

FOREWORD

Rafał Ożarowski, Wojciech Grabowski

There is no exaggeration in a statement that the analysis of Arab and Muslim issues currently constitutes a big challenge and is also very complex. Events from the former years can be definitely perceived as vital, and in some way, epoch-making for the Middle East region. This includes, among others: the phenomenon of ‘Arab uprisings’; the long-lasting war in Syria, so called emerging Islamic State, the signing of a nuclear deal between Iran and the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China) plus Germany, the arms race and the Saudi-Iranian rivalry in the Persian Gulf, the political crisis in Egypt and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Some of these events affect instability of this area, some of them were aimed at reaching some positive changes or reforms. But Middle East is indeed a region characterized by lots of unpredictable occurrences that may head towards many diverse directions. This unique specificity of the Arab and Muslim world attracts much attention of scholars, journalists and politicians from around the world.

The Arab and Muslim world has been associated with international Islamic terrorism for a long time. Its eruption might be dated from the end of World War II, but in last decades Islamic terrorism is the result of formation of

al-Ka'ida and the inflammatory rhetoric of its leader Osama bin Laden. This rhetoric addressed to the Western world and Muslim 'usurpers', combined with terrorist attacks on WTC and Pentagon in 2001, led to labeling Arabs and Muslims as terrorists or religious fundamentalists. That is why, researchers have difficult mission to uncover myths and stereotypes in order to show that the vast majority of Arab and Muslim population is against terrorism and also falls victim to terrorist attacks.

This was one of key aims of the first international conference on Arab and Muslim world in the contemporary international relations organized on 23rd of September 2015 by the Institute of Political Science of the University of Gdansk in Poland. Scholars from three countries presented papers on varied topics regarding the Arab and Muslim World and contributed to a stormy but productive discussion.

This book entitled *Arab and Muslim World in Contemporary International Relations* is a collection of papers prepared by conference participants on many interesting and varied topics.

The article of Tran Thi Huong from the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam regards a widely understood issue of the role of Muslim World in contemporary world politics. The author explains how important this Islamic area is for the world politics and economy and why it is so important. She characterizes Muslim community by referring to its most important features, such as the common belief in God and Prophet Muhammad, no separation between religion and politics, or its anti-American and anti-Western sentiment.

The paper entitled *ISIS and its historical origin* by Hadi Ajili from the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of Al-lameh Tabataba'i University in Iran touches current issues of Islamic State and the origin of its activity. He points out that the roots of ISIS might be found in what super

powers and regional powers planned at the beginning of the emergence of this group – to make a new equilibrium of power against Iran, Syria and Russia. Another reason of ISIS emergence concentrates on the socio-economic causes, such as chronic poverty, illiteracy and lack of social justice in the Middle East.

The third paper prepared by scholars from the University of Wrocław – Jarosław Jarząbek and Łukasz Fijałkowski, entitled «*Plague-bearers*» – *foreign fighters in the ranks of ISIS as a threat for their home countries. Selected cases of Asian states* is connected with the H. Aliji's paper. The authors present a specific nature of engagements of foreign fighters in ISIS troops with the result for the international relations. Among the most dangerous ones is that some of these fighters will back their home countries and pose a security threat to their authorities.

The article written by Przemysław Osiewicz of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań concerns Turkish and Iranian policies toward the Syrian war analyzed in many aspects. Both states – Turkey and Iran have done a lot to fuel the conflict. The author shows that visions of Syria presented by those states are completely divergent. Their engagement shows their ambitions to act as a regional power.

The paper presented by Rafał Ożarowski of the University of Gdańsk is correlated with the previous article and regards Hizballah's stance towards the 'Arab Uprising' and the war in Syria. The paper shows how Hizballah's ideological foundations have determined its vision and why sometimes ideological assumptions are not correlated with the Party of God's activity. In addition, the author presents a specific example of Hizballah's involvement in the Syrian war, which has been analyzed with the explanation of aims of Hizballah, its role and methods of warfare during the Syrian conflict.

The article by Magdalena El-Ghamari of the University of Białystok is focused on the cultural and traditional val-

ues of the Iraqi policy. The author presents terminology of cross-culture awareness, its determinants and the specificity of cross-cultural communication.

Wojciech Grabowski (University of Gdańsk) is an author of the paper on the role of Gulf Cooperation Council in the destabilization and stabilization of Yemen. The author shows that the current war in Yemen is a result of failure of the political transition after the 'Arab Uprising' in 2011, but also that the deal, which was a product of the GCC, was not implemented effectively. This resulted in the destabilization of Yemen.

Marcin Szydzisz of the University of Wrocław concentrated on the Israeli position in the Middle East in the face of new dilemmas and challenges facing this state. The article describes the new position of Israel during the changes in the Middle East and presents three political events that have occurred in the region: the Arab Spring, the war in Syria, development of the Iranian issue.

The article prepared by Jędrzej Czerep of the Institute of Political Science at the Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw concerns a very specific issue of Sudan's cultural influences on South Sudan.

Finally, the article by Joanna Figura of the Pedagogical University of Kraków concerns a topical issue in Europe and focuses on the Muslim minority in Switzerland. The author shows influences of the Swiss political system on its integration. The author presents the history of the Muslim immigration to Switzerland, sociological and economic analysis of their situation and the referendum concerning the Muslim minority. The article tries to answer a question whether the Swiss direct democracy has a positive or a negative impact on the equality of the Muslim minority.

As editors we hope that these papers will bring readers closer to the varied and complicated issues concerning the Arab and Muslim world and provide answers to their questions.