:

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's outgoing prime minister, has been sworn in as president during a ceremony in the capital Ankara, extend his more than a decade-long domination of the country's political scene.

Erdogan, 60, took his oath of office on Thursday, ushering in a new era for Turkey, where he is expected to push for a new constitution and seek to further transform the country with development projects.

[...]

However, some opponents have warned that the new president will extend what they see as his increasingly authoritarian rule.

From Istanbul, journalist Andrew Finkel told Al Jazeera that Erdogan would likely use his new position to continue exerting control over the way Turkey is run. He added that one of the main accomplishments of Erdogan's tenure as prime minister has been "to clip the power of the military".

"At one stage, [the military] via the constitutional court was almost intent on closing his party down, tearing him out of office. But he fought back that challenge," he said²³⁷.

This attitude is not a new habit for the AJE staff and, indeed, each political election in Turkey has been debated in accordance with these principles. Explaining the political meaning of the AKP third re-election in 2011 and its following consequences, AJE quoted a statement made by the *Turkish Daily News* reporter, Cengiz Aktar, who declared:

[...] that the electorate had delivered a clear message.

"Turkish voters were telling Recep Tayyip Erdogan, 'Look we would like to have a new legislature with an opposition. Go and talk to them to solve the burning issues of the country, i.e. the new

²³⁷ AJ Staff, Al Jazeera English, August 28th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/08/erdogan-sworn-as-new-turkish-president-201482810503485706.html>

constitution and the Kurdish conflict.'

"So he has the initiative; either he goes that way, or he goes the way he was presenting to us during the campaign, that he will have his own agenda and apply it. In that case, we may have problems in Turkey."

Erdogan's third election success, following victories in 2002 and 2007, comes amid unprecedented prosperity under the AKP's stewardship and with Erdogan credited by many with raising the country's profile on the international stage²³⁸.

In accordance to the two paragraphs barely quoted, the sober and accurate AJE approach comes out clearly, which means usual mixed information characterized by the acknowledgment of successes without disregarding potential controversial issues and negative comments.

Furthermore, the entire AKP phenomenon and its features are discussed as such. In particular, each political victory through regional, national and presidential elections since more than a decade concentrates media limelight on the AKP capacities to entrench its consensus across the population. AJE and AAE inquiry largely on the AKP strategies to achieve this sequence of political successes, which are attributed most of the times to relevant economic growth and conservative pro-Muslim attitude²³⁹. Before deepening this key point that will be done in the next section drawing up the economical scenario of Turkey, the Gulf media regularly forecasts hypothetical upcoming changes upsetting the current framework. In debating so, the last presidential election held in August 2014 represents a fundamental milestone. Indeed, this event opened the paths to a set of different either positive or negative situations depending on the perspective used: Erdogan's supporters praise the new political affirmation and welcome a reformist phase aiming, above all, to change the actual constitution approved under the military regime in 1980²⁴⁰. On the contrary,

²³⁸ AJ Staff, Al Jazeera English, Jun 13th 2011, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2011/06/201161312337875876.html>

²³⁹ Counting the Cost, Al Jazeera English, September 16th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/countingthecost/2014/08/turkey-an-economy-at-crossroads-20148161343937947.html>; and AA Staff, Al Arabiya English, Last access February 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/08/10/Erdogan-takes-early-lead-in-presidential-race.html>

²⁴⁰ Lauren Williams, Al Jazeera English, August 11th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/turkey-erdogan-president-new-election-201481161359774647.html>

criticism rise from the opposition front guided by the former Republican Party, known as CHP, which accuse the concrete threat for an authoritarian shift, a setback of the Kemalist secular values in favour of a pro-Muslim culture and the consolidation of a corrupted political class²⁴¹. Interestingly, AJE and AAE dedicate extensive articles in order to show this intrigued framework and the Al Arabiya piece titled as “Erdogan wins Turkish presidency” expresses exactly this divergent kind of assessments:

In a tea house in the working-class Istanbul district of Tophane, men watching election coverage on television praised Erdogan as a pious man of the people who had boosted Turkey’s status both economically and on the international stage. “Erdogan is on the side of the underdog. He is the defender against injustice. While the Arab world was silent, he spoke out against Israel on Gaza,” said Murat, 42, a jeweller, who declined to give his family name. “This country was ruined by the old politicians. They lied to us. They caused economic crises, the PKK violence,” he said.

[...]

Despite the challenges Erdogan has faced, there was an air of resignation among many voters who oppose him. “I am almost depressed. I worry for my country because I increasingly feel like an alien here. The prime minister is talking about a Turkey that I don’t recognize,” said Erkan Sonmez, 43, who works in an import-export business. “I can no longer speak to my neighbours who vote for the AK Party, does that sound like a peaceful community to you?”²⁴²

Summing up the considerations pointed out so far, usually AJE and AAE agree on drawing a similar image of the Turkish political scene. Both Gulf news agencies focus on the figure of President Erdogan, his party and the potential upcoming changes giving voice to the supporters and opponents respectively. Especially, the Qatari web press deepens profiles of the main Turkish politicians²⁴³ and, in addition, wonders which are the

²⁴¹ Simon Hooper, Al Jazeera English, Jun 6th 2011, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/turkeyelection/2011/06/201166103518748989.html>

²⁴² AA Staff, Al Arabiya English, August 10th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/08/10/Erdogan-takes-early-lead-in-presidential-race.html>

²⁴³ About Gul: AJ Staff, Al Jazeera English, April 27th 2007, Last access <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2007/04/2008525124750388750.html>
About Gulen: AJ Staff, Al Jazeera English, March 13th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/03/gulen-vs-erdogan-struggle-three-2014311144829299446.html>

current open-spaces through public debates²⁴⁴.

On the contrary, SG shows a more rhetoric way of writing that is incomparable with the former two online newspapers. A dispute over a tweet made by a Saudi citizen favouring Mr Erdogan as new “Caliph” of the Muslim world created the background to split the Saudi public opinion: on one side, the rector of Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University, Suleiman Aba al-Khayil, responded angrily to the suggestion that the Turkish politician could fill the vacant seat of “Caliph”; while, on the other side, official statements have been published by SG in solidary with Mr Erdogan. At least three news agencies mentioned this episode: Al Monitor gave a detailed historical explanation concerning the traditional rivalry between Ottomans, later Turks, and *Wahhabis* living in Saudi Arabia²⁴⁵; the Turkish *Hurriyet Daily News* reported it underlining the apologies made by Saudi officials²⁴⁶; while SG published entirely the piece wrote by Dr Ahmed Al-Tuwaijri, who openly criticized rector Aba Al-Khayil claiming to express apologies for the whole Saudis.

Below parts of the Al-Tuwaijri’s article:

The recent statements made by the rector of Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University against Turkey and its Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan can only be described as irresponsible. The statements, made in a session of the “International Conference to Fight Terrorism” which was held in Madinah, are totally rejected by the entire Saudi people.

[...]

About CHP leaders: Simon Hooper, Al Jazeera English, Jun 6th 2011, Last access February 2015

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/turkeyelection/2011/06/201166103518748989.html>

About Davutoglu: AJ Staff, Al Jazeera English, September 1st 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/09/ascent-turkey-ahmet-davutoglu-201491134555729882.html>

²⁴⁴ Inside Story, Al Jazeera English, August 12th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2014/08/erdogan-new-turkish-era-201481116514700344.html> and Lauren Williams, Al Jazeera English, August 26th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/turkey-erdogan-gul-akp-struggle-201482172427830655.html>

²⁴⁵ Madawi Al-Rasheed, Al Monitor, April 29th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/04/saudi-wahhabi-leaders-see-turkish-caliphate-threat.html#>

²⁴⁶ Al Hurriyet Staff, Al Hurriyet Daily News, Last access February 2015 <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/tweet-about-turkish-pm-erdogan-sparks-debate-in-saudi-arabia.aspx?PageID=238&NID=65888&NewsCatID=352>

It is a real disaster when a university rector does not know that Turkey is not a European country. It is also saddening that the rector seems to have forgotten that Turkey was the center of the Islamic Caliphate for more than eight centuries. It is unacceptable that the rector has ignored the ferocious Jihad (struggle) of Erdogan, his ministers and political party to build a Muslim state. Erdogan and his colleagues have made tangible achievements in putting Turkey on the right path and in preserving the identity of its Muslim population who are a majority.

[...]

I also cannot accept his accusations against Erdogan who is known for his good manners, straightforwardness and virtue. The man has tried his level best to spread the values of virtue in his country.

For his concrete efforts to consolidate Islam in Turkey, Erdogan has been granted an honorary doctorate by Umm Al-Qura University in Makkah which is close to the Grand Mosque. It is simply unbelievable that a man of his caliber would open a nudity club²⁴⁷.

Two factors distinguish this piece with the usual AJE and AAE articles: the claim to give voice to a homogenous popular consciousness that agrees on the same political perspective; plus, a clear emphasis on certain common values, namely the same Muslim culture, which provide reasons of reliability and prestige for the image of President Erdogan. In other words, the language and tones of the previous quotation differ strongly from the reporting style of AJE and AAE.

3.4.1.2 The AKP in the international arena: AKP's foreign policy

Presenting in the first chapter the socio-political constitution of modern Turkey, the international framework has been discussed and its importance has been clarified. Before picturing the AKP's foreign policy, it needs to make clear a methodological approach that characterizes this specific section. The current geopolitical framework of the Middle East sees a wide range of open-matters, which are daily on the top of the world headlines and some of them afflict directly the Turkish environment. Above all, the actual warfare along the Syrian-Turkish border between Kurdish forces and ISIS militants poses one of the most recurrent topics addressed by the media. Nevertheless, this issue opens broad rooms to debate

²⁴⁷ Dr. Ahmed Al-Tuwaijri, Saudi Gazette, Last access February 2015, <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20140502203786>

uncertain events and even more uncertain effects for the relationship between Turkey and the GCC monarchies. Thus, drawing up the image of the Turkish foreign policy, this major issue has been left apart, not for inaccuracy, but due to the unclear result on the Gulf attitude towards the Turkish context. In other words, this issue is considered as a chronicle fact so far and it will need a while to observe and present it with the appropriate perspective. On the other hand, the theoretical concepts and arguments treated in the first chapter offer a starting point to address the Ankara's foreign policy. Main questions to deal with will concern, how the Gulf media consider the AKP's strategy towards their neighbour countries and, then, how the last post-presidential election changes could shape the general Turkish foreign policy.

In spite of a traditional shy approach in shaping its foreign policy, the AKP establishment reinvigorated the Turkish willingness to re-affirm the former Ottoman prestige. It meant that thanks to increasing strength due to inner political stability and economic growth, the AKP re-thought its foreign policy promoting itself as a model and a bridge between Western and Middle Eastern world. This active attitude has been labelled as neo-Ottomans, which concerns economic and geostrategic efforts to enlarge the Turkish clout over neighbour countries. Gulf media highly debated on this phenomenon and argue about its efficiency²⁴⁸. Indeed since the first election as new Prime Minister of Mr Erdogan happened in November 2002, his party made considerable shifts: for instance, in the early 2000s the AKP fostered a renewed interest towards the European Union and the Copenhagen Criteria, but throughout the decade this appeal slowed down to the point that nowadays major media reporters doubt clearly about any positive forecast regarding the EU-Turkish partnership²⁴⁹.

AAE's opinion-maker Ceylan Ozbudak states severely this assessment:

²⁴⁸ The Café, Al Jazeera English, October 9th 2012, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/thecafe/2012/10/20121039574656284.html>

²⁴⁹ Ceylan Ozbudak, Al Arabiya English, December 20th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2014/12/20/What-will-2015-bring-for-Turkey-.html>

It is not difficult to see that Turkey's relations with the EU are deteriorating while the bilateral relations with the member states within the union are getting better on certain fronts. We cannot deny the fact that the process to please the EU helped bring discipline to the Turkish political scene in institutionalizing various decisions of the government in terms of more democratization, economic stability measures and foreign relations. However, the fact that the EU decided to give membership status to Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, who remain far away from even the most basic EU standards, as well as a bankrupt Greece and Greek Cyprus, whose entire banking system was based on the financial transactions of Russian oligarchs, made an impression on Turkey that a shared future with the EU is apparently not on the horizon²⁵⁰.

Nevertheless, Gulf media attributes an undeniable relevance to the role of Turkey for the Middle Eastern context and certain amount of successful achievements. In particular, AJE and AAE present Ahmet Davutoglu, former Foreign Minister under several Erdogan's governments and current neo-nominated Prime Minister, as key decision-maker, who shaped profoundly the Turkish international behaviour in recent time²⁵¹. His merits concern the active pragmatism that distinguished him from former predecessors, his awareness on the renewed scenario relating to the global balances and, finally, the definition of a clear strategy known as *Zero Problem with Neighbours* (ZPN), which aimed to create favourable partnerships across the Middle Eastern nations²⁵². Articles, such as "The ascent of Turkey's Ahmet Davutoglu" appeared on the AJE website on September 1st 2014, acknowledge the achievements made by the new Prime Minister and describe the ZPN policy as a great success:

More famously, and controversially, Davutoglu saw the opportunities for Turkish outreach in the Arab world, and beyond. The AKP effectively expanded trade, investment, and cultural exchanges throughout the region, an approach labelled "zero problems with neighbours" by Davutoglu. ZPN seemed a brilliant diplomatic stroke, a dramatic effort to rest Turkey's ambitions on the

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Richard Falk, Al Jazeera English, September 1st 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/09/ascent-turkey-ahmet-davutoglu-201491134555729882.html>

²⁵² Ibid.

*dynamics of "soft power geopolitics", that is, providing benefits, attracting others, and not depending for influence on military prowess or coercive diplomacy*²⁵³.

For these reasons, replacing the charismatic Mr Erdogan with his previous Foreign Minister Davutoglu rose inquires and open-spaces often debated by the Gulf media²⁵⁴. Once again AJE offers a set of articles, which discuss, for example, the inner AKP's political competition to replace Tayyip's position, the actual foreign policy priorities and how Mr Davutoglu will shape the current framework.

Below a short passage arguing the internal tense atmosphere inside AKP in the aftermath of the last presidential election held in August 2014:

An increasingly public rift between founding members of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) was on full display recently as outgoing Prime Minister and President-elect Recep Tayyip Erdogan moves to cement his hold on the party leadership.

The nomination of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu as Turkey's next prime minister was seen by some as confirmation of Erdogan's efforts to put a subservient prime minister into place, and freeze out AKP co-founder and Turkey's outgoing President, Abdullah Gul.

[...]

"I have the feeling this is getting personal," said Ilter Turan, political science professor at Istanbul Bilgi University, about the Erdogan-Gul rift. "It's no longer just about party policies."

Speculation has been mounting over a brewing power struggle within the party, and Gul's future role within its leadership, after AKP leader Erdogan secured the five-year presidency by a narrow margin

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ AJ Staff, Al Jazeera English, August 22nd 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/erdogan-names-davutoglu-as-new-turkey-pm-201482116111746407.html> and Lauren Williams, Al Jazeera English, August 26th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/turkey-erdogan-gul-akp-struggle-201482172427830655.html>

in the country's first direct presidential elections on August 10²⁵⁵.

One more time mainly AJE and AAE offer a set of articles that contribute with divergent views and comments, ranging from a clear acknowledgement of the Turkish influence at a global level²⁵⁶ to a negative forecast about an increasing isolationist situation of Turkey facing major matters of the current days²⁵⁷.

In conclusion, each news agency analysed (AJE, AAE and SG) discusses all the main aspects of the Turkish politics, addressing both relevant internal and international issues relating to the political framework of modern Turkey. Obviously, this sphere is heavily interconnected with economic and social contexts and, indeed, these fields will be covered in the following sections.

3.4.2 The economic image of Turkey

Discussing economic aspects of Turkey, Gulf media usually underlines the achievements completed during the last decade and their consequences produced on the general framework. Fundamental assumption shared by AJE, AAE and SG concerns the direct link between political stability and economic growth. As previously noted, nobody avoid to acknowledge Tayyip Erdogan as charismatic leader; but, in the meanwhile, many agree on claiming that the AKP's strength comes mainly from an unprecedented economic success²⁵⁸, which has been reached both with effective reform processes and external favourable economic trends of the early 2000s. Insofar, there are two typologies of readings among the Arab productions: the former concerns a general debate of the evolution of the Turkish economy and the changes occurred in recent times ruled by AKP governments and, secondly, it enquires over the current statistics produced

²⁵⁵ [Lauren Williams, Al Jazeera English, August 26th 2014, Last access February 2015](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/turkey-erdogan-gul-akp-struggle-201482172427830655.html)
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/turkey-erdogan-gul-akp-struggle-201482172427830655.html>

²⁵⁶ The Café, Al Jazeera English, October 9th 2012, Last access February 2015
<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/thecafe/2012/10/20121039574656284.html>

²⁵⁷ Jonny Hogg and Nick Tattersall, Al Arabiya English, October 1st 2014, Last access February 2015
<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/analysis/2014/10/01/Turkey-frustrated-with-West-clings-to-fading-vision-for-the-Mideast.html>

²⁵⁸ AJ Staff, Al Jazeera English, August 5th 2007, Last access February 2015
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2007/08/2008525172959877147.html>

by the Turkish economy and which potential upcoming scenarios there will be.

Despite divergent tones used by AJE, AAE and SG describing major factors of the Turkish economy, it comes out among all the news agencies a similar view relating to the merits and causes of this positive story. Two articles, published by AJE and SG respectively, show clearly the consideration above pointed out:

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AK party) went into the elections having presided over an unprecedented period of economic growth and stability which helped swing the election in their favour.

Emre Yigit, an analyst at the Istanbul-based brokerage Global Securities, believes the AK party's election win was due to voters effectively rewarding the government's economic performance during the past few years.

He said: "Inflation has dramatically dropped, there's been four years of strong growth, the government almost balanced the budget last year and there's been a major surge in investment."

[...]

Volkan Aytar, programme officer for the Istanbul-based Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), told Al Jazeera the AK party shifted away from the old, state dominated economic structure, which depended on nationalised industries and a social welfare system.

He said: "The government – the AKP – would like to take the country further into the free market. Yet elements of the state – the bureaucracy, the military, the high courts and many public sector groups – are quite opposed to this. They want to continue a national economy."

"The AKP comes from a different tradition than that, one that came out of ideas about Islamic businesses and free enterprise."

[...]

Many of the Islamic businesses Aytar is referring to are known as "the Anatolian Tigers".

[...]

[...] "The AK party have managed to combine a social conservatism – as a party of Islam – with an economic policy that fully supports globalisation, membership of the European Union, integration with other global economic structures such as the IMF and World Bank."

"It's been a winning combination."

The evidence is in the level of foreign direct investment in the country²⁵⁹.

The paragraphs quoted above cover the key points of the current history of Turkey, especially the features related to AKP policies: beginning with the undeniable economic growth that contributed heavily on the series of electoral victories led by Tayyip Erdogan, the AJE reporters praised results dropping inflation rates and stimulating prosperous industrialization phases. In accordance with the TESEV think tank, the AKP establishment summed up conservative stances proper of Muslim population and a liberal, or rather neoliberal, mentality fostering the enforcement of free market principles. Through a set of reforms AKP governments dealt with 2001 financial crisis, leaving behind its harmful legacies. In doing so, Southern cities of Turkey known as “Anatolian Tigers” jumped once again at core of the industrialization process; plus, their economic elites became new influent players of the national context; and massive foreign investments (FDI) enriched the Turkish business. In other words, managing Islam as inner national force and conducting a favourable participation into international institutions, Turkey began a global economic actor. The amount of sources available online makes AJE and the other Gulf formats reliable and in line with the academic assessments of international scholars such as Hale, Karadag and Nocera²⁶⁰.

Similarly, the Saudi web-newspaper present the recent economic booming of Anatolia:

With its commitment to democracy and market economy and its big and young population Turkey is a source of stability and development for its region. Turkish economy has shown remarkable performance with its steady growth over the last ten years. After 2002, the Turkish economy achieved great progress. A sound macroeconomic strategy in combination with prudent fiscal policies and major structural reforms has integrated the Turkish economy into the global economy. Its dynamic and growing economy creates many opportunities for trade and cooperation. Structural reforms transformed Turkey into a more democratic and economically more

²⁵⁹ AJ Staff, Al Jazeera English, August 5th 2007, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2007/08/2008525172959877147.html>

²⁶⁰ All these authors have been already quoted in the second chapter.

stable and dynamic country. With the macroeconomic improvements and fiscal discipline, economic growth became sustainable.

[...]

In the last eight years, trade between Turkey and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia showed dynamic trend and this trend likely to continue to rise.

[...]

In the end of 2011, trade volume reached to \$6.2 billion. Furthermore, Turkish export to the Kingdom increased by annually average rate of 20% between 2004 and 2011. Also, Turkish import from the Kingdom demonstrate an upward trend during this period and it reached to \$3.5 billion.

[...]

Political and economic stability, structural reforms and macroeconomic improvements created an attractive environment for FDI. Success in privatization also contributed to FDI increase²⁶¹.

Besides to these considerations about the Turkish success, it comes out through the SG's readings the effort to present Turkey as an important partner of the Saudi monarchy and, even more interestingly, a model to observe for the future. This perspective is seen in other SG pieces as well, such as "*Turkish economy – An example for developing countries*"²⁶² or "*Turkey is both an alluring and a correct model*"²⁶³. Interestingly, these last two articles point out clearly the attitude of the Saudi press drawing up the Turkish image: each of them acknowledges economic merits and achievements, but then the former one raises the willingness to underline the Saudi-Turkish entrenched partnership. The latter fosters in the end of piece an open-discussion approach over the current political and economic situation that represent an intriguing issues considered the current state of absolute monarch in Saudi Arabia.

Below the key paragraphs of "*Turkish economy – An example for developing countries*":

²⁶¹ SG Staff, Saudi Gazette, October 29th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20141029222730>

²⁶² Dr. Sami Alnuaim, Saudi Gazette, October 19th 2013, Last access February 2015 <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20131019184019>

²⁶³ Aylin Kocaman, Saudi Gazette, March 6th 2013, Last access February 2015 <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20130306155737>

[...]

The magic here is when we know that this great achievement was done without the presence of abundant oil & gas resources!!! If we look at some Arabic countries similar to Turkey (e.g. Egypt) we can see the huge economical gap between the two. When we see also our beloved country (Saudi Arabia), although we are at the top 20th global economics due to our oil export income, our economy depends mainly on depleting resources that may jeopardize our future long term economic superiority.

We talked a lot and wrote several articles about the importance of strategic planning and the pivotal absent role that the Ministry of Planning must play for the Kingdom future!! Let's ask ourselves, what is the Kingdom's vision and what would be the ratio of the oil export to the total income in 2023? I leave these strategic questions answered hoping for the best for our beloved country²⁶⁴.

The third article titled “*Turkey is both an alluring and a correct model*” makes a major divergent statement concerning the partnership between these countries and the modelling of the Ankara system. Indeed, the journalist Aylin Kocaman assumes as fundamental criteria the Muslimness of Turkey and its legacies with the Ottoman Caliphate. Similarly with articles concerning President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and its conservative party, SG gives voice to a more rhetorical and emphatic production, which diversify the Jeddah-based press from other Gulf reporting-styles.

Another typology of economic readings appeared on Gulf media websites concerns a narrower analysis of Turkish statistics and tendencies relating to the foreseeable future. AJE and AAE point out potential threats for the Ankara's economy. Debates, like the live show “Counting the cost” on AJE²⁶⁵, sum up clearly the current framework: despite Turkey became one of the top 20 world economies and, even, international economic institutions such as the World Bank expect Anatolia to be high-income country in few years²⁶⁶, the actual problematic balance between inflation

²⁶⁴ Dr. Sami Alnuaim, Saudi Gazette, October 19th 2013, Last access February 2015 <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20131019184019>

²⁶⁵ Counting the Cost, Al Jazeera English, September 16th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/countingthecost/2014/08/turkey-an-economy-at-crossroads-20148161343937947.html>

²⁶⁶ Jonny Hogg, Al Arabiya English January 12th 2015, Last access February 2015

and interest rates may produce an harmful setback for the Turkish economy. Basically, assuming that its political success is based on unprecedented economic development through the 2000s, the AKP establishment needs to keep low interest rates to favourite investments and growth. In doing so, hyperinflation risks are highly expectable and it poses Turkish authorities on the edge of an unstable scenario. Recent AAE's articles, such as "*Turkey bank defies Erdogan to hold rates*"²⁶⁷, "*Turkish central bank to keep tight policy until inflation improves*"²⁶⁸, or "*Turkey's economy is victim of Erdogan's political ambitions*"²⁶⁹, cover in-depth descriptions and provide data relating to this situation. Insofar, Turkey could suffer a new wave of economic instability, reason why AJE does not avoid mentioning the IMF assessment, which enlist the Turkish Republic as one the most fragile countries due to its unsustainable economic system, largely based on loans and low interest rates²⁷⁰.

In conclusion, Gulf media poses frequent coverage of economic issues, mainly highlighting the fundamental relationship between political stability and economic growth. Nevertheless, through an accurate reading of the online resources it does not come up a uniform image of the Turkish economic framework, which is assumed generally speaking as model for other Arab countries, but currently dealing with an averse scenario.

3.4.3 The social image of Turkey

Last field in order to complete a comprehensive image of Turkey concerns the major social aspects treated by the Gulf media. Three broad topics can be pointed out. All of them refer somehow to the social sphere, or rather to the democratic degree of Ankara's socio-political state system.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/business/economy/2015/01/12/Turkey-could-become-high-income-country-in-five-years-World-Bank.html>

²⁶⁷ AA Staff, Al Arabiya English, December 25th 2014, Last access February 2015
<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/business/banking-and-finance/2014/12/25/Turkey-bank-defies-Erdogan-to-hold-rates-.html>

²⁶⁸ AA Staff, Al Arabiya English, December 17th 2014, Last access February 2015
<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/business/economy/2014/12/17/Prospects-of-Turkish-interest-rate-cut-fade-as-lira-slides.html>

²⁶⁹ Mahir Zeynalov, Al Arabiya English, January 26th 2014, Last access February 2015
<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2014/01/26/Turkey-s-economy-is-victim-of-Erdo-an-s-political-ambitions.html>

²⁷⁰ Counting the Cost, Al Jazeera English, September 16th 2014, Last access February 2015
<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/countingthecost/2014/08/turkey-an-economy-at-crossroads-20148161343937947.html>

Namely, they concern women's rights condition, the relationship between secular and Muslim values in the social daily life and, finally, press freedom guarantees of the Turkish media. Obviously, these are not all the potential matters relating to the general social context of modern Turkey, but they find theoretical background thanks to the analysis completed in the first chapter as well as a high frequency among the subjects covered by the readings considered.

In addition, interestingly all these issues could be tricky matters in the eyes of the Gulf societies and their conservative cultural environment. Nonetheless, AJE, AAE as well as SG debated overtly on them and give ample space on their websites. Thus, besides emphatic statements in presenting Erdogan's charisma and his profound Muslimness, the Jeddah-based format does not avoid to document the Turkish socio-cultural contradictions reporting, for instance, the critical thought of Nurdan Gürbilek, eminent Turkish intellectual:

How is Turkey a land of contradictions?

Turkey is devout and secular, "backwards" and modern, rich and poor, conservative and liberal all at the same time. It's the land of the world's biggest shopping malls and also of its poorest villages. Most importantly, Turkey is both a victim and an oppressor. It's the land of people who feel they are victims of the West, but also a land of those victimizing their own minorities.

[...]

How would you define "Turkishness"?

We have to be careful with such concepts since we might easily come up with essentialist-nationalist-orientalistic definitions. Turkishness should not be defined as an originary state of mind or some essential cultural reality alleged to identify Turkey's true natives, nor should it be defined as an oriental backwardness resisting modernity. Turkishness can only be defined within a historical-dialogical perspective, in its dialogue with the others – it's big "other", the West, and also with the others within itself, the so called "minorities." In these essays I defined it as a cultural double-bind which was shaped in relation to the modern-capitalist world: An admiration and a drift towards the Western model, and a fear of losing its self in that model, a perpetual summons to return to the self. A sense of inadequacy and grandiosity, enthrallment and fear, victimhood and defiance standing side by side in the same space of

*political subjectivity*²⁷¹.

In the same regard, despite reporting official statement made by AKP establishment about their willingness to represent the all Turkish citizens²⁷², AJE and AAE debate specific examples of hard coexistence between secular and religious values: so, in presenting the sharp increase of Turkish students enrolled into Muslim schools²⁷³ as well as the heavy discussion over the dress code of the politicians' wives²⁷⁴, both Gulf news agencies underline the inner gap of the Turkish society, divided by the traditional competition between secularism and religious legacies.

Finally, extensive articles cover the current press freedom condition around Anatolia. Despite this issue does not concern merely the social sphere, but rather it is deeply interconnected with the political context, it offers an intriguing outlook over the democratic status of Turkey. Labelling Anatolia as one of the worst places for journalism, Gulf media denounces high number of reporters imprisoned and overt willingness of the political elites to control the media production²⁷⁵. Once again quoting short paragraphs appeared online; it comes up clearly the harsh tones used by AJE, AAE and SG respectively.

On February 2013, the AJE homepage titled "*Turkey: 'World's biggest prison for media'*", which reported statistics concerning the amount of journalist jailed and reason why those people suffered trials:

²⁷¹ Joseph Richard Preville, Al Arabiya English, Last access February 2015 <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=2011042499060>

²⁷² Galip Dalay, Al Jazeera English, August 16th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/08/turkey-voting-out-founding-ideo-201481682423243421.html>

²⁷³ Dasha Afanasieva and Can Sezer, Al Arabiya English, December 2nd 2014, February 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2014/12/02/Rise-of-Turkish-Islamic-schooling-upsets-secular-parents.html>

²⁷⁴ Hilal Elver, Al Jazeera English, September 20th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/09/turkey-first-ladies-headscarf--2014911114226379736.html>

²⁷⁵ Jillan Kestler-D'Amours, Al Jazeera English, February 17th 2013, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/02/2013217124044793870.html>;

and SG Staff, Saudi Gazette, May 23rd 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20140524206150>; and AA Staff, Al Arabiya English, January 15th 2015, Last access February 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/television-and-radio/2015/01/15/S-Korea-extends-travel-ban-on-japanese-journalist-.html>

[...] *The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) recently reported that Turkey jailed the most journalists in 2012 - ahead of Iran and China.*

"Authorities have imprisoned journalists on a mass scale on terrorism or anti-state charges, launched thousands of other criminal prosecutions on charges such as denigrating Turkishness or influencing court proceedings, and used pressure tactics to sow self-censorship," the CPJ said in a report titled "Turkey's Press Freedom Crisis".

As of August 1, 2012, some 76 Turkish journalists were in jail, and at least 61 of those were imprisoned as a direct result of their work, CPJ stated. Many of the arrested reporters were Kurdish citizens of the state, or were affiliated with or working on contentious issues, including attempted overthrows of the government, Kurdish and Armenian rights, and more²⁷⁶.

Similarly, SG one year later, namely May 2014, titled a piece “*How independent is press in Turkey?*”, giving voice to the controversial case of Gonul Tol, a Turkish academic writing willing to denounce the lack of press freedom in her country:

A columnist for a Turkish newspaper has proved her own point all too well after a piece she wrote criticizing Ankara's crackdown on press freedom was rejected by her editor. Washington-based academic Gonul Tol left her position at the Aksam daily to preserve her “professional ethics” in a case that has sparked fierce debate about censorship in Turkish media. “The fact that my piece has not been published is actually stating once more what’s obvious,” Tol told AFP. Her article focussed on the race-fueled backlash against a report from Freedom House this month that claimed the country had seen the biggest decline in press freedom in Europe. The US-based media rights watchdog downgraded Turkey’s status from “partly free” to “not free” — putting the EU hopeful in the same category as Libya, South Sudan, Ukraine and Zambia — after it put a record number of journalists behind bars²⁷⁷.

Notably, it appears the negative assessment made by the US-based media rights watchdog downgrading the Turkish press evaluation from “partly free” to “not free”.

²⁷⁶ Jillan Kestler-D'Amours, Al Jazeera English, February 17th 2013, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/02/2013217124044793870.html>

²⁷⁷ SG Staff, Saudi Gazette, May 23rd 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20140524206150>

The AAE's article, titled as "*The witch-hunt reaches Turkey's media*", concludes with a severe consideration over the Turkish scenario, which is in line with the former statements of the other Gulf news agencies:

*The media is a barometer for democracy in any country. Turkey was already infamous for its intolerance to journalists, but raiding a newspaper is a new step for a country that had once been touted as a model for other Arabs, but now represents one of the failed cases of a Muslim democracy*²⁷⁸.

In accordance with all these quotations and other similar publications²⁷⁹, the three Gulf media show a general tendency to criticize lack of transparency and controversial issues proper of the Turkish social environment: i.e. women's condition, competitive coexistence between secularism and Islam and, finally, press freedom. Interestingly, all these issues could raise concerns over the Gulf scenario, which does not deal easily with the same arguments. Nonetheless, each news agency allows extensive articles debating these matters and, probably, it reveals the impact of the Al Jazeera phenomenon. Meaning that despite any limited democratization process across the Arabian Peninsula, the development of professional and accountable media agencies allowed to balance the socio-political framework of the GCC countries inducing certain kind of cultural reform processes.

²⁷⁸Mahir Zeynalov, Al Arabiya English, January 26th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2014/12/16/The-witch-hunt-reaches-Turkey-s-media.html>

²⁷⁹SG Staff, Saudi Gazette, Last access February 2015 <http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=20140913217966> and AA Staff, Al Arabiya English, December 15th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/television-and-radio/2014/12/15/Turkey-dismisses-EU-criticism-of-raids-on-media-outlets.html>

3.5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS OVER AL JAZEERA ENGLISH, AL ARABIYA ENGLISH AND SAUDI GAZETTE

These sections attempted to draw up the current image of Turkey, considering political, social and economic features respectively. Before concluding the chapter as a whole, some considerations about the three Gulf media as such can be pointed out.

As noted above, it exists a heavy interconnection between socio-political and economic aspects and usually it comes up through the articles considered. In particular, among proper political issues in-depth readings focus on the AKP establishment and his influent leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan; while, turning to the economy, Arab media highlight the fundamental relation between recent political stability and massive economic growth and, furthermore, they enquire which are foreseeable scenarios in the early future. Finally, specifically about the social context, Gulf news agencies give ample space in debating issues over women's condition, coexistence between secularism and Islam, plus press freedom in Turkey.

Nevertheless, some differences distinguish the three formats considered. AJE affords usually broad articles and online public debates offering every time to several perspectives, both official statements claimed by governmental authorities and opposition critics defended by minority forces. For instance, web-programs as "*The cafe*"²⁸⁰ or "*Inside Story*"²⁸¹ are suitable cases of the AJE journalistic style, which is characterized by high information quality relating most of the times to tricky actual problematic of the Turkish society, plus a multi-angles discussion participated by several guests. In doing so, many correspondents, to a major extend Turkish citizens, contribute with articles and opinion pieces to present the current scenario of Turkey and, indeed, it is hard to define a unique AJE policy referring to Turkish politics.

²⁸⁰ The Café, Al Jazeera English, October 9th 2012, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/thecafe/2012/10/20121039574656284.html>

²⁸¹ Inside Story, Al Jazeera English, March 21st 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2014/03/turkey-turns-off-twitter-201432117440947226.html>

The Dubai-based agency, Al Arabiya English, follows similar tendencies with the Qatari AJE, fostering criteria of accountability and good headlines coverage. Due to its recent creation and a comparable reporting style, the Arabic version went on air in 2003 and the English one broadcasted in 2007, AAE is usually considered a rival of AJE, or AJ in general. Focusing on Turkish politics a range of different writers collaborates in publishing updated pieces. Among them, journalist Ceylan Ozbudak²⁸² is one of the most recurrent contributors in debating Turkish political events.

Saudi Gazette, on the other hand, is quite different compared with the former platforms. There are consistent amount of articles where tones are rather rhetoric and emphatic over supposed common values owned by Turkey as well as Saudi Arabia, or even the Gulf monarchies in general. The best example referring to this attitude concerns the piece over the polemic caused by rector of Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University, Suleiman Aba al-Khayil.

In conclusion, thanks to picturing the image of Turkey, it comes out on the same time the importance of the Gulf media as a real soft power. Point of fact demonstrated by the controversial issues treated by all these news agencies, above all in debating critically the press freedom condition in Anatolia.

²⁸² Ceylan Ozbudak, Al Arabiya English, December 20th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2014/12/20/What-will-2015-bring-for-Turkey-.html>; and Ceylan Ozbudak, Al Arabiya English, September 27th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2014/09/27/Turkey-can-rid-Russia-and-Europe-of-bipolar-world-views.html>; and Ceylan Ozbudak, Al Arabiya English, August 11th 2014, Last access February 2015 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2014/08/11/Five-years-in-Turkey-with-President-Erdogan.html>

CONCLUSION

This work attempted to draw up an extensive image of Turkey through the lens of the Gulf media. Three popular news agencies, *Al Jazeera English*, *Al Arabiya English* and *Saudi Gazette* respectively, provided accurate materials to analyse and discuss this topic. The current picture of Anatolia concerned political, economic and social aspects. Furthermore, in order to furnish a solid knowledge to fully understand the results showed by the Gulf articles, two chapters developed a comparative analysis between the main considered players, namely Turkey and the GCC monarchies. Those parts aimed to highlight similarities and differences of these countries.

Before concluding, a few questions remain to be dealt with. Above all, someone could wonder for what use has the image of Turkey been drawn up. Which kinds of advantages, either theoretical or practical, could be offered by this analysis? In order to answer properly to this final query, it is not necessary to add any further concept, but underlining previous passages it will be possible to find solid argumentations. The TESEV think tank gives a valid explanation. Basically, it fosters the importance of a comprehensive dialogue between these subjects, promoting mutual acquaintance, creating a favourable partnership and guiding upcoming policies for the foreseeable future. Welcoming this interpretation, the analysis of the media contents becomes central to figure out the degree of knowledge and the state-of-the-art of the public debate over any specific issue and, in particular, concerning the Turkish framework. Obviously, another basic assumption concerns the relevance of the media, which is, interestingly for this work, the great impact it has had over the Middle East. Fact demonstrated by the *Al Jazeera phenomenon*, which renewed heavily the style and the attitude of the existing news formats.

Moreover, other remarks about the Turkish image can be discussed. What kind of meanings arise concerning the current relations between Turkey and the GCC countries? Surely, the frequency and extensiveness of the articles focused on the Ankara's politics induce to claim the diffuse acknowledgement of the relevance of this player both regionally and

globally. Deepening the Gulf-Turkish partnership, both subjects foster an increasing consolidation of economic and political ties throughout trades and diplomatic cooperation. Turkey aims to benefit diversifying the traditional alliance with Western nations and international institutions and entrenching its influence over neighbour countries. Similarly, Gulf establishments seek to enlarge their diplomatic network and to break partly their reliance on an oil-producing economy. Due to this mutual acknowledgement of each other as key regional player, Gulf media usually covers Turkish events and debate publicly over the potential upcoming, political, economic and social, frameworks.

Besides the Gulf-Turkish liaison, the inner equilibrium between the Arabian states could be questioned. What kind of considerations could arise comparing the three Arab newspapers, AJE, AAE and SG respectively? As noted describing the *Al Jazeera phenomenon*, some rivalries exist among the Arabian nations; for instance, between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. This atmosphere does not undermine the general positive balance around the GCC countries. Rather it produces a competitive attitude, which favours the implementation of *soft power* instruments such as the foundation of reliable news agencies to spread national influence across the Middle Eastern area. Therefore, if Al Jazeera represented a successful case, that allowed an increasing role of Qatar regionally, Al Arabiya has been the counterbalance made by neighbour countries to limit the Doha's influence.

Another aspect refers to issues regarding the coexistence in the Arab world of secularism and Islam. This debate finds its roots in the beginning of the last century, or even further, when Europeans divulgated their laic principles worldwide. Nonetheless, it is still an on-going matter that produces divergent perspectives and interpretations. The image pictured along this work contributes somehow to the current discussion. Turkey is presented as an intrigued example that mixes secular and Muslim values, resulting probably as a unique case for the entire Middle East. Interestingly, Saudi Gazette and to a lesser extend Al Jazeera English and Al Arabiya English mention the "Muslimness" of the AKP leaders as a key reason for their political success and an element of prestige. This assessment denotes

great importance to the common religious background among the Arab countries. In other words, it means that intra-Arab relations are strongly based on the same cultural heritages, which allowed a shared consciousness and facilitated mutual legitimacy. The controversy caused by the rector of Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University, Suleiman Aba al-Khayil, is a suitable example showing the complicated and delicate debate over secularism and Islam.

Furthermore, the vivid image of Turkey pictures a country on the edge of its active political and social life. Despite controversial factors, i.e. uncertain economic forecasts and unconsolidated democratic liberties, for the upcoming decades, the Anatolian territories are living an intense economic growth and an unprecedented political stability. The Turkish framework represents similarities with the broader context of the Middle East. The end of “exceptionalism” referred to the MENA countries and the open-matters concerning economic and political events pose these lands into a complex and shifting scenario. Hardly any assessment could sum up a comprehensive forecast on the general status of the region. Nonetheless, both Turkey and the GCC monarchies, above all Saudi Arabia, are enlisted on the top 20 economies and foster their influence at a global level, promoting, in the meanwhile, their Muslim tradition.

Assuming the international acknowledgement of these players, one more question has to be answered. Namely, which image of the Middle East as such has the Arab media, or rather the Gulf one, presented to the rest of the world? Each news agency states its own accountability and quality of the produced service. Indeed, this effort expresses the willingness of the Arabian elites to renew the image of their countries, demonstrating the open mind-set towards any issue. The social image of Turkey shows this fact. Discussing publicly of women’s condition, press freedom and human rights, the three Gulf web-newspapers deal with controversial matters not only for Turkey, but also for the Middle East as a whole. So, GCC regimes use the media soft power to overcome alleged accusations of democratic deficit and to gain credibility towards Arab and international public opinion.

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