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Contemporary conflict management and peace in the lands of ziggurats and pyramids

Peace in the Middleeast is the base for the peace in the whole world.
President of Palestine Abu Mazen[1]

Two ancient lands with traces of the roots of so-called „western" civilization, Iraq and Egypt, are currently undergoing enormous changes[2]. Both of these countries are crucial for the stability of the Middle East and North African regions, and even for the whole world. Dealing with these countries, with respect to their past together with their present situation, their culture and religion are the underestimated factors of current politics. A pragmatic and business approach to these countries is the core of most western countries' relationship with their partners from other areas in the world. However, excessive pragmatism covers other important factors in the contemporary debate. Very often representatives of the western world, during meetings and discussions with the countries of the Middle East and Africa, are convinced of their superiority, even if they do not fully, or even at all, realize this. These are serious mistakes and are a large burden when it comes to important conventions, which aim is to come to a peace agreement yet may result in war in those places. Moreover, even

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[1] "Parigi, nasce l'Unione per il Mediterraneo Olmert: "Accordo mai stato cosè vicino", *Corriere della Sera* February 14 2008, http://www.corriere.it/esteri/08_luglio_13/unione_mediterraneo_sarkozy_1e27b91c-50bf-11dd-b816-00144-f02aabc.shtml accessed April 20, 2011.

[2] Frederic Wehrey, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Jessica Watkins, Jeffrey Martini, and Robert A. Guffey, *The Iraq Effect: The Middle East After the Iraq War* (Santa Monica: Project Air Force, 2010), 1–4; Freeman C.W., "The Arab Reawakening: Strategic Implications", *Middle East Policy*, 2 (2011); Kandeel A.A., "Egypt at a Crossroads", *Middle East Policy*, 2 (2011).

if it comes to pragmatism, such an approach during a discussion influences not only western countries' relations with the disputants but has an impact on the state of security in the western world.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the politics of the western countries concerning Egypt and Iraq, and to compare the consequences in both cases. Another task is to analyze throughout a comparison of the latter years of those countries' potentials for the future. An important factor is also the concept of the expressions "democracy" and "democratization". A comparison of these two ideas and some sort of proposition of a new approach to this problem is a very important part of the paper in face of the political thinking directed toward Muslim and Arabic countries. Such an analysis can be important in the face of European Union efforts to develop its relations with the countries of North Africa and Middle East within the confines of The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euromed)[3], and also for the USA politics which maybe looking to become closer to this initiative in the future.

Much has been written on the subject of Iraq and its transition into democracy, the failure of the stabilization mission, and is now being written about Egypt's soft revolution. But a comparison of the state in which these two countries are and even more importantly, the reasons why it is like this can be more productive. A comparative analysis of the western style democracy introduced by force in Iraq and the soft transition into a kind of democratic system in Egypt gives a solid foundation for discussing democracy in the whole Middle East and Africa. Such a view of these subjects is something new and had never been seriously considered before.

The significance of Egypt and Iraq for international stability

One of the countries in question, Egypt, is currently seen as a central point in the stability in north-east Africa and a country that reflects heavily on Israel, which itself has a tremendous impact on peace, or possible war, in the region. The state of affairs between Egypt and Israel impacts on the countries' common border, and relies especially on the blockade of weapons flow to the Gaza Strip. Moreover, any coalition of Muslim countries formed against Israel[4] – if it were to be successful – is hard to imagine without Egypt's participation. Simultaneously, the African Union is much less influential without Egypt's participation. On top of that, the second country under discussion here, Iraq, has a special role to play in the region, being regarded as extremely important for the world powers because of its geopolitical position (located between Iran, Syria, Turkey and Kuwait), as well as its oil fields and last, but not least, its relations with Israel.

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[3] "Parigi, nasce l'Unione per il Mediterraneo Olmert...", *op. cit.*

[4] There seems to be a tendency in some Muslim circles to try to construct such a coalition which could destroy Israel. At the same time, such an anti-Israel coalition appears impossible on the international level of today's world. Some countries, for example Egypt, were even called allies of Israel and this gives the impulse to believe that stabilisation in the region is possible and that it depends on proper international politics: Ilana Feldman, "Everyday Government in Extraordinary Times: Persistence and Authority in Gaza's Civil Service, 1917–1967", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 47 (2005), pp. 863–891.

Apart from the above mentioned aspects of the situation in the Middle East, there are other, and arguably, much more valid factors which make it so important to deal with the conflicts in that part of the world in a strategic and sensitive way. These vital issues to be taken into account are the lives of the people inhabiting these lands, the prospects for the countries' development, and finally the right of the indigenous people to decide on their future and the future of their countries. To interact with these two, and other countries, the world's political actors should equip themselves with the knowledge much more complex than merely economical relations, oil prices, the value of weapons, or the spheres of influence and dominance[5]. Those with the power to make a difference should be aware of all the factors which impact on what goes on in the region, focus on the critical ones, and be constantly reminded of them while they interact with those countries.

It seems that these two countries, Egypt and Iraq, are an excellent choice for making a comparison which helps to analyze the problems facing international relations in the Middle East; and while they may have often been discussed, it is the history, culture and religion of the two countries which seems to be underestimated in those discussions. It is not enough to speak only about the importance of these factors as some countries' leaders do[6]; what should be really understood is whom one is cooperating with, whom those affluent countries are trying to help, or sadly, whom they are fighting the war against. Such knowledge could radically change the talks and their outcomes. Then, it would have been no great surprise to the leaders of the so-called "western world", how the so called "soft revolution" in Egypt, which started at the beginning of 2011, was possible. In the specialist circles of university institutions and research centers[7] there had already been serious discussions and many were trying to alert the world by describing the situation in those countries. This could have been avoided if proper attention had been given to all aspects of life in the Middle East.

Ancient history in current politics

How history can be crucial in establishing leadership in the countries of the Middle East is shown in the recent past of Iraqi politics. One of the ways Saddam Hussein legitimized his power was by presenting himself as the successor of the ancient Meso-

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[5] *Strategic Energy Policy Challenges for the 21st Century*, Council on Foreign Relations, April, 2001; *Official: US oil at the heart of Iraq crisis*, Sunday Herald, October 6, 2002; *Oil prices lift ExxonMobil*, BBC News January 30, 2003. All accessed 25 March 2011.

[6] One effect of such politics of "omission" was the affair with the Iraqi journalist who threw his shoes in the direction of president George W. Bush: "Iraqi journalist throws shoes at Bush in Baghdad", *CNN World*, December 14, 2008, http://articles.cnn.com, accessed 25 March 2011; "Shoe monument for man who threw footwear at Bush", *Reuters*, January 30, 2009, accessed February 5, 2011.

[7] For example Centre for Studies on Terrorism and Institute for Research on Civilisations from the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow, Poland, where such issues were deliberated with details. There were also opinions of Egyptians themselves about future changes which were inevitable: Mark Tessler, "Islam and Democracy in the Middle East: The Impact of Religious Orientations on Attitudes toward Democracy in Four Arab Countries", *Comparative Politics*, 34 (2002), p. 338.

potamian kings[8]. This kind of propaganda has been the basis for many leaders in the history of mankind, but it seems that since the second half of the 20th century it has not had the same level of influence in sanctioning the ruling power. The reason for this may not just be an anachronism of such auto-presentation, but also the disastrous experiences of the world in the first half of the 20th century. In the 1930's ancient connotations were allegedly invoked by Hitler (who called upon the continuity of the Roman Empire and even exploited the symbols used in ancient Rome) and by Mussolini (who tried to use the figure of Octavian August, the first emperor who himself had special achievements in the area of propaganda)[9]. Another reason for such a decline in the power of auto-presentation is the way it has been presented to the western public by the media. There is a strong tendency to satirize such leaders, which has two negative results: it undermines the status of a leader in the eyes of the people he rules, and it impacts on the person's status in the arena of international relations. Additionally, when the media and politicians describe someone as a mad dictator, it reflects not only on the person the comment is made upon, but also on the leaders of countries in a similar political or economic situation. Moreover, it is also offensive to the people under the rule of the person being criticised.

Hussein reached for the ancient models in a very chaotic way. He claimed he was the descendant of the Babylonians as well as the Assyrians or Persians, whose revered status he eagerly exploited. Such rhetoric was not something altogether new or wrong in Hussein's country. It actually made the Iraqis proud of their history and seemed to diminish the differences inherent in Iraqi society. Because of this rhetoric of historical roots, people felt unified, something which these days seems to be impossible.

From another perspective, the Egyptians with their depth of history are not only the people of a place of travels and archaeological paradise. Their history, which in fact is a second branch of western civilisation roots, is something which constitutes their political mentality. If we treat them as being isolated from the past of their country it does not help to improve relations. A very important point in the connection between the western world and Egypt is the city of Alexandria, which for almost its whole history, has been the cosmopolitan meeting point for the flow of information, the science and poetry. Now, when the western world realises that there has to be some common ground for generating better relations with the Middle East and North Africa such a central point would be the best place for this.

A comparison of just these two countries is important because they stand out as being the leaders of the regions and also it highlights the serious mistakes made in international politics. There is the need to show more respect for the distinctness of their culture, their religious rules, but also for their history, which makes them partners of great value. Openly demonstrating this respect and recognizing their status as leaders, the politics towards Egypt and Iraq could have a more positive effect on the surrounding countries much better than just spreading the sphere of dominance of the world's leading powers.

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[8] Baram A., "Mesopotamian Identity in Ba'thi Iraq", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 19 (1983), pp. 426–455, Saddam Hussein on the subject of Arabs before Islam, p. 439.

[9] Leonard Schumacher, "Augusteische Propaganda und faschistische Rezeption", *Zeitschrift für Religions und Geistesgeschichte*, 40 (1988), pp. 307–330.

According to the famous Polish archaeologist Kazimierz Michalowski: *"to be conscious of the past, especially the ancient past of a country, makes a nation rise to a higher level of civilisation"*[10]. Both Egypt and Iraq were becoming from the beginning of XX century, more and more conscious and proud of their ancient past, and it is that pride which can be a basis for national agreement and a solid fundament for uniting the countries.

Democracy in Iraq

Unfortunately, in the case of Iraq, external factors have been involved: the war against the American invasion. Official causes of the war were the accusations that the Iraqi dictator was undergoing preparation to use weapons of mass destruction and that he was relying on his connections with Al-Queida.

Since subsequently no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq[11] and no connections to any groups of terrorists were proven, it led Kofi Annan to declare: *"I don't see an argument for military action now"*[12]. Nonetheless, the country which had one of the highest levels of education[13] in the region, was put into a continuous crisis not by the internal politics, but by the "empire" searching for new resources in far off countries[14]. Ruining all the internal structures of the country and building a "democracy" in their place proved that strategists planning this war did not have the full information about the culture and tradition of the people in the region. Disassembling the country's police force, the army and the secret service, though it stopped a despotic rule, it also ruined the stability of the country for years, broke down the educational perspectives of the children, and damaged any chance of a healthy job market in the country. Clearly, with Iraq in such a perilous state, terrorists had very easy entry

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[10] Kazimierz Michałowski, *Od Edfu do Faras* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1974), p. 5, (translation from Polish by author).

[11] Brendan Carlin and Christopher Leake, "Tony Blair accused of 'twisting facts' on Iraq", *Daily Mirror*, 13.12.2009; <Jason Beattie, "Tony Blair accused of misleading Iraq Inquiry over war plans", *Daily Mirror* 26.01.2011; George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, (New York: Crowns Publishers, 2010), p. 280, 326.

[12] "No basis' for Iraq war now", *BBC News*, December 31, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2617783.stm, accessed March 20, 2011; Former member of the weapon inspection commissions in UN, Scott Ritter said also: „The truth of the matter is that Iraq today is not a threat to its neighbors and is not acting in a manner which threatens anyone outside of its own borders: Scott Ritter addresses Iraqi parliament", BBC News, Sept 8, 2002.

[13] "Situation Analysis of Education in Iraq", UNESCO Paris: 2003: 57; Rakesh Kumar Ranjan i Prakash C. Jain, "The Decline of Educational System In Iraq", *Journal of Peace Studies*, 16 (2009); Ahmed Habib, "The Deadly Lie of Democracy in Iraq", *The Electronic Intifada*, November 19, 2010. The texts shows the problem of breaking down the education system but also the illusion of democracy introduced in Iraq. About the situation from the previous period: A. Baram, "Qawmiyya and Wataniyya in Ba'thi Iraq: The Search for a New Balance", *Middle Eastern Studies* 19 (1983), pp. 188–200, 196; D.A. Roy, "The Educational System of Iraq", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 29 (1993), pp. 167–198.

[14] This conclusion is drawn from the recent years where the USA attacked Afghanistan and Iraq because of the terrorism connections and weapons of mass distraction while at the same time North Korea and Pakistan are claimed to have such weapons too and have shown support for terrorism almost officially. Also Russia is in a state of war against Chechnya and the country breaks international laws and regulations, while China is treating Tibet and other territories in its area like slave reservoirs. Despite these obvious causes for invasion, the USA does not seem eager to wage war on these countries, on the contrary, some of them are seen as allies and partners of the USA. The above is to show the hypocrisy behind US politics; at the same time there is no doubt the world does not need another war, especially now that the war on Iraq is being seen as waged without any justification.

into the country and its people's minds. And it was after the invasion that Al-Qaeda started its activity in this country; not before[15].

The USA's invasion of Iraq has shown that any dreams of power of the kind Saddam Hussein upheld were completely false. But it is fair to assume that the images of strength and power, supported by the presentation of ancient roots Hussein often referred to, were not to prevent an attack from the USA, but were raised for his own people[16]. He tried to show them that they should be a proud nation and such a stance was easily mistaken as a proof of Hussein being a far cry from the fanatic dictators that history has known. At the same time, Hussein's way of wielding power was not something that Westerners were used to but by Middle East standards it was nothing new or surprising. Unfortunately, for the nation he ruled, the real danger the people of Iraq are now facing is a complete lack of stability, very strong influences over the country of Iran and Syria, with Kurdistan in the north which is almost a separate state. With the imminent possibility of the country falling apart[17] it seems likely that the only chance of Iraq holding together is by the rule of yet another dictator on the scene, namely Muqtada al-Sadr. It seems highly possible since even the prime minister put in power by the Americans says that Muqtada is the only man that can unite the country again. But what is tragic for the Iraqis, is that this man might possibly be a much worse dictator then Hussein[18].

What transpires from the above analysis is that the divisions that exist within Iraq are not caused by the internal forces, such as the differences between religions, different roots or cultural backgrounds. The strong divisions observed these days in Iraq are a direct result of its neighbours, their lack of stability and structures, and finally foreign powers interference and the recent US invasion[19]. In such a situation everything that used to be the real value of Iraq, i.e. its national pride producing a consolidated, high level of education and relative security[20] are practically non-existent now. The only predictability seen in the country these days is displayed by the regularity of terrorist attacks, though it is not the number of these attacks that is the most important factor[21] but the way they are organised. If there is any common strategy in

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[15] Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism", *Comparative Politics*, 4 (1981), p. 396.

[16] Similar to Russia's intention to recreate its former empire of the USSR.

[17] P. Goncharov, *How To Divide Iraq*, RIA Novosti political commentator Moscow (RIA Novosti) Oct 10, 2007; Saeed Kakeyi, *The Kurdish Conflict: Aspirations for Statehood within the Spirals of International Relations in the 21st Century*, Kurdishaspect.com, June 9, 2010.

[18] N. Raphaeli, "Understanding Muqtada al-Sadr", *Middle East Quarterly*, 4 (2004), pp. 33–42.

[19] Mahmood Monshipouri, Thaddeus C Zolty, "Shaping the New World Order: America's Post-Gulf War Agenda in the Middle East", *Armed Forces & Society*, 19 (1993), pp. 551–577.

[20] Security of contemporary Iraq has to be compared with the Iraq from the time of Saddam Hussein's rule. It is worth considering that while the brutal ruler would punish a whole village because one person was alleged to be guilty of treason, under the American invasion villagers suspected of collaboration with terrorists are interrogated by US soldiers in Abu Ghraib in a very brutal way and those suspected of collaboration with the collation forces are interrogated and often killed by terrorists. (*Getting Away with Torture?* Human Rights Watch, Apr 23, 2005, http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/04/23/getting-away-torture, accessed March 23, 2011; *The Road to Abu Ghraib*, A Human Rights Watch Report, June 2004, http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/usa0604/, accessed March 21, 2011; A. Mathias, "Abu Ghraib guards to appeal convictions after release of interrogation memos", *Jurist*, May 02, 2009, http://jurist.law.pitt.edu, accessed March 21, 2011.

[21] In fact the number is also stunning as it is in the first quarter of the 2011 the highest number of terrorist attacks from all of the countries in the word: *Monthly Terrorism Report*, Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism in Turkey (Coe-Dat), from January to April (http://www.coedat.nato.int).

the activity of terrorists in Iraq, it is obvious how they have adjusted to the situation in the country. In the new situation, from the second half of 2010 when the number of US soldiers in Iraq has been decreased, it seems that there is no need to further try to destabilise the country and organise as many attacks as prior to 2010. But the problem persists and it creates suffering for the local people. This is the real determinant of the prospective stability in the country which at the moment looks bleak. If one just looks at one of the terrorist attacks, on a day in November 2010, eleven explosions occurred killing at least 63 people and injuring almost 300[22]. Even more significantly, this attack was carried out in one of the best guarded places in Iraq (except for the Green Zone), the Karrada district. This breach of security, on top of the number of attacks, shows the real potential of the terrorists[23]. If one considers that the neighbouring countries are trying to win as much as they can in this situation and secure their influence in the country[24], we can imagine why the situation is extremely chaotic.

A disturbing, but also interesting aspect of the state of chaos in Iraq is the growing number and scale of attacks against Christians[25]. A society which did not use to display real problems with its religious diversity, is now showing strong antagonism between Shiites, Sunnites, Christians and Kurds at the same time. These hostilities are caused, not by the actual differences between these groups, but by the influences of politics and governments which seem to profit from a situation of instability by gaining " the right" to exert full control over an oil-rich country. Terrorism, it seems, is not born because of the issues between the people living in Iraq; quite the opposite, it is just the emanation of the external forces struggling for control over Iraq.

All this suggests that the strategy for resolving the conflict in Iraq[26], which relied on fighting terrorism by simply killing all the terrorists, is not the solution to the real problem. Such a flawed strategy can be seen in the statement of the former US president: *"Our strategy in Iraq has three objectives: destroying the terrorists, enlisting the support of other nations for a free Iraq and helping Iraqis assume responsibility for their own defense and their own future"*[27]. Although in his statement George W. Bush announced three strategic aims, the order in which these priorities were put, his following qualifications in the same strategy document and also the US soldiers' actions

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[22] "Baghdad bombs kill 63", *Iraq Wars*, Baghdad (AFP) November 2, 2010, http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Baghdad_bombs_kill_63_999.html, accessed March 20, 2011.

[23] Though there are of course much smaller terrorist attacks: i.e. *Suicide attack kills at least 7 in northern Iraq*, http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/06/21/iraq.violence/index.html?iref=allsearch; *Successive blasts rock Baghdad, killing 29,* accessed March 20, 2011; http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/06/20/iraq.blasts/index.html?iref=allsearch, accessed March 20, 2011.

[24] From the memoirs of the Battle Captain in the Tactical Operation Centre of the fifth shift of Polish forces in Iraq from June 2005 till February 2006. In countless meetings between coalition forces commanders and staff with local leaders and district governors there were many times information given about whole families of Iranian moving to southern Iraq. They of course voted in "democratic" elections for Shiites.

[25] Sammy Ketz, "Grieving Christians mourn dead from Iraq church bloodbath", Baghdad (AFP) November 2, 2010, http://www.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne+News/World/Story/A1Story20101102-245425.html, accessed February 05, 2011.

[26] This strategy follows neoconservative doctrine: Brian C. Schmidt & Michael C. Williams, "The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives Versus Realists", *Security Studies*, 17 (2008), pp. 191–220.

[27] The White House, online, September 2003 (http://www.whitehouse.gov), accessed March 11, 2011.

in Iraq seem to suggest that the coalition forces rely heavily on their success on the destruction of the terrorists.

We should also remember, however, that fighting terrorism has not the same meaning for all nationalities and their armed forces. The way of dealing with it depends mostly on the historical experiences and cultural backgrounds of the people. There is no doubt there are other ways of fighting terrorism than just fighting all who have different ideas for their country other than democracy. Some countries and their soldiers treat local people differently than US soldiers do. Also, if Americans treat all Taliban in Afghanistan and all the opponents of democracy in Iraq as potential terrorists, then the definition of this word has to be totally different to what it means to other countries forming the coalition forces. One can say with all certainty that many of the so called terrorists are doing this kind of activity as an answer to the methods used by some forces from the coalition against terrorism. It seems that US commanders could learn a little from their European allies; such co-operation within NATO would be fruitful for the whole alliance if there were to be a real exchange of experiences and not merely a transfer of rules and ideas.

Thomas L. Friedman in his article for the New York Times presents the American invasion in Iraq as the best example of one country showing how to "referee or coach a democratic transition between the distrustful communities in these fractured states"[28] and compares it to the European efforts to bring the Eastern Bloc countries to democracy. It seems hard to imagine how these extremely different historical and political regions could bear any likeness in their situation, past or present. Friedman's second conclusion which seems flawed is how he describes Iraq as the example of a democratic country with "real pluralism where people feel a common destiny, act as citizens and don't believe their minority has to be in power to be safe or to thrive"[29]. At the same time US generals are already worried about the situation in Iraq once the last American soldier leaves the country and they are predicting the Green Zone falling, claiming there will be a necessity for an armed come-back to Iraq. It only remains to be added that Muqtada-Al-Sadr as the leader of Iraq does not implement any strategy of coalition forces for that country[30]. If such is the case, it really does not look like Iraq is an example of democracy at all.

Democracy in Egypt

Just after the collapse of the despotic rule in Egypt, people were asked what sort of country they wanted to live in. Even during the protests against Mubarak, when still in rule, they were talking about democracy and nobody denied the tendency was solid. But the word "democracy" can mean much more than westerners perceive. For the western world it has just one meaning and there is no need to explain this. Of course

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[28] Thomas L. Friedman, "Prey. Hope. Prepare", *New York Times*, Apr 13, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/13/opinion/13friedman.html. accessed on April 20, 2011.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Nimrod Raphaeli, *op. cit.*, pp. 33–42.

there are some problems with this system such as with Jörg Haider's party entry into the government of Austria in 2000 and the reactions of the EU[31] or the Greek crisis in 2011[32], but democracy for westerners is always connected with such concepts as: pluralism where, not only there are many political parties, but also every citizen can be in whichever party they want; human rights, by which every man and woman, boy and girl are treated with dignity; free elections, understood as being an individual choice of every citizen for whom he or she votes, democratic rule secured by the separation or balance of powers; equality of rights for women, and also secularization which is, in fact, the separation of a country's governing body from religion. All those ideas have to be described with a short explanation, as for most Middle East and African countries, only the emblems can sound the same, but the meaning of those concepts can differ to a large extent. That is why many statements of the people in those territories can seem to be ambivalent reflections within the society of the country[33], but this ambivalence is seen by westerners because it is very hard to understand others cultures. That is why many westerners are shocked that, while those Egyptians wanting democracy are in a majority, at the same time almost one quarter of them would consent to a non democratic system as well (table 1). Moreover, they believe that, although there is a need for democracy and free elections, at the same time, one third of them believe that a strong leader is more important, even though this poll was made after the overthrow of Mubarak (table 2). The tendency looks good right now for all who believe in democracy in this country, but it is important to be aware of the difficult path the Egyptians have in front of them. It is certain that these proportions will not be maintained in near future. Most shocking could be the way Egyptians see their legal system. According to a vast majority it should strictly follow the Quran. Only 27 percent said that the law should follow only the principles of their holy book. So citing only a number of supporters of democracy is very much confusing the picture. In fact the word "democracy" for the Egyptians means something quite different from most westerners beliefs. To understand better the example of Egypt presented above would be useful. In many countries, closer to the western world we have quite similar processes. The best example is Turkey, where 76 % in 2010 believed that democracy was a preferable system but in 2011 it is just 66% of the people[34]. It may cause surprise that in just the previous year it was 10 percent higher. In Egypt during the same time this number rose to 71%.

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[31] No way out, guardian.co.uk, Tuesday 29 February 2000, accessed on 13.09.2011.

[32] Democracy: The European crisis, BBC news, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14786484, accessed on 13.09.2011.

[33] This ambivalence is often ascribed to the different opinions inside the party which is also true but different comprehension of those key concepts can make it more complex. Examples of such ambivalence can be found in here: Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, "The Path to Moderation: Strategy and Learning in the Formation of Egypt's Wasat Party", *Comparative Politics*, 36 (2004), p. 208.

[34] *Pew Research Center* on http://www.pewglobal.org/, accessed September 13, 2011.

Table 1. Views of Democracy[35]

Country	Democracy preferable to any other kind of government	In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable	For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have	DK
	%			
Lebanon	81	12	5	2
Turkey	76	6	5	13
Jordan	69	17	10	4
Nigeria	66	18	16	1
Indonesia	65	12	19	4
Egypt	59	22	16	2
Pakistan	42	15	21	22
Based on Muslims only. Conducted on April 12 to May 7, 2010 by PEW Research Centre Q17.				

Table 2. Which is more important?[36]

	2007	2011
Democracy	50	64
Strong leader	47	34
Don't know	4	2
PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q57.		

Table 3. Support of laws[37]

Strictly follow the Quran	62%
Follow the values and principles of Islam	27%
Not be influenced by the Quran	5%
DK	5%
PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q47x.	

These analyses challenge or just question the points raised by scholars like Carrie Rosefsky Wickham who divides Islamists into those who support pluralism and human rights and others who do not[38]. The problem is that when representatives of those parties are discussing human rights and pluralism their understanding of these issues

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[35] Richard Auxier, "Egypt, Democracy and Islam", *Pew Research Center*, January 31, 2011, http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1874/egypt-protests-democracy-islam-influence-politics-islamic-extremism, accessed September 13, 2011.

[36] "Egyptians Embrace Revolt Leaders, Religious Parties and Military, As Well", *Pew Research Center* http://pewglobal.org on APRIL 25, 2011, accessed September 14, 2011.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *op. cit.*, pp. 206–207.

are much different than the western analyst who examines those responses like we see in the above analyses.

With this point it is good to compare Egypt and Iraq as we can see those tendencies described above are more or less similar in the land of zikkurats. This can be noticed in the separation of the state and religion analysis made in 2001, where their scores are very close[39]. It is clear that not every country has good grounds for democracy in its western meaning. It seems that the world leaders need to finally realise that democratisation does not have to lead to a full democratic system and that in many countries it is unlikely to happen, while a semi-democratic system could exist there successfully. Unfortunately, for many observers the changes in North Africa and the Middle East seem hard to understand. For example, Thomas L. Friedman compared changes in Europe to those in North Africa. Even though there is some similarity between the situations in Yugoslavia or Poland and some regions in Africa or the Middle East, Friedman's conclusion, that the war in Yugoslavia took place because of its national mosaic similar to Libya, and his comparison of Germany being homogeneous as in Egypt, seems far-stretched and definitely not encompassing all the issues in each of these different cultures, which are totally different with regards to culture, religion, and their past. As for example in the case of the Yugoslavia transition, there were a lot of mistakes in Europe's reactions and also the Yugoslavians did not have any experience of such a situation. There are tremendous differences (even if it looks similar because of the effects) in those situations just because of the history, the religion of these countries and their cultures. There is an obligation not to underestimate these differences, but also there is no need to demonize them. The western world should accept that every nation can determine its own path because evolution gives the best results – not revolution (like the eastern Europe also shows). It is an obligation to help, encourage, make every diplomatic effort to improve the situation. But to make decisions on behalf of that people (as in Iraq) is wrong. The example of Egypt best shows that bringing western democracy to Iraq is not possible. The breach in their society is much deeper than in Egyptian society. If one third of Egyptians are willing to accept a strong leader, and we consider the tragic situation faced by the Iraqi people, they are still waiting impatiently for such a leader.

Democracy and democratisation

What is important here is that the Egyptians do not have to introduce democracy; they merely want some form of democratisation which does not necessarily lead to a fully democratic system in the form known in Europe or America. Also they have leaders who know very well how democracy works[40] and it is in the Egyptians' own hands as to the direction they take in the future. Here lies a major lesson for "western" powers that they should take into account when dealing with the region. During the protests

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[39] Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, Separation of Religion and State in the Twenty-First Century: "Comparing the Middle East and Western Democracies", *Comparative Politics*, 37 (2005), p. 326.

[40] Even they understand that democracy is not something which can be introduced in a rush: Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "We do not want a sham democracy: ElBaradei", *India Today*, New Delhi, March 19, 2011 http://indiatoday.intoday.in/site/story/egypt-we-do-not-want-a-sham-democracy-mohamed-elbaradei/1/132835.html, accessed June 27, 2011.

in Tahrir Square the Egyptians expressed very clearly that they do not want the West to introduce democracy there and organize their country in the mode known to the West. A recent poll also shows that a majority of Egyptians do not think of democracy the same as most westerners[41]. This is probably why many people believe that there is some contradiction between the Muslim religion and democratisation, but proper analysis refutes this[42]. In fact we have to learn to observe the cultural differences without falling into extremism on one side by denying democracy in a Muslim country at all, or by introducing it in those countries in the form as it exist in Europe or the USA. Both view points are considered to be wrong. Turkey shows to some extent an example of democracy in an Islamic country[43], which is not perfect and produces many problems, but the development of the country shows that its direction looks right.

Democratisation can be called the process of enforcing a system whereby people have some influence on their ruler; it does not necessarily need to mean fully democratic elections. It can be applied in many countries in the world and it is not the role of westerners to force those countries any further of this direction. If there is a need to be more accurate in the terminology of the processes which are happening in North Africa and the Middle East we should introduce a change to the definitions in use. Democratization in Egypt and Iraq (but also Afghanistan, Yemen, or Pakistan and many more) can simply mean bringing people to some level of influencing the decisions and not fully changing the leader with every election. A good example presents itself in Eastern Europe; the average Russian claims he or she does not care about or want democracy, but want a good leader. At the same time, even during the communist period people in Poland always dreamed about democracy and never gave up this dream.

If we give up thinking of political order in Egypt and Iraq in the western-style democracy, the arena is wide open for real competitive participants in the political contest. It appears that the Muslim Brotherhood and even more so, the Wasat Party are the contestants for the democratisation in Egypt[44]. Both appear to be not so far away from the European countries' parties concerning the differences in understanding of democracy in the Middle East and Africa and also the western world.

Another important factor is the strong role of army in Egypt and in Iraq. Army is a supporter of the modernisation but also ties to the traditional roots[45].

In the case of Iraq it is even more persuasive to give the zikkurat land citizens the possibility of choosing their own path. After what has happened there, it seems that to reach the objective of strengthening the process of democratisation, the only option is to foster close relations with that country, to introduce them to Euromed (joined by the USA) and an understanding of the different meaning of democracy, thereby becoming reconciled with every choice they will make.

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[41] "What Egyptians Really Want", February 10, 2011. *Investor's Business Daily* at Investors.com: http://www.investors.com/NewsAndAnalysis/Article/562840/201102101920/What-Egyptians-Really-Do-Want.aspx, accessed April 19, 2011.

[42] Marc Tessler, *op. cit.*, pp. 348–350.

[43] Michele Penner Angrist, Party Systems and Regime Formation in the Modern Middle East: Explaining Turkish Exceptionalism, *Comparative Politics*, 36 (2004), pp. 229–249; Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, *op. cit.*, pp. 328–330.

[44] Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *op. cit.*, pp. 205–228; Mona El-Ghobashy, The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 37 (2005), pp. 373–395.

[45] James A. Bill, "The Military and Modernization in the Middle East", *Comparative Politics*, 2 (1969), pp. 41–62.

Potentials of Iraq and Egypt

In conclusion to this part of the paper it seems prudent to add that while Iraq is such a high point of interest to the neighbouring countries, and also to the USA and the western world, because of its oil fields and its geo-political location, Iraq also has its treasures which are much more valuable than the oil. It is the historical monuments of Iraq, its ziggurats and their state of preservation of a few of them that is absolutely amazing. Some ancient cities are covered by sand and are still waiting to be discovered by archaeologists. There is the possibility that Iraq could be an even more successful tourist and scientific destination than Egypt, if it was well prepared for that kind of commerce. The potential of Iraq is huge, but at the moment it seems there is no possibility to change the situation in the country.

It is important to stress that before the Iraq–Iran war, the tourist movement had already started, and there are still some guides and tourist maps remaining from that time. The war and now terrorism have shut down any perspective for Iraq's stabilization, which is a necessary basis on a worldwide scale, for this unique tourist and scientific research ground[46]. With that basis in place, with a genuine stabilisation of the country, Iraq could grow to an enormous scale since it is the place with probably the greatest number of not recovered historical sites[47]. One can easily imagine that every new discovery would produce a new impulse in the world's interest in the country.

It is interesting to note that Iraq has previously experienced some level of world interest in its historical treasures, when at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century archaeologists from all over the world visited the country and worked for years on its archaeological sites. One of these people was Leonard Woolley[48] who wrote a book about his discoveries in Ur. His descriptions can serve as an example of what Iraq can offer if there were no influences by foreign powers, and if the country could achieve the evolution of its political system. If one compares Iraq and Egypt, we can put side by side Woolley and another famous explorer Carter[49]. Such a comparison shows that, although the discoveries in Egypt were possibly as crucial as those in Iraq, it is the Egyptian discoveries that became much more famous. This fact could be explained by the accessibility of these two countries, their political situation, and partly by Egypt being a "fashionable" destination since Bonaparte's campaign.

Again, accessibility is a determinant of these countries' progress in all other spheres of life. There are many similarities between Egypt and Iraq, such as pride of their past; the level of education which is also very high in Egypt when compared with other nations in the region[50]; the countries can boast many historical monu-

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[46] It is interesting to note the reflections of the war in Iraq even in Egypt and Turkey where tourist business suffered great losses: J.S. Goldstein, *The Real Price Of War, How You Pay for the War on Terror*, New York, London 2004, p. 92.

[47] Polish archaeologists working with the Polish Armed Forces Contingent in Iraq took thousands of pictures of the desert areas and identified a lot of interesting places probably hiding treasures which would revolutionize the history of the region and through that also the history of all western civilization.

[48] Leonard Woolley, *Excavations at Ur, A Record of Twelve Years' Work*, E. Benn, London 1964, pp. 52–109.

[49] "Times Man Views Splendours of Tomb of Tutankhamen; Howard Carter's Discovery in Upper Egypt Reveals Glory of the 18th Dynasty", *The New York Times*, December 22, 1922; Tut-ankh-Amen's Inner Tomb is Opened Revealing Undreamed of Splendours, Still Untouched After 3,400 Years, *The New York Times*, February 16, 1923.

[50] Vickie Langohr describes this as the result of both the colonial influence of British and ability of the Egyptians to implement it into their education system. To some extent against religious movements: „Colonial Education Systems and the

ments which are the magnet for tourists; there were the despotic rulers with the police having special rights; Egypt (as Iraq under Hussein) remains unified even if there have been events which could have led to its break down. At the same time, despite these points of similarity, the situation in these two countries is drastically different. The difference is that Egypt is, in a sense, an ally to the USA, which was apparent during the social revolt. From the beginning of 2011 the USA supported the dictator of Egypt. Later on, president Obama transformed his strategy to strongly supporting the society and the changes required in the country. In this case the Americans seemed to help to preserve the regime which sprang from the fact that nobody had any control of what was going on in the country. In the end, however, it came about that it was the people who were determined to bring down their ruler and to introduce democratisation to their country.

Egypt, on the other hand, is an ideal example of a country proudly displaying its ancient monuments and relying heavily on tourism. For tourism to thrive in Egypt, stabilisation and security inside the country are vital. To maintain these, the country needs to have firm structures, even if it means some form of continuity from an undemocratic system[51]. This is already happening since after the overthrow of Mubarak it seems that trials are more or less fair with no death penalties, up to now of Mubarak's supporters, police officials or secret service staff. These structures have indeed survived and the system is changing. Nobody is expecting a total rebuilding of the country's structures. It can benefit the majority of people and has not brought a sudden pause to the life of society, as in Iraq, where people are struggling simply to survive and there is no time to think about any development[52]. In Egypt, people have also experienced how terrorism and instability can influence their lives in the most direct and dramatic way, especially with the massacre in Luxor in 1997[53] which taught them this, when in 1998 tourism of Egypt collapsed and caused a real threat to the economic survival of the country[54].

Apart from its history, tourism and science factors, there is yet one more potential that Egypt could further exploit for its own benefit. It is its relations with the world's most important political structures. The European Union with its relatively strong economy (even after the crisis from 2009–2010) is one such organisation, the USA and the League of Arab States and African Union being others. Such relations could contribute to Egypt's growth as long as the country has strong structures in place. The most advantageous in this context would seem to be the Euro–Mediterranean Partnership in which Egypt could play a decisive role for the very reason of its past and present position. In fact the membership of Egypt in Euromed would benefit both

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Spread of Local Religious Movements: The Cases of British Egypt and Punjab", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 47 (Jan., 2005), pp. 161–189.

[51] Continuity is the most important factor during political changes. Poland, and after that, other countries from the Warsaw Pact after 1989, proved this fact. In middle Europe systems have changed, but many internal structures of those countries were changing later on and gradually. There were no disassembly of the structures as was done in Iraq. Comparisons of Europe and Middle East most often are not correct because of the many differences between those regions in many spheres of life, but this fact happens.

[52] According to Maslow's pyramid theory persons without their basic needs secured are not reaching for the next levels. They can't think for example about democratisation if they have to worry about surviving: A.H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation", *Psychological Review* 50(4) 1943, pp. 370–96.

[53] *World Tourists Massacred at Temple*, BBC News, November 17, 1997.

[54] The author of this paper was in Cairo in the January 1998 and saw firsthand the situation there.

sides of the Partnership: The European Union on one side and the North African and Middle East countries on the other associated in this organisation.

Table 4. Egyptians opinion of countries and organisations[55]
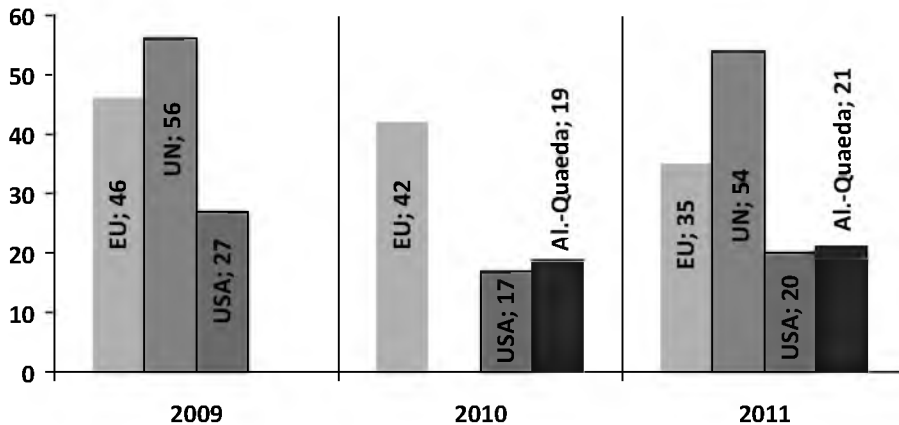
Just from this poll among the Egyptians, it seems to show that Euromed is much better viewed by the people from the land of Pyramids. Unfortunately, the level of sympathy towards the USA[56] is lower than for Al-Qaeda. This observation displays an unpleasant view but tells much: both fighting sides are equally assessed by them. Both of them are bringing instability to the region and are searching for supporters. Both have large amounts of money and both are ready to destroy any opponent to achieve their political ends. What is also important to note is that the Egyptians do not appreciate the role of the USA during their revolution which is shown in a recent poll (Table 5).

Table 5. Egyptians opinion of U.S. Response on Situation in Egypt
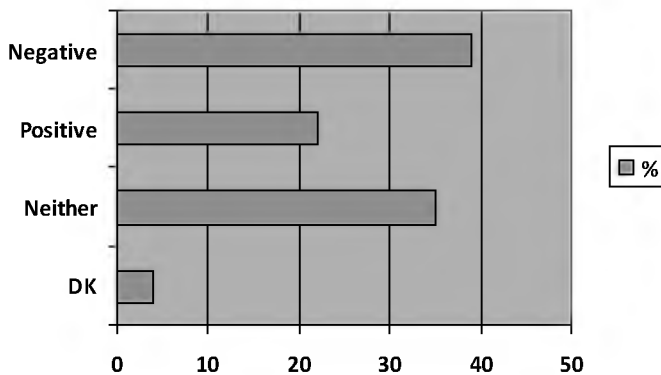
PEW Research Center QEGY 10.

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[55] Pew Research Center on http://www.pewglobal.org/, accessed 20April, 2011.

[56] Edward P. Haley, "A Defensive Grand Strategy for the United States", *Armed Forces & Society*, 30 (2004), pp. 461–481.

The European platform of the Euromed Partnership brings new possibilities; there has even been a situation where, for the first time, Palestinians and Israelis sat together with an aim other than only for negotiations. Cooperation with the USA and the EU on this platform could benefit all sides. But even then it looks as if both the USA and the EU are lacking in all those "non-pragmatic" elements like culture, history and religion. That is why the negotiations of Euromed are in the death throes too. So, from the other side, the participation of the USA could bring some dynamics to this conception. Both sides need to allow a larger input of the academic centres into the political discussion. There are people who have often resolved problems which are well beyond the reach of most politicians. Of course, politicians do not have to be specialists in the area of cultures and religions but a better dialogue between politics and academia would be something which could change the course of history in the Middle East and in North Africa.

Conclusions

It still remains to be stressed that the examples of Egypt and Iraq should be of much greater interest to the Western world than they currently are. Their ancient monuments are not only the traces of the past, long gone; these are also the roots of western civilisation. This civilisation developed out of Mesopotamia and Egypt and its culture is only richer because of them. A comparison of these two countries shows their true potentials and the positive options for both Iraq and Egypt. It also demonstrates how much Egypt has to lose if the system changing process goes off in the wrong direction. Fortunately, one can hope from the reactions of the Egyptians and from the processes in this country at the beginning of 2011 that, because of the democratisation process, the situation should improve there, not deteriorate. However, at the same time with Iraq in this perspective, it is hard to be that optimistic, especially after the dramatic invasion in 2003 by the USA. Nevertheless, the example of Egypt shows that the possibility for the situation to improve exists, except that in Iraq the process of rebuilding the structures will be much more difficult. The greatest danger Iraq faces, which now seems inevitable, is that it will have to, once again, go through another brutal dictator stage, since in its current chaotic situation only a despotic rule could be effective. However undesirable, this may increase the level of national unity, and then create the need for democratisation again, as happened there before the Gulf War (1990–91)[57] and as it is in Egypt now.

Two thousand three hundred and forty two years ago, these two lands of pyramids and ziggurats were part of one empire conquered by Alexander the Great[58]. His politics with regard to his new empire were constructed on the basis of intercultural integration which he himself demonstrated to be genuine through his many actions. One of these was to order his commanders to becoming "satraps", i.e. to learn the local

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[57] During the Gulf War opposition against Hussein was much larger. Unfortunately the USA after agreement with the dictator left their local supporters, helping only a few. The rest had to cope with the situation on their own.

[58] Maciej Milczanowski, *Podboje Aleksandra Wielkiego*, Zabrze 2007 (The Conquests of Alexander the Great).

language and to dress and act like the locals[59]. He also ordered that he was to be treated in each of the new territories and in front of each new group of people in their local manner. It caused anger among his own people but at the same time it won the trust of those he conquered.

The lesson for today that can be derived from Alexander the Great actions is that he never forced Greek or Macedonian (we could say today, European) manners to be introduced into the conquered regions. New cities he built were not only military garrisons designed to keep his empire alive, but they were primarily cultural centres where citizens could foster their regional customs, traditions and religions. Moreover, using his own resources he rebuilt sanctuaries and temples of various religions from his new territories. Finally, he left a political system intact as he had found it in the given territory. This kind of management was the beginning of new era known as Hellenism, which was a revolution in the spheres of science, philosophy, politics, and also the military, with its cultural and scientific capital in Alexandria, which for thousands of years was the symbol of great cultural diversity and internal politics. Alexandria was something unique in the history of human civilisation.

Now again, Egypt is showing new perspectives and positive possibilities for its own society, while also being a great example for the region and the world. It seems it is high time that co-operation with this country is furthered and, in this context, a shift in international politics is introduced from directing and ordering to helping and the sharing of information while raising self knowledge, instead of educating others in the European or any other mode of thinking. In the Euromed Partnership, the Land of Pyramids always held a privileged position because of *"the strategic importance accorded to Egypt by European decision makers. Its geographical position at the cross-roads between the Middle East and North Africa, its proximity to Israel and its status as the most populous state in the region make Egypt a central factor in determining the stability of the southern Mediterranean"*[60].This preferential position is just and, consequently it receives more aid than any of the other countries of Maghreb or Mashreqi states. If Euromed is to establish a closer rapport with countries like this much more is needed than sending aid. There should be a genuine partnership based on equal terms. It does not mean that Europe should be docilely agreeing to any requests, such as opening the Egyptian market into European economy without any conditions current in the EU but to treat partners from the Pyramid land as a place of great potential which can emerge only when the relationship is on a much higher level.

Euromed is right now the best platform to develop much better relations between the European Union and Egypt, but it also makes it possible for the West to learn a lot from countries like Egypt, Syria or Iraq (which should be invited to this partnership). Western world politics should understand that a civilization is not defined only by the level of its technological advancement[61] and should stop underestimating those societies, countries, cultures and religions or fighting them for domination or in order to enforce the model of a country in the western fashion. It is this respect for the Middle East which should be the first step in the new order of discussions with the

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[59] Plutarch, *Live of Alexander*, The Parallel Lives, 46–47.

[60] Trevor Parfitt Source, "Europe's Mediterranean Designs: An Analysis of the Euromed Relationship with Special Reference to Egypt", *Third World Quarterly* 18 (1997), p. 866.

[61] Wade Davis, *The Way Finders, Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World*, Toronto 2009, pp. 193–198.

countries from the region. To successfully manage the conflicts and bring peace, politicians need to understand those countries' cultures and return to those countries' past, where they will find all the answers to today's issues. Ignoring the past will keep western civilisation progressing its technology, but will be a serious impediment to resolving the world's social and political problems[62].

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[62] *Ibid*, p. 201.