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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Security Studies

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**The main causes of migration in the Middle East:
Is migration predominantly caused by armed conflicts?**

**Hlavní příčiny migrace na Blízkém Východě:
Je migrace především výsledkem ozbrojených konfliktů?**

Master's thesis

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Study Programme: Master in International Security Studies

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Year of defense: 2021

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Budapest on 1st of May 2021

Dóra Béres

References

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Abstract

This diploma thesis deals with the causes of migration with a special focus on the relationship between international irregular migration and armed conflicts.

The first part of the thesis consists of a short overview on the security challenges in the 21st century as a method of approach to the migration topic. Engaging the issue, I clear first the definition then overview the common causes of migration in the Middle East, my geographical area of research. Using Lee's theory of migration, I identify the main push and pull factors behind an individual's or group's decision to leave the homeland.

The main part of dissertation deals with the armed conflicts in the Middle East and its effect on the volume of migration. Investigating the different aspects of the topic I narrow my research to Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and the Palestinian territory.

In the last part of the dissertation through a descriptive analysis of two case studies I apply Lee's theory to show the chain process that led to the today experienced large-scale migration of Syrian and Iraqi people.

As a conclusion, the research question addressed by stating that in the Middle East from the many push factors of migration the armed conflict represents the greatest threat.

List of Abbreviations

AI	Armed Awakening Movement
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
ELTE	Eötvös Loránd University
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HTS	Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
HTS	Hayat Tahrir as-Sham
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISI	Islamic State of Iraq
ISIL/DAESH	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
KRG	Kurdish Regional Government
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NMI	NATO Mission Iraq
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLO	Palestine Liberal Organization
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNRWA	The United Nations Relief and Works Agency
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSMIS	United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria

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1. Introduction

Migration is as old as mankind because people living around the world always moved from one place to the other. Migration, cross-border or domestic, affects millions. Its existence is a fact, the question is where and why people are moving and what their reasons are to flee from home. Migration is a result of individual or common will, which are determined by general social, economic, or political processes, the individual intention, and everyday ambitions altogether and at the same time. (Tóth, 2001, 20.)

There are several reasons why such phenomena occur. Throughout the human history there were migrations on huge scale, but the reason behind it was not always violence or human suffering. We can identify periods in the history (e.g., age of exploration) when the driving force behind the migration was to discover and populate new places on Earth. Despite these positive historical motives/cases the reason behind migrations in most of the time was connected to different type of crisis. People decided to leave their home and look for a safer region for many reasons like difficult economic situation, climate change, lack of food or water, epidemics, overpopulation, or they just wanted to flee war-torn areas.

My dissertation aims to examine which are the main reasons for today's migration and whether the armed conflicts are responsible for the currently experienced irregular large scale migration.

In the first part of my dissertation thesis, I will provide a general overview on the security challenges of the 21st century that effect our daily sense of security with a particular focus on international (cross border) migration. I intend to narrow my research to a specific geographic region, the Middle East and from the many causes I intend to focus on two main push factors, overpopulation, and armed conflicts. As for the time period I examine the phenomenon of migration in the last 63 years (1955-2018) with special focus on the last 10 years when we have experienced an unprecedented growth in numbers.

The main part of the dissertation will deal with the armed conflicts in the Middle East with special focus on Syria and Iraq, but the research will include Yemen, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territory too.

After reviewing the dissertation, I will summarize my findings and answer the research question.

I will use qualitative and quantitative research focusing on a particular problem or situation faced by a population. The dissertation includes empirical research to examine the

relationship between variables using statistical analysis. The statistical analysis will apply primary data and secondary data.

In my dissertation thesis I work with Lee' theory of migration that is a proper theoretical tool to address the topic.

As a citation form, I use the Modern Language Association style with parenthetical in-text citations and a "List of sources" collection at the end of the paper.

2. Methodology

In my dissertation I will use both qualitative and quantitative methodology. I collected data from primary and secondary sources and elaborated my topic using case studies, surveys, and interviews. The latter includes officials from the Foreign Ministry of Hungary (familiar with the region) and military personnel who served in Iraq in NMI missions. Applying the theoretical framework in my dissertation I consulted with teachers from the ELTE University in Budapest.

2.1. Research Question

What is the main factor behind the migration process in the Middle East?

Derivate

Are the armed conflicts the main factors behind the migration process in the Middle East?

2.2. Theoretical framework

Over the past nearly 140 years, many sociologists, economists, and mathematicians have attempted to present in detail the theory of migration as a phenomenon. One of the most influential experts on this field was E.G. Ravenstein, who in 1885 elaborated the "laws of migration" theory, which is still valid today, and over time somewhat supplemented and adapted to the ever-changing security environment and technological development.

Ravenstein summarized basic findings in his study for example he found that the majority of migrants are at the age of 18 to 50 and male migrants are ready to cover long distances (Alexander and Steidl,5).

S.A. Stouffer, an American sociologist, was the one who created the “theory of mobility” (Faridi) in 1940, in which he overwrote the gravitational model (based on Newton’s theory of attraction) that supported/complemented Ravenstein’s theory. According to Stouffer, there is no necessary link between mobility and distance, and the more barriers there are, the smaller the number of migrants may be. In 1966, the American Everett Lee wrote a dissertation entitled “Theory of Migration” that can be interpreted as a comprehensive theory. In his study, Lee classifies the factors (also known as push and pull factors) (Faridi) that trigger migration into four groups. The four groups are: factors related to the starting point, factors related to the target area, intermediate factors, and finally personally motivated factors (Faridi).

In my analysis that deals with the relationship between conflicts in the Middle East and migration, Lee’s “Migration Theory” (i.e., “push and pull” factors) can be applied the best. Regarding migration from the Middle East, the groups of factors identified by Lee are valid both individually and collectively. The root causes include armed clashes and poor economic conditions, which are currently being observed in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and the Palestinian Territories. Among the personally motivated factors are several circumstances, all of which are valid for conflicts in the Middle East. The majority of Sunnis in Iraq were forced to become migrants not voluntarily but because of strong pressure (revenge campaign of the Shiite majority, who were oppressed for decades). The same is true of the Palestinians, who have gone through several exoduses in recent decades because of the policies of the Israeli government. The majority of Syrian refugees left the country because of the civil war, as well as for better living conditions in Europe. Thus, in this case, the push and pull factors worked together. Lee clearly describes in the study that migrants are perfectly aware of push factors, while they have only partial or superficial information about pull factors (*Significant Pull/Push*). The best examples are the Syrian refugees, who throughout the tumultuous journey hoped to be admitted immediately, to find jobs and to get a better life. In contrast, the reality was that a significant proportion of Syrian migrants reached only the neighboring countries. The only different thing was that there were no armed clashes around them.

In addition to the four groups of factors, Lee also developed three hypotheses (characteristics of migrants, scale of migration, and the ratio of outgoing and returning migrants), all of which can also be observed in the crises in Iraq and Syria. The evolution of the scale of migration in recent years has clearly interacted with the evolution of the conflicts

in Iraq and Syria. The changing intensity of the fighting also influenced the volume of migration. According to Lee, each outflow is followed by a backflow. The duration and the scale of migration depend on how the security situation changes at the starting point. At the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, for example, there was a strong influx of Iraqis migrants back to Iraq. Refugees have returned even though there were limited improvements in their home country.

There is another approach to apply Lee' theory.

The traditional theoretical frameworks (originating mainly from the pioneering work of E. Lee) focus mainly on push and pull factors of the 'rational world' of rational thinking. Lee has already stressed, that some of the push and pull factors are emotional, but at that stage, in the pre-ISIS (Islamic State) war era the range of these emotional factors was much narrower, than during the ISIS war and the post-ISIS era. The number of the push and pull factors of the traditional framework is quite large and based on four cornerstones (positive and negative effects):

On the push factor side, the 1) uncertainty or even the fear of finding work at home, violation of human rights, social conflicts, war, instability, religious conflicts etc. 2) On the positive side (reasons to stay at home) the familiar environment, living conditions, secure family background, the use of native tongue, familiar local traditions, and customs.

On the pull factor side these models calculate the 3) uncertainties of the decision to migrate: costs of traveling to the new destination and the first steps in the new world, transport to the spot, uncertainty of a possible workplace, accommodation, cost of living; change of social status (positive or negative), the fear of alienation, of unfamiliar environment, language use; different social norms etc. Furthermore 4) on the positive side (the hope of): higher wages, status, and standard of living, better existential environment, education etc.

The "Arab Spring", the evolving civil war in Syria and the war against the ISIS in Syria and Iraq opened a new era, and the pull and push factors of the characteristically 'peace time' framework were replaced or complemented by another, mostly 'war time' logic.

It became quite clear that in this new model – applied characteristically to the Muslim world – the list of the push factors should be complemented by several 'emotional decisions', which could be classified as 'irrational' from the Western, 'enlightened' point of view. These 'irrational' or 'emotional' factors contributed a lot to both the refugee and migration crisis triggered by the civil war, sectarian war, and the war with the ISIS.

In the motivating factors of Muslim terrorists, there are a lot of ‘emotional’ factors (could easily be considered ‘irrational’ from the Western point of view) based on religious beliefs and traditions (e.g., the promise of the eternal life in the Heavens if someone offers his/her life for his belief). These religious factors play a role in the refugee/migration conflict as well (the Sunni contra Shiite, contra Yezidi or Christian). Yezidis and Christians could be enslaved by the warriors of the ISIS. The fear of being enslaved, or to be killed by the ISIS because of sexual orientation (homosexuality) opened a new file in the traditional framework of push and pull factors, which have already contained the general category of the violation of human rights.

Such an ‘emotional’ factor (which plays a role in the rational, reasoning strategy as well) was the paramount role of the family/clan/tribal networks, which form the basic texture of these Muslim societies (which phenomenon has almost entirely been extinct from the Western societies) and provided a safe background for the individual. It has to be mentioned that such family networks help the refugees/migrants in the receiving country as well, since the strategy of sending one of the family members in every generation to the “West” is an old phenomenon.

The push and pull factors of the traditional models obviously do not apply to Muslim women on their own, since the Muslim women – in a consequence of their social status – hardly move on their own, and hardly make independent decisions on their own. This phenomenon is illustrated in the statistics of the registered refugees/migrants, where the young males form the overwhelming majority of the people on move.

So, we need a new synthesis, which combines the ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ (emotional) push and pull factors, adapted to the wartime scenario and the Muslim cultural characteristics in Syria and Iraq, but this synthesis exceeds the limits of this study.

Overall, the theory developed by Everett Lee in 1966 is fully valid even today and can be perfectly applied to illustrate the relationship between conflict and migration.

2.3. Literature review

The literature review will be based on primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are UN surveys (UNHRC, UNRWA), World Bank analyses, IOM papers and reports of international (and non-governmental) organizations. I use a great amount of data from different sources to support my findings. Secondary sources are mainly researcher analyses, theoretical works, reports, articles, published books.

3. Security challenges in the 21st century

The security challenges facing the world today are far more complex and interrelated than at any point in our history. Evidence suggests that as intergroup and interpersonal conflict has begun to recede, there has been a corresponding escalation of other, less understood known threats including threats to the natural, economic, and social systems we have developed upon which society depends (Pierce et al., 2). The security landscape is getting more complex, driven by non-conventional challenges, like Islam-related terrorism, hybrid activity, cyber threat, climate change, pandemics, migration, or water/food insecurity. To analyze these issues in detail is beyond the framework of dissertation but I consider it important to address some of them.

Terrorism has many definitions, but the most widely accepted explanations are based on four factors: non-state actors use or threaten to commit violence against innocent people for political purposes (Stuurman). From the different forms of terrorism (nationalist-separatist, right-wing, left wing, religious, etc.) the most serious one that has significant impact on our security is the Islam-related terrorism.

Cyber threats often have additional goals such as influencing political and governmental outcomes and events, damaging the reputation of a company or a person, and stealing product designs and patents (Hopland). In our globalized world, the possibility of cyber-attack is increasing because of the rapidly developing information technology. The overall development of information networks provides an opportunity for secret services to counter national security interests in the country, organized crime groups to seek financial gain, terrorist organizations to influence and intimidate society, and access to economic, government, and military systems (James, 8).

Hybrid attack is defined as a complex operation where one party uses different traditional (e.g., economic sanctions, military threat) and non-traditional (e.g., influencing public opinion through social media, cyberattacks against the other party's IT or energy system) procedures simultaneously, in a coordinated manner, for a common purpose (Weissmann et. al, 48).

The perpetrator's aim to identify and exploit the weaknesses of the target country, to paralyze the decision-making process, to gain influence over economic and social system and to control the information environment,

Certain infectious diseases are considered a security challenge because the disease can reach any country within days in the globalized world. According to the World Health Organization, many more people die due to epidemic diseases than terrorist acts or wars (*Ten threats to global health*).

The COVID 19 pandemic is a good example to show how serious effect can have a disease on the globalized world.

Only 2.5% of water resources on the planet are drinkable freshwater (Mishra and Dubey, 366). There are states that lack fresh drinking water, and unfortunately, it will only worsen in the future. Wars between the states could break out to control the water resources. Climate change poses a severe threat to the peace and security of the world because desertification, durable drought, water shortages, floods, and food problems cause border disputes, irregular migration, and wars between countries.

The dissertation's central issue the migration is addressed in the 4th paragraph.

4. Migration

It is essential to distinguish between forced migration and voluntary migration. The former usually happens when there are war and persecution, and the latter occurs when an individual or group decides to seek better material conditions (Carling and Talleraas,13).

4.1. Definition and historical background of migration

One of the most prominent global security risks of the 21st century is migration. Migration, whether cross-border or within a country, affects millions. International migration is a long existing phenomenon with many historical stages and turning points. Disintegration of the middle age societies and accompanied changes such as renaissance, commercial revolution, colonization, agricultural revolutions, industrial revolution, emergence of free market societies, modern education, and technological advancement are some prominent

factors which have contributed to the growth of international migration. (Wimalaratana,13.) In the last decades, globalization has further enhanced migration, mainly through revolutionary changes in information technology. Economic organizations like the European Union (EU) have opened the gates of international migration in their member countries. International conventions on migrants, peaceful environment in many parts of the world, encouragement of skilled and professional labour migration, and modern low-cost communication facilities have become major incentives for international migration. Natural disasters and man-made disasters such as wars, conflicts and deteriorating political environments at present further contribute to migration (Wimalaratana,14.).

The definition of migration: An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons ("Who is a migrant").

The word migration is of Latin origin, which has several meanings, including "relocation," "change," "settling," "moving" ("Definition of Migration"). Population movements between different areas of the world have always existed. The cause could have been overpopulation, armed conflicts, difficult economic situation, climate change, lack of food, or epidemics.

Ancient civilizations in the Near East, in times when the carrying capacity of an area is exceeded by the population of a given community living there, a stress effect emerges that typically triggers definite (violent) responses. Such response may be population movement (the settlement of Akkadians in Sumer, the migration of Hebrew tribes to Canaan, or population movements in the Migration Period), conquest (Assyrian Empire) or colonization (ancient Greek colonization), all resulting in conflicts with neighboring societies (Dezső, 5). The modern version of this is reflected in the principle elaborated by Huntington, who argued that in societies where the share of male population aged 15–25 (predominantly at the age of mandatory military service) approaches 20%, a revolution, uprising or war, i.e., an armed conflict, can be foreseen. According to Huntington, examples include the conflict in Chechnya and the Iranian Islamic revolution (1979), but many analysts similarly see the Iraq-Iran war (1980–1988) as a tool for 'addressing' the problem of excess population. (Dezső, 6) Based on some estimates, the latter war resulted in the death of 800,000 Iranian and 400,000 Iraqi soldiers (Dezső, 6.). There is no doubt that if we examine the 2011 demographic situation of the Arab countries affected by the revolutionary events of the "Arab Spring", the results will conform to Huntington's theory. This series of events – the world's first semi-spontaneous experimental revolution organized online – logically mobilized these social groups, and especially young

men who have little chance, for instance, to get a job, to establish their first relationship, and to start a family. They were the ones who took the streets, and those leaving for Europe during the migration crisis also came from this segment. (Dezső, 6.)

The process of migration cannot be stopped but need to place within definite bounds due to their irregular and cultural characteristics not to cause severe internal crisis in the target countries.

4.2. Causes of migration in the Middle East

The migration in the region has three interrelated patterns (*Regional Strategy*, 11) The first one is forced migration and internal displacement, which is originating from a crisis in the area. The second one is mixed migration caused by many factors such as economic, political, social, and other factors directed to Europe. The third one is labor migration, both regular and irregular within and from the region (*Regional Strategy*, 11).

The migration crisis suffered by Europe was primarily caused by the social and economic tensions prevailing in the Muslim world from the Middle East through the Near East to the Maghreb (North Africa), i.e., from Tajikistan to Morocco. This crisis manifested in the dramatic events of the ‘Arab Spring’, the Syrian civil war (Sunni-Shiite conflict), the emergence of the Islamic State, the outbreak of the migration crisis, and the ‘never-ending’ war in Afghanistan (Dezső, 5).

There are many reasons behind the irregular migration originating from the Middle East. The most important reasons are as follows.

The lack of social and economic development can be one of the factors why migration happens. There are many regions where social development is unbalanced. The Human Development Index looks at the performance of other country's health, education, and economy (Castelli, 3). In the developing countries, most of the jobs are still in the private sector, with a small salary but social protection. Therefore, people feel the need to search for better jobs elsewhere. Poor education and the economic sector are due to the vulnerability of the health, education, and productive systems because of the absence of a good economy and human resources (Castelli, 3). Due to poor state of healthcare, many qualified professionals have been driven away to places where there is balance in the health sector and economy (Castelli, 3).

Migration's most significant motivating factors are inadequate health services, lack of education and poverty,

Climate is becoming increasingly warmer, causing health inequalities all around the world (Castelli, 4). Climate change results in declining water supply, reduced agricultural yields, health impacts in cities due to heat, flooding, etc. These effects force people to search for a less hostile environment. Land degradation caused by climate change is a common reason people migrate due to its secondary effect on food insecurity and negative health impacts. According to the IOM, environmental migrants are *"persons or groups who, for the reason of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their homes, or choose to do, so either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad. (Castelli, 4)"* International law does not currently recognize the concept of climate refugees. Asylum only recognizes refugees from war or persecution, although IOM believes it would be necessary to introduce some protected status for those who migrate for environmental reasons (Laczko and Aghazarm).

The Middle East is one of the weakest regions in the world with freshwater resources. The climate will become even warmer and drier, projected to cause water shortage and waves of emigration over the next 25 years. Within the Middle East, water scarcity is currently the worst in the Arabian Peninsula. Yet, Saudi Arabia did not take the first steps to address water problems until 2013, while the country needs more and more water due to its growing population. According to Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, ruler of Abu Dhabi, "water is more important to us than oil" ("Iraqi politicians").

In the Middle East, among other factors, climate change-related water scarcity is the leading cause of long-term problems. The infrastructure in the region is relatively well developed, but it has the least amount of water compared to the need. The situation is steadily deteriorating. The World Bank estimates that without more efficient water management methods, the amount of water per capita will fall by an average of at least 50% by 2050, with severe social and economic consequences ("Understanding poverty").

Water resources are becoming increasingly scarce in the Middle East, and this region is one of the most water-scarce regions globally. Due to the rising population, there will be an increased demand for international rivers (Abbott and Stivachtis, 9) The central water resource in the Middle East is rivers that cross more than one country (Abbott and Stivachtis, 9). Egypt, Sudan, Syria, and Turkey (which represent 60% of the region's population) will depend on the Nile, Euphrates, and Tigris rivers (Abbott and Stivachtis,9) With the population increasing, the

local water sources will be not enough to supply the growing population. In the future, there could be conflicts due to this and to the failed access to water sources by 2100 (Vidal).

Armed conflicts are the most significant cause of migration in the Middle East. The civil war in Syria has forced two million people to migrate to safer regions in 2012. The Assad's regime's policy and the remnants of the still existing Islamic State derive people from rebuilding the country under peaceful circumstances. The number of people who migrated has grown to 6.6 million by the end of 2015 (*Conflict in Syria*). Since the breakout of the conflict, Syria is one of the leading countries of origin of refugees worldwide (Dorai).

Syria is one of the tensest regions which absorbed international political attention. The current wars in the region have displaced more than half the population; about 11 million Syrians have left their homes by the end of 2016 (Bahout et al., 3) and since the U.S. government began waging war against the Islamic State in 2014 7.1 million Syrians (37%) are internally displaced (Vine).

Iraq suffers from Shia and Sunni rivalry tossed by the violence of the Islamic State (ISIS/DAESH) terrorist organization. The number of internally displaced people in Iraq – since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and occupation and the post-2014 war against the Islamic State – hit 9.2 million in 2020 (Vine). The displacement in Iraq is not new due to the Saddam Hussein regime common policy for forcing people to move to other part of the country. By the time of the U.S-led invasion in 2003, 1 million people were internally displaced, and 400,000 refugees fled to other countries.

4.2.1. Relationship between overpopulation and migration

Due to a population boom over the past 63 years, the Muslim world has suffered severe social crisis that led to the "Arab Spring" explosion, to the Syrian Civil War, the appearance of the Islamic State, and indirectly to the migration crisis.

The demographic trend further continues and will cause a more severe crisis. The forecast background is primarily the vast population explosion that radically changed the demographic image of the Arab world. Based on the data from the United Nations (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division), the population of the 28 Muslim states of the examined regions (Middle East, Near East and the Maghreb region) (Dezsó, 5).

The demographic explosion fundamentally influences the future of this group including the Middle East. According to UN data (from the *Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division*), we can see a massive growth in the total population of 28 states in the analyzed regions over the past 63 years, from 193,416,897 in 1955 to 879,038,864 in 2018. This average population growth of 454% found the countries of these regions unprepared. This demographic stress effect is one of the most important social tensions – perhaps even the most prominent one – that led to the above events from the year 2012 on (Dezső, 6).

This process is still ongoing. Population growth continues in the already stressed three regions also responsible for sending millions of emigrants. According to UN forecast (from the *Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division*), the total population of the three regions will grow to 1,282,578,210 between 2020 and 2050 (medium scenario) (Dezső,6). This further growth of 403,539,346 will exacerbate the already severe challenges faced by the three Muslim regions – and, unfortunately, will cause troubles for Europe as well (Dezső, 7).

This additional explosive growth will mean an unbearable burden on the Muslim states of the regions concerned, triggering further emigration waves.

The following table (Figure number 2) (Dezső, 6) shows 12 Muslim countries' data between 1955 and 2018. During that period, the population of these countries quadrupled. The column for 2017-2018 shows how much the demographic growth was in analyzed countries (in percentage and figures) in one year.

Country	1955	2018	1955-2018		2017-2018	
			(growth)		(growth)	
Afghanistan	8 270 581	36 373 176	439%	28 102 595	2,37%	843 095
Pakistan	40 424 296	200 813 818	496%	160 389 522	1,93%	3 797 863
Iran	19 293 999	82 011 735	425%	62 717 736	1,05%	848 947
Iraq	6 502 657	39 339 753	605%	32 837 096	2,78%	1 065 135
Syria	3 911 501	21 018 834	537%	17 107 333	2,82%	544 845
Saudi-Arabia	3 558 155	33 554 343	943%	29 996 188	1,87%	616 130
Yemen	4 767 587	28 915 284	606%	24 147 697	2,35%	644 864
Turkey	24 270 585	81 916 871	377%	57 646 286	1,45%	1 171 851
Egypt	23 553 384	99 375 741	422%	75 852 357	1,87%	1 822 590
Sudan	6 549 298	41 511 526	633%	34 962 288	2,41%	978 196
Algeria	9 829 719	42 008 054	427%	32 178 335	1,67%	689 912
Morocco	10 502 666	36 191 805	344%	25 689 139	1,27%	452 225

Figure 1 - Muslim countries' data between 1955 and 2018 (Dezső,5)

The Figure number 2 shows the three regions in the Muslim and the study presents the population growth - based on actual trends - up until 2050. The table presents that the population living in the three regions of the Muslim world grew from 193 million (1955) to 879 million by 2018 and will increase nearly 1.3 billion by 2050 (Dezső, 5).

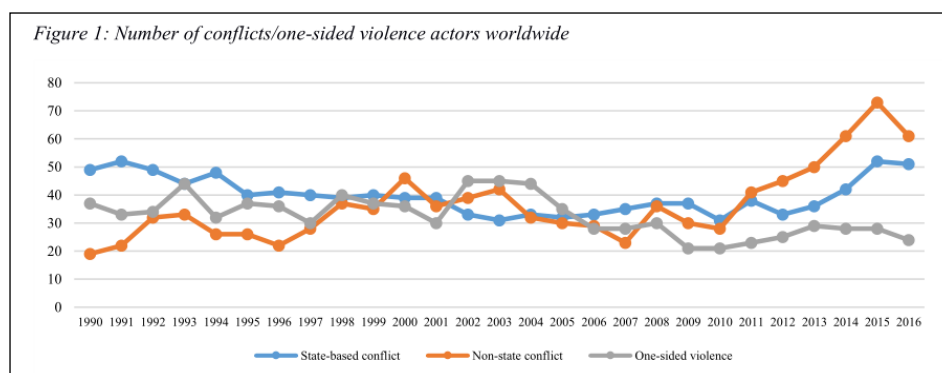
Region	1955	2018	2050
Near East	89 870 570	478 120 358	722 557 421
Middle East	47 952 374	163 701 250	201 097 436
North Africa	55 593 953	237 217 256	358 923 353
Overall	193 416 897	879 038 864	1 282 578 210

Figure 2 - Population growth between 1955-2050 (Dezső, 5)

In summary, based on the examination of the past 63 years the demographic explosion in the Muslim world can be considered dramatic and in the mirror of the ongoing conflicts, it can have further dramatic consequences. The 400-600% population growth creates difficult situation that can be manifested in new conflicts and new migration waves both locally and regionally.

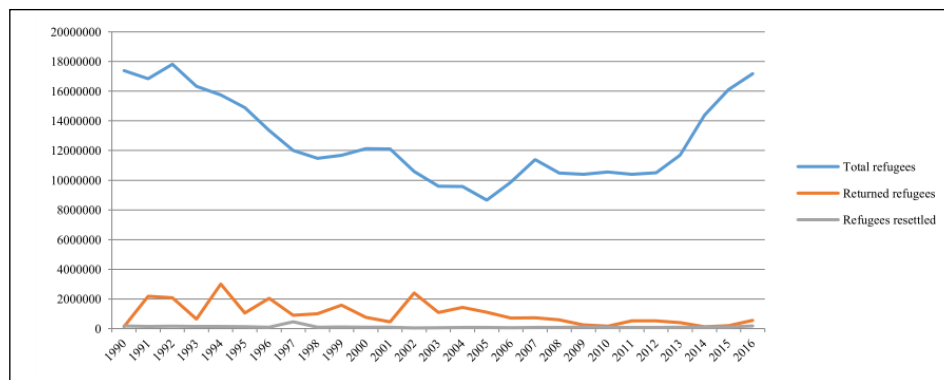
4.2.2. Link between armed conflicts and migration

Even without significant research, it can be concluded that there is a significant link between migration and armed conflict. This fact may not be disputed by anyone, especially if we consider the conflicts in the Middle East in recent years and the mass migration to Europe. Examining migration and armed clashes over a longer period also provides a similar picture. The number of conflicts and the number of victims and organized violence has fluctuated over



the last 25 years. Experts have pointed out that the relatively consolidated situation after the end of the Cold War has increased again since 2010, particularly the number of "non-state conflicts" and "state-based conflicts" as shown in the chart (Bradley, 4).

Conflict-generated migration has also been increasing since 2010 and is slowly reaching the levels of the 1990s period. Most of these were internally displaced persons (IDPs), while the number of cross-border migrants remained relatively stable.



In 2016, 55% of the refugees came from only three countries: Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan (*Trends at a Glance*). However, most of these refugees sought asylum within national borders, meaning that only some of them crossed international borders. The problem of migration is exacerbated by the fact that permanent emigration is becoming more and more common. In 2014, almost a third of refugees had been away from their original place of residence for more than ten years (Palestinian refugees are a perfect example of this). Only a small percentage of refugees return to their country of origin each year, but the number of persons resettled in third countries is negligible.

Although emigration is primarily aimed at preserving life and livelihood, it does not guarantee security and sustainability. Displaced people tend to generate and take on additional risks and vulnerabilities because they pose significant threats to their security at any time of emigration, and their livelihoods are not necessarily guaranteed.

The relationship between armed conflict and migration is therefore evident, but it is rather complex. Although violence that threatens people's lives and livelihoods encourages migration, two equally violent conflicts do not always have the same effect or same degree of emigration. Ultimately, migration is always the individual's decision, and therefore there are

many other factors involved, not just violence. In addition to external influences, such as the political, economic, social, demographic, environmental conditions of violence and the individual's place of birth, personal attitudes to migration also play an essential role. Social relations, religion and ethnicity, age, gender, education, current health status, and language skills are also important factors in emigrating (Castelli,3).

In addition to the link between migration and violence, it is also worth investigating other external factors. In addition to directly triggering a decision by threatening the individual's physical security, violence can also have the same effect indirectly through the degradation of the economic situation, social relations, and political institutions. Furthermore, people and different social groups perceive threats to their security and livelihood in different ways. This could result in different migration effects across regions.

For decades, the Middle East has been the scene of significant migratory movements (it is enough to think of the Palestinian masses that have migrated since 1948). The countries in the region are almost continually confronted (not only armed) with the factors that trigger migration, including religious and ethnic differences, political instability, economic problems, and social inequality. All this results in the temporary or permanent migration of refugees, so the decision to become a refugee is not solely caused by armed conflict. Furthermore, the emigration of people living in the region's states is not the result of a single factor; it results from the totality of various factors, in many cases interdependent relations.

In addition to the social, economic, and political components, individuals suffer from resource scarcity (water resources, cropland, pastures), impoverishment, famine, livelihood difficulties, the resulting armed conflicts due to climate change and large-scale population growth, as well as the persisting social and political instability caused by these, or the immediate threat to their security resulting from terrorism, among the social, economic, and political components of the population.

Examining the conflicts in the Middle East, this is mostly a chain process, at the end of which, in most cases, the armed conflict results in the decision to emigrate. Still, in many cases, the individual leaves his / her birthplace earlier in the process.

In addition to the development of armed conflicts in the Middle East, the following factors play an essential role.

The region is one of the weakest regions in the world with freshwater resources. Almost every country in the region already has a volume of water below the safe level of 1000

m³/person/year. The 33 countries most affected by the water scarcity drawn up by the World Resources Institute include 14 countries in the Middle East, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iran, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates. (Maddocks et al.) As a result of climate change, the climate will become even warmer and drier, which is predicted to cause water poverty and emigration in the next 25 years.

The link between climate change and large-scale population growth, and regular armed conflicts can also be seen in the Middle East, especially in the Syrian, Iraqi, Yemeni, and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Migration to rich, oil-producing Arab countries has been widespread in the past, but they employ non-Arab workers¹ (such as South Asian, the Philippines) rather than Arab workers, fearing easier social integration of migrants of Arab descent.

Another important reason for migration to the Middle East is dramatic population growth, which was the highest in the world (as it was elaborated in the previous section), fundamentally changing the region's image.

An important factor is that the number of women in the area is significantly lower than that of men. Fertility rates are still above three² in some countries in the region, but the decline in the average number of children is spectacular, especially in the Gulf countries. Due to previous trends, the proportion of young people within the population is high, with an average age of 20-25 years. (Maddocks et al.) In the case of the young population, the tendency to move is much higher, especially without a vision and job opportunities, in a hopeless economic and political situation. Rapid population growth places a heavy burden on providing adequate free public education, especially in rural areas. Although the proportion of participants in technical training is significant, the quality and practical value of education is not very high according to (employer) experience. This stress effect is an important, if not the main, reason for the social tensions that also played a significant role in the events starting in 2011.

The religious and ethnic diversity of the population also contributes to the potential conflicts of the region and is expected to develop in the future and is therefore also a cause of migration. The region is currently characterized by an almost impenetrable set of conflicts

¹ Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, the Gulf countries have not received any Syrian refugees, they have been more involved in tackling the refugee problem with regular financial support, although these resources are also declining due to the fall in oil prices.

² Iraq 4.64, Yemen 4.35, Jordan 3.51, Israel 3.05, Syria 3.03. According to the UN population forecast, the population of Iraq could increase from the current 36 million to 83 million and Syria's population from 18 million to 34 million by 2050.

between different religious and political groups and forces, including external actors (US, EU, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Israel) and internal actors (Shiite and Sunni groups, Kurds).

Due to the above challenges, the countries in the region face significant internal political risks. Two countries stand out, Lebanon, which is on the brink of political and economic collapse, and Iraq, where ethnic and religious tensions remain unchanged after years of armed conflict. Syria is similarly characterized, where the regime continues to regain control of the country. Still, the fight has not ended, as well as Yemen, with a civil war in the country that is partly religious in color. An increase in instability in these countries could lead to another wave of refugees, even if the individual is not directly threatened by physical violence.

Thus, many challenges in the region result in migration (armed conflicts, economic problems, population growth, climate change, water scarcity, religious-ethnic differences). Still, it is important for decision-making that they affect emigration differently (to different degrees and at different rates). Armed struggles, terrorist attacks, or even natural disasters that directly threaten human life can trigger an immediate response from citizens and force emigration, ignoring other factors. Economic, social, or even religious issues are much more part of a slow process that can take years, and those in need are not always directly and immediately affected. As a result, they do not emigrate in most cases but hope for positive change that will make them feel more secure about their existing problems. This has been the case in many conflicts in the Middle East, including in Syria, where, with the spread of fighting, population migration has started mostly in the areas affected by the clashes.

5. Armed conflicts in the Middle East

The Middle East is one of the most conflict-affected regions in the world. In the early 1990s, a French war correspondent on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti front line described the entire area as a massive powder keg surrounded by continuously burning matchsticks. This short, simple sentence is an extremely accurate reflection of the incredible tension that is constantly present in the Middle East.

Since the end of the Second World War, in the last 80 years, there has been no decade in the region of not at least one (but in many cases even more) conflict with major civilian victims, internal and external refugee flows, genocide, regime changes, exchanges of territory and the need for diplomatic and military intervention by the international community. Israel

has waged eight wars with Arab states and Arab armed organizations/militias (including interventions against the Palestinian organization Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the 33-day war in 2006 against the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah militia). In addition, the Palestinians launched two popular uprisings (Intifada) against Israel, the second of which was a long series of terrorist attacks against Israeli targets that lasted for years. There have also been three Gulf Wars (The Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, the 1991 U.S.-led coalition intervention to liberate Kuwait, and the 2003 US-led international coalition operation in Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime). For years there have been civil wars in Lebanon and Syria. However, the ongoing conflict in Syria cannot be clearly described as a civil war. Unlike the West, the Syrian regime has consistently classified it as a fight against terrorism. This includes the ongoing US-led international coalition against ISIL/DAESH in Iraq and Syria. These last two conflicts are responsible for one of the largest internal and external waves of refugees today, which has significantly influenced and continues to affect and burden the countries of the region and the European Union. Even the Yemeni conflict has been going on for almost two decades and is somewhat ignored by the international community. In addition to all this, it should not be overlooked that the Arab Spring has also impacted the region's security, but not to the same extent as in the North African region. There have been countless military interventions against the Kurdish minority in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran, some of which have received almost no media coverage. Finally, it should be noted that for many years we have also witnessed a Cold War process in the region, which is taking place at the same time between Iran and the Arab countries, as well as between Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, for the position of a middle power in the region.

5.1. Syria

The foundations of the current conflict in Syria dates back to the 2011 Arab Spring. For decades, the Syrian regime belonged to the Alawites³ minority, maintained peace, and ensured

³ It is a branch of the Shiite branch of the Islamic religion. The sect was traditionally founded by a Muslim teacher named Ibn Nuzair in the 9th century. Most of them live in Syria, in the western, coastal areas of the country, their most important cities are Latakia and Tartus. Before the Civil War, 2.6 million Alawites lived in Syria.

the country's stability⁴ between many ethnic groups and religious denominations⁵ by force or mutual interests. This was helped by the society - especially the urban middle class -who supported the regime and were not receptive to religious extremism. This is why extremist Salafist⁶ groups have not radicalized or mobilized large masses of the population.⁷

Anti-government demonstrations began in Damascus on March 15, 2011. However, the protests did not threaten the stability of the country and the regime for some time, as the demonstrations took place mainly on Fridays and in connection with funerals and were present only in the border areas of the country, in some of the areas belonging to the Sunni religious denomination and the Kurdish ethnicity. In the capital and in Aleppo, the second-largest city in Syria, there have for some time been no anti-government mass demonstrations. However, taking advantage of peaceful protests, the Salafists eventually carried out armed attacks against law enforcement agencies. This provided an excuse for the government to act violently against population movements as well. In the summer of 2011, a new trend was that the population protests spread from the country's southern parts to the western and northern regions. In the region neighboring Iraq, the number of affected areas has increased. For a long time, opposition forces were unable to take control of any part of the country. The units assigned to army duties have increasingly used tanks, anti-government vehicles, artillery, and naval equipment to clean up the areas that were the centers of anti-government protests.

As early as 2011, there was strong international pressure on the Syrian leadership to start a political dialogue and end the violent repression of popular movements. The United States and EU member states have put several leaders of the regime on a sanctions list and banned their entry, imposed an embargo on Syrian oil and petroleum products, and several countries have suspended diplomatic relations with Syria.

In the second half of 2011, the regime expected that the number of people attending the demonstrations would not increase significantly. The regime hoped that protests would not

⁴ Ethnic composition of the 22 million population: 85% Arab, 10% Kurdish, 5% other. Religious distribution: 70% Sunni, 12% Alawites (closer to Shiite Islam), 10% Christian and 8% Druze (evolved from the Shiite branch of Islam). In addition to the above, about 500,000 Palestinian refugees (Sunni and Christian) and a small Jewish community live in the country.

⁵ At least one-third of those belonging to the Sunni religious denomination also supported the government, and despite the violent repression of protests, about half now hold a neutral stance.

⁶ It belongs to the Sunni branch of the Islamic religion, primarily fighting Western influence and modernization, and fighting for a return to the roots of the Islamic faith.

⁷ The protests are mainly attended by deeply religious Sunnis living in the countryside and in poverty, who, because of their religious beliefs and hopeless situation, can be tuned against the government by imams with extreme views.

spread to the country's central region, and law enforcement organizations remain loyal to power. Therefore, the government did not take substantive measures affecting the foundations of the system to address public dissatisfaction. However, violence against demonstrators continued. By 2012, the Syrian leadership managed to avoid local anti-government public demonstrations grow to nationwide popular movement. The army isolated the hotspots of resistance and launched research and killing operations against opposition political leaders and militants but failed to eliminate them. President Assad has lost his credibility both abroad and domestically due to violent government actions against the population.

By the first half of 2012, fierce clashes between the opposition and government forces escalated. The protests spread to several parts of the country and turned into an armed struggle to overthrow the system. The regime tried to eliminate the resistant groups that fought in isolation without the central leadership by deploying military forces. In addition, the Assad regime tried to divide the opposition with political means. On April 12, a ceasefire agreement came into force between the armed fighting groups and the government forces. The agreement is part of a six-point⁸ settlement plan elaborated by Kofi Annan and was supported by the UN Security Council (UN Security Council). Despite President Assad's acceptance of the document, the army did not withdraw its heavy weapons from the populated areas.

To ensure compliance with the ceasefire agreement, on April 14, the UNSC decided to send an unarmed observer group of 30 persons to Syria and, on April 21, enlarged the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS). After the ceasefire came into force, the number of acts of violence decreased, but the clashes did not end completely. The subunits of the army continued their operations with less intensity in the provinces of Deraa, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, and Idlib. In the settlements patrolled by UN observers, subunits of the army carried out actions to intimidate the population in several cases after their departure. Opposition armed groups and government forces have repeatedly violated the ceasefire agreement. From the second half of April, compared to the previous period, the number of attacks including elements of asymmetric warfare increased, for which the government blamed groups linked to Al-Qaeda. In 2011, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, urged Muslims in the surrounding countries to support the opposition. In Syria, armed groups with radical agenda

⁸ In addition to the immediate cessation of violence, the document includes political dialogue between the parties, the withdrawal of Syrian troops from populated areas, the unimpeded provision of humanitarian aid, the release of prisoners and the free movement of journalists.

emerged in early 2012, taking advantage of the tense security situation to increase their influence through their attacks.

On July 17, the Syrian Free Army's armed forces launched a coordinated operation against the security forces in Damascus. Violent clashes took place in Damascus Tadamon, Kadam, Hajar-al-Aswad, Barzeh, and Midan. For the first time in 16 months of the crisis, the opposition was able to launch a coordinated simultaneous attack in several districts of the country, including the inner districts of Damascus.

To displace opposition forces, artillery, tank formations, and helicopters were deployed. In parallel with the operations launched in the capital, the opposition attacked the government forces in Aleppo. It temporarily took control of several border crossings on the joint border section with Turkey and Iraq. To strengthen the government forces, the military leadership also commanded forces from units stationed on the Golan Heights to the area of clashes. Due to the increase in the capacity of the opposition groups, army was forced to take stronger action and even applied the previously unused air force. The increase in the strength of the opposition was due to arms shipments from Arab countries (mainly Qatar and Saudi Arabia) and desertions from Syrian forces. The desertions that began in July 2011 did not affect the capabilities of the government forces for a long time. Still, by 2012 the number of soldiers turning away from the regime, including an increasing number of senior officers⁹, had reached a level that had already led to a noticeable decline in government forces.¹⁰ By the end of 2012, the crisis had escalated to the extent of a civil war. The number and intensity of clashes between government forces and opposition militants reached a level where the possibility of a political settlement was impossible. In 2014, there was a stalemate in the fourth year long Civil War because none of the opposing parties could land a decisive blow to the other side. At the same time, there were minimal changes in the balance of power on both the regime and the opposition side. The combat areas took place mainly along the Dara-Aleppo and Aleppo– Dair-ez-Zaur axes and the main supply routes. In 2014, the government forces controlled most territories in the country, the armed opposition groups (including Islamist organizations), and majority of the Kurds.

Opposition division remained unchanged in 2014 as rival radical Islamist and moderate opposition groups continued to attack each other's positions and government targets in the eastern part of the country bordering Iraq and in the northern and northeastern areas bordering

⁹ By July 25, 27 generals had deserted and joined the Syrian Free Army in Turkey.

¹⁰ Despite the fact that more and more senior officers are turning their backs on the Syrian regime, the majority of desertions continue to come from the lower-ranking Sunni population

Turkey. By 2014, the initial two-pole (regime and opposition) situation had changed, and with the emergence and expansion of the ISIL/DAESH¹¹, the conflict became threefold.¹²

Although the Russian military operations started on September 30, 2015, there was no significant shift in the protracted Syrian civil war towards the end of the crisis. The balance of power was balanced overall. None of the opposing parties could win; however, the stalemate between the regime and the opposition seemed to shift in March-April. Islamist opposition groups have been able to increase the size of the area under their control in several districts.

The political settlement of the crisis in 2015 remained hopeless, and the negotiations so far have yielded no results. The main reason for this is that the regime has maintained its power despite its declining support from external supporters (Russia, Iran, Hezbollah) due to economic problems. The military leadership could manage losses of executive personnel and military equipment through the redeployment of forces. The Russian airstrikes, mainly against opposition forces, and the Syrian forces land operations during the first half of 2016 eroded the resistance of anti-government forces in several areas. The Russian presence alone was able to consolidate President Assad's power while air force and military equipment subsidies stopped the erosion and loss of territory. Following the launch of the airstrikes, Syrian ground troops launched comprehensive operations in almost every province, mostly to crack down on opposition militants, while to a lesser extent to suppress ISIL / DAESH. In 2016, opposition groups/coalitions became increasingly radical and began to follow the ideology of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization. For the regime, the recapture of Idlib province and the liquidation of the Levantine Liberation Corps (HTS¹³) and the Islamist extremist organization became the number one priority.

From 2016 onwards, the regime gradually reclaimed 70-80% of the country with the effective support of the Russian, Iranian, Lebanese, Iraqi, Palestinian, and local Sunni militias, and successfully repressed most of the resilient forces/Islamist/terrorist groups into the territory of Idlib. Taking advantage of the instability in Syria, the Turkish government has launched three major and several smaller research and liquidation operations in the northern part of Syria in the last five years, in line with its own national security interests, to prevent the Kurdish

¹¹ Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Islamic State of Iraq and Sham. DAESH stands for the Arabic name of the organization.

¹² This definition is only valid for parties fighting within Syria, and the situation is significantly more complex, taking into account both external and non-state actors.

¹³ Hayat Tahrir as-Sham-An umbrella organization of at least 23 groups formed at the end of January, led by the Syrian Victory Front (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham - JFS, formerly the Nusra Front).

minority from seeking autonomy. The interventions of the Turkish army claimed that it was taking action against ISIL / DAESH, which was almost entirely untrue.

Simultaneously with the success of the Syrian government forces, the US-led international anti-ISIL/DAESH coalition also achieved significant success, which was fundamentally good for the regime as it had to focus on fewer fronts. Fighters from the Islamic State have been pushed back into the country's central desert and Iraqi border region but not completely eradicated. During the fight against terrorism, the US administration has found a partner in the Syrian Kurds, also known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) Kurdish-Arab armed militia. The primary goal was for the US military to gain a foothold in Syria. Everything was done to eradicate the ISIL/DAESH. However, the US support of the SDF is fundamentally contrary to the interests of the Turkish government. According to Turkey, most of the SDF consists of the Kurdish People's Defense Forces, equivalent to the Syrian wing of the Kurdish Labor Party (PKK), the number one enemy.

The settlement of the Syrian conflict is still pending due to conflicts of interest between external and internal actors. Due to the US sanctions in force, foreign investment is lagging. Iran and Russia are no longer able to provide as much financial support as years ago, so the country's reconstruction has not yet begun.

5.2. Iraq

The origin of the current conflict in Iraq dates back almost 20 years. The United States had just launched its intervention in Afghanistan in 2002 when the administration started to make extremely high-profile allegations against Iraq. Through the UN Security Council and the international media, the American leadership intended to prove that the Iraqi leadership possessed weapons of mass destruction, oppressed its population, and terrorist groups were present in the country. The recordings (on Iraqi mobile nerve gas laboratories) presented by former US Secretary of State Collin Powell to the public convinced the world that the United States is right and need to be supported. It is important to note that over the past 19 years, the US administration has failed to prove the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Powell was only partially right. Iraq had chemical weapons, but Saddam Hussein used them in several operations against its Kurdish population in the northern part. The Iraqi dictator of Sunni descent refused to make concessions to the Kurds, who took serious steps to establish independence. Designated subunits of the Iraqi army used combat gases against the civilian population, which was practically genocide.

Powell was also wrong to say that there were terrorist organizations in Iraq at that time that posed a threat to the United States of America, its interests in the Middle East, and the international community. Al-Qaeda was not present in Iraq in the early 2000s. There have been Shi'ite militant groups, but they were not, in fact, a threat even to Hussein's regime. Saddam's Republican Guard, which consisted of the most loyal soldiers and the most convincing Baath Party (government party) representatives, regularly carried out pogroms in Shiite areas.

Powell was only right about Hussein suppressing his people. Saddam Hussein, who came to power with a military coup in the late 70s, was a dictator for nearly thirty years in a country where the Shi'ites are the majority (60-65% of the total population), and there is a significant Kurdish minority (10-12%) ("The specter of secretarian"). Saddam and his family were notorious for their violent actions. In countless cases, people have been executed on the open street in front of the public.

By early 2003, the US administration had convinced the international community that the unsustainable situation in Iraq required military force to remove Saddam. The United States set up a coalition battlegroup in a relatively short period (initially made up of American, British, Australian, Polish, Dutch forces). On the part of the international community, France and Germany have also made strong criticisms of the allegations and the need for action. Despite all this, US President George Bush launched Operation Iraqi Freedom on March 20, 2003. Starting from Kuwait, U.S.-led coalition forces pushed forward from two directions and landed troops in the northern region in the Kurdish territories. Simultaneously with the ground movements, the coalition air force attacked strategic military targets (air defenses, command points, etc.), and Tomahawk-type maneuvering robotic aircraft were also deployed. At the start of the northern direction, the US military leadership was not fully aware of how the Kurds would react. However, the Iraqi Kurdish militants, the so-called peshmergas, showed no resistance and immediately joined the US forces. On the southern front, the land units advancing from both directions moved relatively quickly towards the capital. According to reports from the subunit commanders, the Iraqi force, which was reportedly one of the best equipped in the region, showed only very limited resistance. The biggest problem for US forces was the lengthening of logistics routes for which they were unprepared. After the coalition forces reached the capital, the Iraqi forces essentially dropped their weapons. Iraqi soldiers, including staff from the famous Republican Guard, left their army base, leaving everything behind. Saddam Hussein, who had consistently stated that he would be personally involved in the operations, left Baghdad. On May 1, 2003, the US president announced the end of hostilities

and consolidation. The US administration has appointed Paul Bremer as a "deputy" to head Iraq, who divided the country into four areas.

On the American side, it is now acknowledged that Bremer was completely unaware of Middle Eastern realities, religious conflicts, the peculiarities of tribal societies, the weight and influence of tribal and religious leaders in Iraq when setting the agenda for Iraq's reconstruction. As the first step in consolidation, Bremer "shattered" the country's political system and law enforcement sector, laying the foundations for a later conflict that still exists today. In the early years, several transitional and interim governments alternated, which could only achieve minor successes.

The rebuilding of the police sector started very slowly because all the organizational elements (forces, police, border guards) had to be created from the ground up. Bremer planned not to hire anyone from the old stock and then had to revise this idea because there were not enough applicants. Bremer's plan was that all religious denominations would be proportionally represented in the military, the police, and the border guards. Nevertheless, after the removal of Saddam, inter-ethnic tensions grew. As a result, purely Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish subunits were systematically formed. The Sunnis refused to serve in Shiite or Kurdish areas, while the Shiites refused to serve in Sunni and Kurdish areas, just as the Kurds refused to leave the northern part of the country. This significantly hindered the implementation of various operations in the country and negatively affected the forces' capability. There has also been an increasing incidence of corruption.

Simultaneously, with the country's reconstruction, the Shiite majority wanted revenge. With Iran's support, Shiite politicians and tribal leaders have taken steps to marginalize the Sunni minority. Although the new Iraqi constitution enshrined the rights and role of religious denominations in the country's political life, the Sunnis could hardly or at all represent their interests. In the northern part of the country, the Kurds set aside decades of controversy and merged into a seeming unity, forming the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Below the surface, however, tensions between the two dominant Kurdish parties, the Kurdish Patriotic Union (Taliban clan) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (Barzani clan), remained until they divided the Kurdish region among themselves. At the same time, conflicts between the Kurds and the Iraqi central government (disputed areas and the distribution of oil revenues) surfaced and intensified.

Despite the presence of international forces, Shiite militias also gained increasing influence, with the growing conflict between them leading to two Shiite uprisings in Iraq in 2004. The uprising was essentially a fight against coalition forces and between Shiite groups.

The marginalization of Sunnis contributed greatly to the emergence of Sunni extremism, resistance, and terrorism. The organization, now known as ISIL / DAESH, was established in Iraq in 2003. The organization has gradually taken control of more and more areas (mainly in the provinces of Anbar and Nineveh) and has taken full advantage of Iraq's transition, both militarily and politically. Between 2005 and 2007, the organization was extremely active in operations. The period of the organization's next transformation dates back to this period. Along with several other Sunni resistance groups, the Muzahid Surah Council was established, proclaiming the Islamic State of Iraq. In the following years, the organization became essentially known as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). It was then that part of Iraq's Shiite society, and the international community began to draw parallels between the armed Sunni tribes and the ISI, essentially stigmatizing the entire Sunni minority. The Sunni tribes were divided from the beginning regarding the IAQ and its later successor, the ISI. It was impossible to determine which cooperated, which condemned, and which accepted its presence. Tribes that did not adopt the ISI and the strict Qur'an and Sharia-based rules created self-defense units that gradually merged into the Armed Awakening Movement (AI), which was armed by the international community. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has grown in size and successfully pushed ISI back into the Iraqi-Syrian border region (a region almost not controlled at all by law enforcement agencies) that has evolved into an underground movement.

Following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the organization reactivated itself and became a player in the Syrian crisis, through which it was significantly strengthened. At the same time, following the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq in 2011, Shiites, with increasing power, pushed the Sunni population even further into the background and declared a kind of revenge campaign. The initial peaceful movements of the Sunnis gradually took on larger proportions over the months and became more violent. The ISI was initially only one of the driving forces behind the demonstrations, seeking to win over the population, and then began to support the protesters with weapons. The ISI has gained considerable influence in the Sunni areas, offered a solution to the oppressed, and expanded its ranks significantly. Taking advantage of the inertia of the Iraqi law enforcement sector, the political and religious divisions in Iraq, and the opportunity offered by the Syrian civil war, ISIL / DAESH has brought tens of thousands of square kilometers under its control in a relatively short period of time. The

terrorists used unprecedented violence and intimidation in their expansion. Following the proclamation of the caliphate in Mosul on June 29, 2014, Islamists took over the responsibilities of local authorities (including law enforcement agencies and municipalities) in areas under their control and occupied a significant portion of critical infrastructure facilities (grain storage facilities, power plants, oil facilities).

In the second half of 2014, the United States was forced to return to Iraq to fight ISIL / DAESH and form another international coalition to fight terrorism. At the same time, the Shiite armed militias united under the name of People's Movement Forces (Hashd al-Sha'bi) to protect Shiite areas and Shiite religious shrines. At the same time, Shiite armed groups took an oath of allegiance to the Iranian leadership, which contributed to the growth of Iranian influence in Iraq. Taking the opportunity, Shiite militias, under the guide of fighting ISIL / DAESH, have surrounded the Sunnis in the past seven years and have also appeared in areas that would have been almost unthinkable for nearly two decades. At the same time, Shiite militias have grown into indispensable players in the Iraqi political, economic, and law enforcement sectors with the support of the Iranian regime. In addition, the militias, initially cooperating with the coalition forces of the United States, have, over the years, become increasingly distant from the international forces under Iran's orders and have begun to act against them. As a result, the US administration has consistently classified former partners as terrorists. The US-led coalition forces have successfully repressed the ISIL/DAESH in Iraq in recent years but have also carried out destruction in the Sunni areas to the extent that was not the case during the 2003 intervention. In the central and western provinces of the country, cities, industrial infrastructure facilities have almost been destroyed, and the lives of Sunnis in the affected areas have become impossible. As a result, nearly three million people became homeless and forced into refugee camps.

5.3. Israeli-Palestinian opposition

The longest-running conflict in the Middle East (nearly eight decades) is the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation, which has resulted in a very significant number of refugees (two Palestinian exoduses) in neighboring countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria).

According to estimates, a significant portion of the Palestinian society lived in refugee camps for decades and is unlikely to return to the Palestinian territories, where the economic situation is gradually deteriorating, domestic tensions are rampant, the population is

rejuvenating, and unemployment is rising. The greatest losers in the establishment of the State of Israel have always been the Palestinians who have lost territories since 1948 (essentially forced into a 'reservation' by military force) and are still forced to renounce new territories which the government of Israel is legally or illegally expropriating. In addition to the interests of the Palestinians, a number of Arab countries have stood up, hosted leaders of Palestinian organizations, provided refugees, and provided financial support or even shelter to members of Palestinian terrorist organizations. Egypt and Jordan have repeatedly taken on mediator roles between Palestinian political groups, organizations, and Israel.

The first Palestinian exodus took place during and after the first Israeli-Arab war when 700,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes and settle in neighboring countries (Flapan,1). During the 1950s and 60s, there were further Israeli-Arab wars, the biggest losers of which were again the Palestinians. After the 1967 "Six-Day War," the second Palestinian exodus took place when hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees again left their homes. This was also the war that resulted in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank being placed under Israeli jurisdiction. Israeli forces withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, while the West Bank was divided into three zones with Israeli and Palestinian and a mixed control area.

Representatives of the international community, notably the United States, have come up with proposals called "Roadmap" to resolve the crisis, which have so far failed in all cases. The fundamental obstacle was always the status of Jerusalem and the disputed territories. In addition, according to Israel, the Palestinians were unable to speak with one voice and wanted to immediately enforce all their demands, which was unacceptable to the Israelis. The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis is almost impossible because the conflict itself is fundamentally beneficial to the opposing parties

5.4. Lebanon

Lebanon is one of the smallest but most densely populated countries in the Middle East region, host of all political and ideological trends in the region (*Lebanon country profile*). The peaceful functioning of the country was based on balance and tolerance between the various communities under the 1943 National Pact, which made it possible to establish independence. However, the balance between the sects was upset by the 1970s, mainly due to the arrival of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The Christian population, which controlled political and economic life, has since become a minority. Tensions between the Christian and Muslim sects

fluctuated, and conflicts have emerged within Muslim groups. The Palestinians and the leftist parties opposed the National Pact, and right-wing Christian forces tried to keep the previously acquired privileges of the Christian population.

The first armed clashes of the Civil War took place in the spring of 1975 between Palestinian militants and Christian militias. After its escalation, by 1976, state power had virtually collapsed. The northern part of the country was under the control of the invading Syrian troops, and control of the other territories was taken over by the military militias, which had full power in the areas under their control. Israel also intervened in the conflict with the support of right-wing Christian forces and aimed to destroy the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In the late 1970s, Shiite armed groups were strengthened with the support of Syrian and Iranian Islamic revolutionary forces, and primarily the influence of the Amal Movement increased. In 1982, with significant support from Iran, the Shiite Hezbollah extremist organization was formed, whose militia received significant weapons and support from the Shiite country. The militia was particularly active in suicide bombings and political assassinations.

At the end of 1983, international forces, and a year later Israeli forces, were withdrawn from Lebanon, and the rebuilding of central power began, over which Syria had significant influence. The three strongest militias, the Shiite Amal (led by Nabih Berri), the Christian Lebanese Forces (led by Samir Geagea), and the Druze Progressive Socialist Party (led by Walid Jumblatt), signed a three-party agreement in late 1985. However, President Gemayel and General Michel Aoun, the army commander-in-chief, disagreed because a further increase in Syrian influence accompanied it. The solution was finally reached by the Taif Agreement, drawn upon the proposal of the Arab League, and mentored by a committee set up with the involvement of Algeria, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia, which provided for the restoration of Lebanon's independence, the election of a president and the dissolution of armed militias. Two years have been set for implementing the agreement, with Syria being entrusted with its monitoring. Relations with Syria and Lebanon were enshrined in a separate bilateral agreement that virtually "made Syria a colony." However, the Shiites and Druze opposed the dissolution of the militias, and Aoun did not accept excessive Syrian influence.

The 15-year civil war had a significant impact on the country, with material damage over \$ 30 billion and a death toll of 150,000 (Slim and Trombetta,36). Approximately 500,000

people - mostly Christians - left the country, which significantly impacted religious denominations.

In 2006, Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah and General Michel Aoun signed a memorandum of understanding representing a strategic alliance between the two parties. As a result, Aoun had the opportunity to take the presidency, and Hezbollah had the opportunity to retain an armed militia. This alliance has a very strong influence on the political life of Lebanon, because not only has the Shi'ite militia maintained its weapons but has also acquired with Iranian assistance personnel better equipped than the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in many areas and with considerable experience of fighting thanks to their involvement in the Syrian civil war. Through Hezbollah's close ties with Iran, Iran's influence in Lebanon has grown significantly, and the country's sovereignty has declined.

Following the explosion in the port of Beirut on August 4, 2020, Prime Minister Hassan Diab and his Government resigned, and no government has been formed since then. The protracted formation of the government will further increase the country's chances of total economic collapse and total insolvency. As a result of hyperinflation, prices have risen by 400% in one year, resulting in more than 60% of the population living below the poverty line and 40% living in deep poverty. (Global Poverty) Given the almost complete depletion of foreign exchange reserves, it is doubtful how long the state aid system responsible for the import of basic foodstuffs, medicines, and fuel can be maintained. In the absence of political and economic accountability, corruption is flourishing by exploiting impunity, and "measures to curb corruption" have remained completely ineffective. Smuggling flourishes, most state-subsidized products are smuggled abroad or sold on the black market after repackaging.

The protracted Syrian crisis is also having a significant impact on the security situation in Lebanon. Some refugees have fled to Lebanon from armed clashes and the effects of the economic crisis. 1.5 million Syrians are a heavy burden on the already weak social services in Lebanon. ("Cherri et al.")

Hezbollah has been strengthened with significant Iranian support in recent years, its popularity has steadily grown, and it has become a major domestic political factor in Lebanon. Its survival needs to maintain an anti-Israel sentiment, which will allow the organization to effectively maintain its army and, through its armed force, demand special rights for itself in domestic political life.

The political elite is not interested in reforms that change the interests of the dominant political parties, and the smaller parties do not represent enough power, so they serve the interests of the big parties they support in the already proven allied system.

Even a new government that may be formed will only be able to move forward with the announced reforms for a while because the current domestic political environment and the existence of the Taif Agreement do not allow for the radical transformations necessary to achieve the goals. In the medium to long term, the current economic, political, and corruption problems will re-emerge.

The population will not support the new government because the parties will again appoint their members under the previous quota system, and the population no longer trusts the current political elite and parliament. Without the reforms being implemented, the country will not receive the international resources needed to survive, and the currency reserves will soon run out. It will be forced to abolish the aid for imports of fuel, medicines, and essential foodstuffs (proposed on several occasions by the central bank), which will lead to a further decline in the standard of living of the population. At the same time, the demonstrations of the population are powerless, and a large part of the population is tired of what seems to be a futile battle. (Bdeir)

At the same time, the demonstrations of the population are powerless, a large part of the population is tired of the struggle that seems to be futile, so those who can leave the country or use impunity find loopholes to make a living. It is worrying that the number of public law crimes against property is constantly rising, which was not typical in the country before.

The political stalemate raises further questions over time. Until the parliamentary elections in 2022, the Government and President Aoun, who will take over some of the governmental powers, will still be legally in control of the country; however, after the parliamentary elections, a parliamentary president will have to be elected, and President Aoun's term will expire. The election of the President and the Speaker of Parliament under the Taif Agreement should take place in a manner similar to the adoption of the new government, the successful conduct of which, given the current situation, can be almost completely ruled out. Postponing the elections could be a solution, which currently has no support.

The real winner of the situation is Hezbollah, which is interested in maintaining the current unstable political and economic situation until the future of Iran-US relations is clarified, the outcome of the fighting in Syria is not decided, and the position of President

Assad is not stabilized. If Hezbollah could "formally" take full control of the country and contribute to an Islamic state, based on Iran, the educated population would flee abroad, which would exacerbate the migration crisis and leave the remaining population freely dominated by the Iranian-Hezbollah coalition.

To form a government and embark on reforms, the international community, primarily Russia, the United States, France, China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, has also increased its pressure on Lebanese political leaders. Intensive negotiations are underway to achieve the formation of a government and the subsequent acquisition of economic positions. The most intensive political activity is currently carried out by Russia, which maintains growing ties with all three sects. The growing intensity of Russian assistance is driven by Russia's role in the crisis in Syria, providing the necessary support to serve the Syrian economy. The intensity of the political pressure exerted by France following the explosion in Beirut has decreased ("Beirut explosion").

5.5. Yemen

In the 70s and 80s, internal political tensions both in the north and in the south escalated, which in many cases led to clashes involving significant human casualties (Day,5). The once prosperous region began to decline.

The Yemeni government gradually isolated itself from the West in the late 1990s and early 2000s and did not act or prevent al Qaeda from appearing in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen. As a result of this and the 2008 assassination attempt on the US Embassy, US-Yemen ties have deteriorated. The US administration deployed military forces into the country and attacked AQAP positions with tactical drones for years. At the same time, the AQAP was proclaimed one of the most dangerous terrorist organizations in the world, which the US claimed was planning assassinations against international commercial aircraft.

Sunnis living in the southern part of the country and Shiites in the north, especially the Houthi Movement, initiated demonstrations to split. Against the Shiite Houthi Movement, the Yemeni government has launched several investigative-liquidation operations, all of which failed. By early 2011, demonstrations claiming human lives, armed clashes with the Houthi Movement, and the Hasid tribe had emerged as new actors, openly opposing the president. In

2015, the Shiite armed militia of the northern Houthi Movement detonated another civil war in Yemen. The Shiite militia achieved great success in a relatively short period.

Under the leadership of Saudi Arabia, an Arab military coalition was formed in 2015 against the Houthi Movement, which has shown almost no success in recent years while suffering very significant losses. On the side of the Shiite movement, members of the Quds Forces of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran also appeared, weakening the activities of the coalition forces led by Saudi Arabia. The war against the Shiites intensified southern separatist aspirations, ISIL / DAESH appeared intermittently in Yemen, and the AQAP expanded its influence on an unprecedented extent. Yemen has become the poorest country in the world, where the vast majority of the population lives below the poverty line, is starving, and has been affected by various epidemics. Furthermore, a solution to the conflict is yet to come.

6. The effect of the armed conflicts on migration

The Middle East is a critical region for migration. The region has always been the scene of migratory movements and continues to receive and supply a significant proportion of the world's refugees and migrants due to violence, armed conflicts, persecution, climate change and urbanization. Between 1990 and 2017, the estimated number of migrants and refugees in the Middle East region increased from 13.8 million to 43.2 million (“Mixed Migration”). The latter represents around 17% of the 275 million refugees and migrants registered worldwide in 2017. Around 29.1 million Syrian workers, mainly economic migrants, live mainly in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries, but a further 5.6 million Syrian refugees live mainly in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon. Data also shows that the countries of the Middle East represent the countries of origin, transit, and destination at the same time (*Syria Emergency*).

Ensuring better living conditions following the armed conflict has become the second most significant reason in the context of migration to the Middle East. About 40% of the region's migrant population growth between 2005 and 2015 can be explained by the economically motivated migration (Middle East's). However, majority of the migration wave, especially after 2011, is effectively linked to armed conflicts that threaten life directly, to the

acts of violence that can be linked to state or non-state actors and has thus resulted in forced displacement of millions of people from their homes (Middle East's).

In the following, I will detail the migratory effects of the conflicts in the Middle East, highlighting the Arab-Israeli conflict, the issue of Lebanese refugees and the migration situation in Yemen under the civil war. The migratory impact of the Syrian and Iraqi crises has been analyzed as a case study.

Arab-Israeli conflict

The oldest crisis in the Middle East, which has lasted more than 70 years, the Arab-Israeli conflict has launched millions of Palestinian refugees to the countries of the region. Although the UN General Assembly resolution of 29 November 1947 created the possibility of a Jewish and an Arab state being created on Palestinian territory, the Arabs rejected the resolution both in the territory of the Palestinian mandate and in the surrounding Arab countries. Following the rejection of the resolution, the emigration of the Arab population from the territory of the Palestinian mandate started. In the following months, about 300 000 Arab people decided to leave the country due to the deteriorating security situation.

By the summer of 1948, almost 750 000 Arab left the territory of the Palestinian mandate (Avi,287-304). The UN estimates at an earlier date put the number of refugees slightly above 700,000, while other estimates ranged from 539 000 to 957 000 on a much wider scale. In terms of proportion, about 80% of the Arab population became refugees during what the Palestinians call Nakba (disaster) ("1948 óta"). When Israel occupied new territories from neighboring countries in the 1967 war, an additional 250 000 to 320 000 Palestinians fled from the West Bank to Jordan. The events of the coming decades, including the expulsion of the Palestinian Liberation Organization from Jordan in 1970, the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the First Gulf War 1990-1991 and the expulsion of the Palestinians from Iraq in 2006, resulted in further movement of the Palestinians (Pátkai).

In addition to the migration caused by the Arab-Israeli conflicts, the emigration of Palestinians, especially to the Gulf states, has also been significant due to better job opportunities.

Although the 1993 Oslo Agreement allowed the repatriation of 100 000 Palestinians to the Israeli-occupied territories, the lack of a political solution, deteriorating socio-economic conditions and the second Intifada led to a further emigration of the Arab countries in the region in the 2000s, especially among qualified young people. The social problem is well indicated

by the fact that the rate of unemployment increased from 14.3% in 2000 to 26.2% in 2008. Among the youngest population aged 15-24, this figure increased from 20.0% to 40.2%, and from 14.8% to 25.5% in the 25-34 age group. The unemployment rate reached 27.2% in 2008.

The example of the Palestinians also shows that armed conflicts are a determining factor in the migration trends in the Middle East, but they are not the only factors, and securing a livelihood is at least as important in terms of emigration.

According to UNRWA, the UN's body specializing in helping Palestinians, nearly a third of the 5.4 registered Palestinian refugees in the Middle East, some 1.6 million people, live in 58¹⁴ official Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.¹⁵ The remaining two thirds of the refugees live in the host country settlements, as well as in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, often around the official camps. According to 2021 data there are 2.2 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan, 476,000 in Lebanon, 552,000 in Syria, 828 300 in the West Bank and 1.3 million in the Gaza Strip in the indicated 58 facility and urbanized areas (“Total Palestinian Refugees”). Over the last seven decades, some of the Palestinian refugee camps have become built environment in the occupied territories and neighboring countries.

By 2006, there were a further 34 000 Palestinians living in Iraq, but their number had dropped to 11 500 by 2018 due to repeated armed clashes, the intervention of the American and international forces and the expansion of the ISIL/DAESH. The UNRWA estimates that, on the contrary, the Syrian crisis has affected the situation of Palestinian refugees less, with no reduction in the number of Palestinians in Syria during the ten-year conflict which has resulted 13 million refugees: 495 970 in 2010, 526 744 in 2015, 438 000 in 2018 and 552 in 2019, of which 189 000 were in the nine refugee camps (*Palestine refugees*).

Only a small proportion of current Palestinian refugees emigrated in 1948 and in the following years, most of them are second- and third-generation descendants, who are thus to some extent already tied to their current place of residence and country making it difficult to return.

The rights granted to Palestinian refugees vary from country to country. Palestinian refugees who are not registered with UNRWA usually have a citizenship, immigrant, or

¹⁴ Ten facilities in Jordan, 12 in Lebanon, nine in Syria, 19 in the West Bank and eight in the Gaza Strip.

¹⁵ According to a 2011 survey, the total number of Palestinian refugees is close to seven million. In addition to the countries of the region, there are thousands of them living in North America, Europe, and the northern Arab states of Africa, including Libya and Egypt,

temporary residence permit. Their legal status is generally the same as that of other refugees in that country, but their situation is most challenging in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

In Jordan, about 95% of Palestinian refugees have citizenship and can participate in political and economic life. This also contributes to the fact that only 20% of Palestinian refugees living in Jordan live in the refugee camp maintained by UNRWA (Palestinian refugees).

In Syria, prior to the civil war, many Palestinian refugees were integrated into society and had access to government-provided services and employment. However, they did not have citizenship and their rights to property were limited.

In Lebanon, the situation is the opposite, with nearly 50% of Palestinian refugees and around 209 000 people living in the camps (*Health in Lebanon*). This is because their rights are severely restricted by the government: they have not been granted citizenship, have almost no political rights and have been denied many social rights, including access to government-run public services (e. g. education, health). Furthermore, Palestinian refugees from Lebanon are being prevented from working in many professions (M Sahel).

Over the last year, the internal political and economic situation in Lebanon and the COVID-19 epidemic have exacerbated the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and their survival has been ensured only through UNRWA's health, financial and social assistance (Yassine).

Israel has never considered the issue of Palestinian refugees as a separate issue but has always treated it as part of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is not surprising that Israel did not allow unconditionally returned, hundreds of thousands of openly hostile Arabs into the country who saw any Jewish authority over the former Palestinian autonomy as heresy. Their presence was thus seen by Israel as a threat to maintaining the Jewish demographic majority of the new state.

The return or repatriation of refugees and their descendants has since been a central element of the recent Arab-Israeli conflicts. After 1948, Palestinian organizations tried to use arms to enforce their demands, and Israel likewise defended its territories. Although the international community has spoken out in support of the right of Palestinian refugees to return, in reality there has been no progress on the issue. One of the most important issues of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (or a possible peace dispute) and of which the Palestinians are unaccountable is the right to return. At some stage in the peace process, the compromise

proposal outlined for a consensual settlement of the issue would have distinguished the refugees from 1948-1949 and 1967 and the former would have been compensated.

Despite diplomatic efforts, a comprehensive solution will not be envisaged. The issue of Palestinian refugees has been unresolved for more than 70 years and, in the light of the current political developments, the return of refugees is not expected in the medium term due to the different approaches of Israeli and Palestinian leaders and key members of international community.

Lebanon

Lebanon is one of the countries most affected by migration in the Middle East. The country is a source and a host state, given the Palestinian refugees who have been there for decades and the outflows from Syria since 2011. The number of refugees is even more dramatic in comparison with the population; with Lebanon having the most refugees in the world compared to the population. The population is estimated at 5.9 million people¹⁶, according to UN estimates, while the country is home to nearly 1.5 million refugees (865,000 Syrians, 476,000 Palestinians and 16,000 Ethiopians, Iraqis, and Sudan) sources indicate that the Lebanese diaspora is between four and 13 million (De Bel-Air).

Five waves of Lebanese emigration were observed: 1880-1914, 1915-1945, 1945-1975, 1975-1990 and 1990 to the present. The first major migration from Lebanon took place in the mid 19th century to the United States of America, Mexico and to Latin America countries. By the end of the World War I, nearly a third of the population had emigrated. This was followed by a more restrained period, but after the end of the World War II, the rate of emigration began to increase again, and new directions emerged to Australia, New Zealand, West Africa, and Europe. In 1967, outflows to the Gulf countries also intensified mainly due to increasing political instability and the lack of qualified workers in the target countries.

The civil war between 1975 and 1989 has caused the displacement of 900 000 citizens, nearly 40% of the population, partly due to changing intensities of conflicts, as well as economic, infrastructure and health care eruptions and high unemployment. The refugees have arrived and settled in the destination countries, relying on the Lebanese who had previously emigrated.

¹⁶ The population of Lebanon is difficult to determine precisely, as the last official census was in 1943, when the country became independent.

In the early 2000s, due to political tensions and demographic growth southern Lebanon became the region's largest refugee-releasing region. The emigration was accompanied by the military presence in Syria since 1990 and the gradual deterioration of bilateral relations with Israel, which was the outcome of the war in 2006. The situation was exacerbated by political tensions caused by political assassinations and civil strife. All this not only resulted in more refugees, but also made it impossible to return to the country.

Currently 34.9%, of the Lebanese diaspora live in the Arab states, nearly 22-22% in Europe, and North America, and 8.9% in Australia (Bartolomeo et al,1).

In addition to its hard situation Lebanon received many refugees in recent decades. The challenges posed by the Syrian civil war in Lebanon are discussed in a separate chapter, but it is important to note that, even before the crisis, there were almost 400 000 Syrian workers (economic refugees) in the country (Errighi and Griesse,5). Lebanon has also been involved in the emigration of Palestinian refugees, with the latest figures indicating that the number of Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA is 476 000 ("Where we work"). Most economic migrants from Asian, African, and Arab countries work illegally, without any documents, primarily in the construction and agriculture sectors, while the majority of women work in households and cleaning firms.

The situation of refugees in Lebanon has always been a sensitive issue, especially for the Palestinians. The possible granting of citizenship to nearly half a million Muslim refugees, mostly Sunni, would upset the delicate sectarian and political-demographic balance. The importance of maintaining a balance is a consequence of the fact that Lebanon has always supported the right of Palestinians to return as enshrined in UN resolution 194.

Yemen

The armed conflict that began in 2014, has now forced more than four million people flee their homes, 1.3 million have so far been able to return to their former homes("Yemen"). The conflict involving the powers of the region has resulted in one of the world's largest humanitarian disasters ("Civil War in Syria") and is still considered one of the top ten conflicts (Satre et al.). Moreover, Yemen is not only an issuing country but also a host country in terms of migration: roughly 140 000 - in other places 223 00017 ("Yemen Operation") - Somali and Ethiopian refugees are currently in the country.

Following the escalation of the conflict, 1.2 million Yemenis left their homes (*Yemen Situation,6-7*) by 2016, and more than 110 000 people fled the country, mainly to the countries¹⁸ of the Horn of Africa, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. At the beginning of the conflict, around 260 000 refugees were in Yemen and, although there have been some backflows, Yemen remains primarily a transit and host country for migration (“Yemen-Conflict and Chorela”). In 2018 the country accepted more refugees than Europe (Goldberg), and data showed that the number of refugees increased. Although refugees from the countries of the Horn of Africa are primarily destined for Saudi Arabia, many people still live in Yemen.

The clash between Iran-backed Anshar Allah and the Saudi-backed government, has caused the worst possible humanitarian crisis in the country. In 2015, the UN Commissioner for Human Rights declared the situation (“Yemen: Highest Emergency”) in Yemen the highest level of emergency, yet 80% of the population of 31 million people still need humanitarian aid, and nearly five million people have uncertain access to food¹⁹. A cholera epidemic has erupted in the country, and although the coronavirus epidemic has resulted in a truce between the opposing parties, the population cannot count on any state actor to contain the epidemic.

With the intensification of the armed struggle, the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) (“Yemen Operations”) has also increased. In addition to the ongoing low-intensity conflict between the opposing parties, the Saudi-led coalition regularly carries out air strikes, primarily against civilian targets, (“Yemen Data Project”) which increases the number of IDPs. The UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees²⁰ has only 6% of the amount needed to tackle the migration crisis in 2021, (“Yemen”,6) which makes it impossible to address the situation even if the armed conflict is brought to an immediate end.

Yemen is traditionally a migration hub, connecting Africa, Asia, and Europe (*On the Move in a War*). For decades, Yemenis have been affected by economic migration, targeting primarily Saudi Arabia (Semnani et al,8) Although migrants from the Horn of Africa also travel primarily to Saudi Arabia, and secondly to Europe via Egypt and Libya, there are between 15000 and 200 000 migrants present in the country, which has not been affected by armed conflict. Migration to Yemen is being increased by the recruitment of migrants in armed conflicts and the sending them of to combat (*Caught in the Crossfire*).

¹⁸ Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan

¹⁹ IDP Response. UNHCR operational update, 2021. April.

²⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR

Migration in Yemen is also hampered by border²¹ barriers and strict immigration requirements with high migration costs. It can be concluded that the population's lack of education and difficult economic situation has prevented the Yemenis from migrating to Europe due to the war situation, but at the same time illegal immigration has increased to Saudi Arabia.

The armed conflict that has been going on since 2014 has caused a serious humanitarian crisis in Yemen, with attacks on civilian targets forcing them to flee their homes. However, all this has not changed the fact that Yemen is a migration transit country and a migration host country, it has only increased the number of migrants leaving Yemen. Migration from the country is hampered by restrictive measures against Yemenis and the poor financial situation of the population. Given that the clash has intensified rather than created a situation that facilitates migration, it is not expected that a truce, a resolution of the conflict, would stop emigration from the country.

7. Case Studies

7.1. Syria

The crisis in Syria started in 2011 with sporadic demonstrations, has become the greatest humanitarian disaster in the last quarter of the century. According to UN figures, (“Syria Emergency”) 6.6 million refugees have already left Syria and at least 6.7 million were internally displaced.²²

Syria before the crisis

Syria, together with Lebanon, became an independent state in 1946. Between 1946 and 1970 there were twenty coups, failed coup d'état and a failed countercoup in Syria. These ongoing crises did not favor the country's economy, the deepening of foreign policy relations with other countries and foreign investment. Syria was one of the poorest and most isolated Arab states in the Middle East.

Even before the crisis, life for the population was full of challenges in an oppressive, ethnically, and religiously divided Syria. In addition to the difficulties arising from the political

²¹ Oman and Saudi Arabia also responded to the armed conflict with physical border closures and increased border controls.

²² The number of internal refugees was the highest in 2014, at 7.6 million.

system, the living conditions of the population were also influenced by other factors that led to internal movements prior to the crisis and finally to the events of 2011. Most of the country is desert, only less than 10% of the land is permanent arable land (Ritchie and Roser). Apart from the narrow belt along the Mediterranean, the entire country is exposed to extreme temperatures, causing frequent dust storms and seasonal droughts. This was the case between 2006 and 2011. The four years of devastating drought have resulted in at least 800 000 farmers losing their livelihoods and approximately 200 000 simply leaving their land (“Syrian Arab Republic”,1). In some area’s agriculture has ceased to exist, nearly 85% of the livestock population has been destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of farmers have been sent to the cities. It is estimated that between ten million people in rural Syria two and three million people have fallen into extreme poverty. To make a living, refugees in cities had to compete not only for scarce food, water, and jobs, but also for the existing foreign refugees (in Syria before 2011 there were 250 00 Palestinian and nearly 100 000 Iraqi refugees) (R. Polk). The number of Syrian internally displaced persons thus exceeded to 600,000 people before the crisis, but around 900 000 Syrians lived across borders (Global Trends,39). Due to historical ties, the largest number of Syrians (289 000) were in Jordan, but addition to some countries in the region (Turkey, Palestine, Yemen, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia), they were also found in Europe. Only 18 500 of them were registered as refugees (*Position Paper on Refugees*).

Humanitarian crisis caused by the civil war in Syria

With the widening of the initially two-player fighting, more and more parties emerged, making the military and political solution increasingly hopeless. In most of the country's provinces, clashes have become common, with the negative effects affecting the civilian population mostly.

From mid-2014, the crisis became even more complex, opaque, and unsolvable with the proclamation of the Islamic Caliphate, the rise of extremist violence in parallel with the rise of ISIL / DAESH, the air strikes of the US-led international coalition and the change in Turkish Syrian policy. This set off another wave of refugees from Syria. The increase in the number of refugees accelerated significantly, reaching three million in October 2014, and in ten months, four million. Contributing to this was the large-scale migration of Kurdish forces and ISIL / DAESH on the Syrian-Turkish border since September 2014 (Kanat and Ustun,49).

On 30 September 2015, Russia joined the Syrian Civil War by military force. As a result of the Russian action, the course of the civil war has been reversed, the Syrian forces, although

mostly through external assistance, have been able to increase their controlled areas, consolidate the security situation and repress opposition militants and the ISIL/DAESH terrorist organization since mid-2017.

Currently, the Damascus government controls much of Syria, but part of the Idlib province in the northwestern part of the country is controlled by opposition forces, and a security zone has been established in the Turkish border zone by Turkish forces and its Syrian allies.

Violations of human rights, international law and disregard for international humanitarian law have become commonplace over the years, and the parties are ready to use any means and methods to preserve power and influence. The economy stalled and sank to its four-decade-old state. Since the start of the fighting, life expectancy has dropped by 13 years. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,²³ 13.4 million Syrian citizens are currently in need of humanitarian assistance, 80% of the population lives in poverty, and families are making a significant effort to provide food, housing, and education (“About OCHA Syria”). Due to the clashes and difficulties in negotiating with the Syrian regime, assistance to those stranded in Syria is minimal and irregular, and the 5.6 million refugees in neighboring countries are difficult to provide due to the continuing lack of resources (“A decade on”).

Due to ongoing fighting, the number of Syrian internally displaced persons reached 7.6 million by mid -2014, but their number, according to official data, has now been reduced to 6.6 million (“Syrian crisis is still”). During the most intense period of the Civil War, nearly 4.5 million people lived in areas that international humanitarian aid workers were unable to access because of the conflicts or the threat posed by armed groups. 28% of the more than six million internally displaced people currently live in Damascus, but three million refugees remain in difficult-to-reach areas (*A decade of war in Syria*).

In the areas affected by war, the quality of life usually reaches a critical level. Power outages are regular, people do not have access to drinking water for weeks, and access to basic food becomes difficult due to rising prices, even if the conflict exceptionally does not exceptionally affect production or transport. It is assumed that access to water has been reduced by almost half, with 11.6 million people not having access to drinking water. Half the hospitals have been destroyed or have been significantly damaged (“2015 Strategic Response”).

²³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – OCHA

The trend in the movement of internally displaced persons has changed in parallel with the escalation of the conflict.

Most of the people left only the cities affected by the demonstrations and sought temporary shelter in the smaller settlements nearby and returned to their homes immediately.

Later, with the development and continued spread of armed struggles, impoverished and suburban neighborhoods of cities became the most affected, and the number of internally displaced persons increased to a greater extent. During this period, those leaving their homes were forced to settle for longer periods of time. As the crisis became nationwide, it became common for refugees to cross the borders of the provinces to find new, safer places to live. Syrians sought refuge primarily in distant relatives or in places of the same religious affiliation for easier integration (Scherer and Charron,9-10).

The majority of those who left the country due to civil war (5.6 million people) sought refuge in the neighboring countries, namely Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. According to the end of January 2021 data, nearly 55% of the refugees (3.6 million) are in Turkey, 865 531 in Lebanon, and 662 790 in Jordan (“Registered Syrian Refugees). The crisis also hit 243 121 Syrians in Iraq, while 130,577 Syrians found refuge in Egypt, which sought stability after the 2011 revolution. All these data refer to registered refugees, so their actual number may be significantly higher. (“Registered Syrian Refugees”) In addition to the above data, 269 912 Syrians have returned to their country since 2016 which is relatively a small number. This has only partially alleviated the situation in neighboring countries, such as Lebanon, where 1.1 million Syrian refugees lived in mid-2015 (Global Trends,13).

The large number of refugees also poses significant challenges to neighboring countries, with political, economic and security implications. The ever-increasing masses of refugees have been addressed by the host countries through the construction of more and more refugee camps, but this was no solution either. It is true for all countries that only a fraction of the refugees have been placed in camps, a significant proportion of them prefer to seek accommodation with relatives or private accommodation. It should also be noted that internal political relations in Lebanon and Iraq were not fully stable even at the beginning of the Syrian civil war.

Syrian refugees in the region

Syrians in Turkey

Turkey is one of the States²⁴ that has acceded to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees with geographical restrictions. It has maintained this status ever since, so that it carries out asylum proceedings only for asylum seekers from Europe and only recognizes these citizens as refugees if the conditions are met. Due to the restrictions, Syrians²⁵ cannot be granted official refugee status, so the Turkish authorities consider them ‘guests’ and grant them temporary protection status. On this basis, the government protects them (they are not being deported back to Syria) and they become eligible for aid. In addition to accommodation and meals, people in the camps receive education and health care (*Effects of the Syrian*, 19-20). Those people living outside the camp will only get free medical care if they register, but many people fail to do so, thus giving up their rights.

As a result of the Syrian crisis, the first refugees crossed the Turkish border on 29 April 2011. The Turkish political leadership, based on the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, believed that Bashar al-Assad's regime would fail in six months to 12 months, and that refugees could return to their country. For this reason, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has declared an open border policy, promising that even Syrians arriving without documents will be given shelter. In August 2012, the number of refugees reached 78 000, while in mid-2013 there were already 600 000 Syrians, mostly in the cities of southern Turkey. Syrians under temporary protection already accounted for 4.36% of the 82 million Turkish population at the end of 2019, and their number and proportion (despite voluntary returns and citizenship) is growing (*Refugees in Turkey*, 6). The primary reason for this is natural population growth, with more than 520,000 Syrian children born in Turkey between 2011 and 2019 (Pénzváltó, 2).

The refugees have caused social and economic difficulties, especially in the cities of the southern part of the country. Wages have fallen significantly due to the illegal Syrian workers and the Turkish national being excluded from the labor market. At the same time, food prices and rent have increased, and it has become more difficult to find acceptable property. As far as municipalities are concerned, the appearance of refugees has led to a lack of resources, as the central funds are allocated based on the number of Turkish populations. There were capacity gaps in education and health care institutions, while public services (waste transport, public transport) found it difficult to keep up with the increased numbers.

²⁴ Outside Turkey, Congo, Madagascar and Monaco

²⁵ Apart from Syrians, most Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali asylum seekers are in Turkey.

In view of the growing influx of refugees, Turkey -like other host countries- has imposed restrictions since mid-2014. Under these measures, refugees who have returned to Syria from the host country could no longer have re-entered. Several border crossings have been closed, which has also resulted in a certain reduction in the number of refugees.

Currently, 3.6 million Syrian refugees live in Turkey, but only 58 000 of them are in the seven refugee camps reserved for Syrians.²⁶ Life outside the camp often provides lower living conditions for refugees. Although they are equally entitled to certain services (health care, education) and benefits, when registering they tend to live in crowded, rented public accommodation due to their financial constraints, especially in impoverished suburbs. Although they are trying to take a job due to the gradual deterioration of their financial situation, in many cases they only have the possibility of doing jobs illegally²⁷, so their wages are lower than the market would dictate. And the minimum salary is mostly enough to keep their standard of living.

In general, the treatment of refugees largely depends on religious, ethnic, and political identity. In the predominantly Kurdish area, they are much more tolerant of the Kurdish refugees than of the Arabs. According to the Kurds, the Arabs could cause an increase in the spread of radical ideas. The Arabs, on the other hand, find it more difficult to accept the Kurds because they believe that they are seeking to divide Syria on an ethnic basis and may even support the Kurdish Labor Party terrorist organization (Orhan,19-20).

The refugees were also originally planned for a short period of time and were encouraged to return home as soon as possible. Due to the protracted crisis, their absence from their place of residence wore them mostly physically and emotionally, and they are less and less able to cope with the monotony and boredom of camp life. Those living in the camps would be looking for an opportunity to earn money and a permanent place to settle, to provide their children with an orderly future, they would even give up accommodation that provides comfort and security (Orhan,12-13).

Syrians in Lebanon

Of the neighboring countries, perhaps Lebanon has been hit hardest by the Syrian refugee crisis. The number of Syrian refugees registered in the country has currently been 865

²⁶ At the beginning of the crisis, another 25 refugee camps housed refugees from Syria.

²⁷ Initially, due to the temporary refugee issue, they were not able to participate in employment, however, seeing the protracted crisis, the Turkish authorities allowed work from October 2014, with geographical and job restrictions.

531²⁸ which means that in terms of the country's population (5.9 million), it has been the highest rate of refugees per capita. Nearly one-fifth of Syrian refugees live in Lebanon, mainly in the poorest neighborhood, sometimes in deterrent conditions. As the authorities consider that the Syrian refugees do not live in Lebanon on a permanent basis, but only temporarily, they are not allowed to build houses, and only the necessary conditions for their survival are provided.

The biggest problem affecting refugees in Lebanon is the government's policy of not building official camps. In the absence of these, the migrants will settle on an ad hoc basis with relatives and friends. According to UNHCR data, there are 1600 municipalities in Lebanon where Syrian citizens are located. Even though the government has not established official places, the spontaneous formed camps have not been dismantled by the authorities, and even the local authorities, with the assistance of NGOs, are implicitly involved in its maintenance.

Obviously, the Syrian- Lebanese border region is the area most affected by the Syrian refugee crisis. As asylum seekers first arrive in areas close to the borders, they are primarily settled here temporarily. However, these regions in Lebanon are the poorest parts of the country and have been completely neglected by the central government for decades. This can also be seen in the case of South Lebanon, the Beqaa Valley and northern Lebanon. The latter has the second highest number of Syrian refugees after the Beqaa Valley. The North Lebanese province of Aakkar can be considered the poorest and the most neglected one in the country. In the Beqaa Valley, 37% of the refugees are located, followed by 26% in North Lebanon, 25% in Beirut and 11% in South Lebanon (Dahrouge,47-69).

The Lebanese Government has also been forced to impose restrictions following the initial 'open borders' directive, in line with all the countries neighboring Syria, due to the inflow of influx and the growing population. According to a decision by the cabinet in October 2014, only Syrian refugees who can be shown to be arriving on humanitarian grounds will be admitted. In addition, a visa requirement was introduced for Syrian citizens in January 2015, and those concerned must communicate the purpose and duration of their stay when crossing the border. In part, these decisions have contributed to the fact that the number of refugees has now fallen by hundreds of thousands, but the more than 800,000 Syrian immigrants still place a significant burden on a country facing economic and political challenges.

²⁸ According to UNHCR, the number of registered Syrian refugees was 1.2 million in April 2015, but their numbers have declined or stagnated in recent years through government restrictive measures. According to the authorities, in addition to the registered, there are at least 500,000 illegal refugees in Lebanon, so it cannot be ruled out that their total number will reach 1.3-1.4 million.

The emergence of Syrian refugees has caused serious tensions on the country's social and political dynamics, while deteriorating the state's infrastructure, deepening the economic crisis and also damaging the environment. As the economic crisis in Lebanon deepens, the vulnerability of refugees will also increase.

Syrians in Jordan

Jordan treats all refugees, including those from Syria, under the Aliens Act, which, in accordance with international law, ensures that return is restricted. At the beginning of the civil war, when the first refugees arrived, (same in Turkey and Lebanon) the country's leadership also announced a policy of "open border," but by closing some border crossings, it sought to control the influx of refugees from 2012 onwards.

Jordan has hosted thousands of refugees from crisis areas in the Middle East for many years. Many Palestinians came during the Arab-Israeli wars, but Iraqis also found significant numbers of refuge in the country. Due to the mass arrival of the Syrians, the situation has already become dramatic, Jordan has become a refugee country. In addition to the more than two million Palestinians previously admitted, the nearly 50,000 Iraqis, and 400,000 Syrian refugees already living there due to previous wars, an additional 660,000 Syrians arrived. Given Jordan's population of 6.6 million ("Jordan World Bank"), it becomes clear how significant this proportion is burdening the country. (Orhan,20-21)

Syrians in Iraq

The rise of ISIL / DAESH and the proclamation of the Islamic Caliphate in mid-2014 have had a negative impact on the security situation in Iraq and thus on the flow of Syrian refugees to Iraq. Most Syrians have sought refuge in Kurdish autonomy. The presence of ISIL / DAESH limited the interoperability of the Syrian-Iraqi border, so from mid-2014 access to Iraq was mostly open only in the northern part of the border, but from May 2015 it became limited due to the activities of the terrorist organization. The Kurdish authorities restricted access to the area of autonomy only if the refugees came from an area not affected by the conflict.

The first wave of refugees appeared in the country in April 2012, and then their number grew steadily. Iraq received 250,000 registered Syrian refugees (mainly Kurds) by September 2015, but their numbers have declined slightly since then, partly due to the tense security situation ("Iraq Monthly Update"). The situation of refugees and the provision of care is hampered by the fact that the conflicts have forced 3.1 million Iraqis to flee their homes.

Iraq provides benefits to refugees under the 1971 Law on Political Refugees. However, the Iraqi central government and the Kurdish Regional Government have very different views on refugees. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the Kurds have been issuing residence permits to registered refugees, providing them with housing and employment opportunities as well as health care (No Escape,14). They can move freely, take jobs, and access the services offered by autonomy. The central government, on the other hand, does not recognize those arriving from Syria as refugees, and restricts both their movement and employment opportunities, and does not provide benefits. They can only access health care and educational institutions.

Overall, the situation of Syrians in the surrounding countries is challenging, but due to kinship and ethnic identity, their sense of security is better than in Syria. Camps are able to provide the basic conditions in all the countries involved, although in many cases only at a minimal level. Housing, food, and health care, with few exceptions, are also acceptable, but the isolation and monotony of camp life can cause frustration and a desire to break out for long-term residents. Life outside the camp poses the same challenges for refugees in all countries. Due to limited and mostly illegal employment opportunities and low wages, incomes are not sufficient to fully support families / households. Because of all this, refugees are forced to recover their assets slowly or with the help of loans, which over time makes their situation hopeless.

Regarding refugees living in countries neighboring Syria, it can be said that most of them considered their refugee status as a temporary solution. Their situation due to the protracted conflict over time forced them to make decisions, and maintaining a family took precedence over the need for security. For some refugees, the issue of leaving for a third country (see wave of migration to Europe from 2015) for permanent settlement have come to the fore.

The return of Syrian refugees

The loss of space and operational capability of ISIL / DAESH, the establishment of de-escalation zones, the presence of Turkish forces in northern Syria and the establishment of Turkish-controlled areas have allowed the return of refugees to neighboring countries.

The Turkish government has long been pushing for the establishment of a security zone for Syrian refugees in northern Syria. Relocation to Turkish-controlled areas has already begun, and the Turkish leadership has also requested international assistance. According to Turkish

data, by October 2020, more than 400,000 Syrian refugees had returned to their homeland (“At least 400,000 Syrians”). At the same time, there is a danger that the resettlement program could lead to a reorganization of the demographic conditions in the area, resulting in a decrease in the proportion of Kurds (Dócza).

The number of resettled people is negligible compared to the nearly 5.6 million migrants and 6.6 million internally displaced people in the region, but the devastation caused by the ten years of conflict does not yet allow for the mass return of Syrian citizens (“Syrian Arab Republic”).

7.2. Iraq

In the Middle East region, in addition to Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese, Iraqi citizens were forced to leave their country en masse or become stateless within it. There has not been a decade in the history of the last forty years of Iraq that there has not been a war conflict that has forced millions to flee.

In the 1980s, during the Iraq-Iran war (First Gulf War), Saddam Hussein carried out genocide against his own Kurdish population, forcing hundreds of thousands to flee their homes and move to neighboring states. Saddam made several attempts to prevent Kurds from leaving the country, resulting in the loss of hundreds of lives at the borders. As a result, it is not possible to determine exactly how many people left the country. Most Kurds found refuge in southeastern Turkey and northwestern Iran, where they could not expect normal treatment at all, even though Kurds lived in these countries. The international community paid only limited attention to the issue of Kurdish refugees because in the second half of the 1980s, the world’s attention was increasingly focused on the rupture of the Soviet empire and events in Eastern Europe.

In August 1990, on the orders of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi forces marched into neighboring Kuwait. Members of the Iraqi army have done extremely brutal things on Iraqi territory. As a result, an estimated 1.5 million people, mainly foreign nationals working in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia (Egyptians, Palestinians, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Filipinos) have fled the region through Jordan (“The Persian Gulf”). Following the first wave of refugees, the international community formed an international military coalition with the United States. The task of the coalition was to ensure the integrity of Saudi Arabia, so American

and British forces liberated Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's oppressive and exploitative regime.

On 7 January 1991, the combined force operation under the name DESERT STORM began. Despite the continued bombing and armed attack of Iraq, only 35,000 people (mostly Shiite Arabs) fled to Iran during the war (Miller). Following the completion of the international operation, in March 1991, the U.S. administration, incited the Kurds and Shiites to trigger a revolution. Iraqi Shiites and northern Kurds complied with the American request and launched mass demonstrations in March and took actual steps to replace Saddam. Contrary to expectations, the Iraqi civil war did not really erupt (several experts dispute what actually happened: violent anti-government movements or, in fact, a civil war). The Kurds and Shiites were basically left alone because no external aid was realized, there were no arms shipments and there were no air strikes, only two no-fly zones were established in the north and south. With the barely recovering Iraqi forces, the Republican Guard has launched comprehensive research and liquidation operations in both the Kurdish and Shiite areas. Iraqi forces have carried out bombings in both regions, destroyed shrines and killed nearly a quarter of a million people in the Shiite region.

In the Kurdish region, 1.5 million people tried to get through to neighboring countries (Blakemore). The Turkish authorities have closed the Iraqi-Turkish border and in many cases used violence against civilians seeking to break through the border. The Iranian government also used coercive measures, but what happened in the Iran-Iraq border received much less media attention than what happened at the Turkish-Iraq border. Most of the refugees had returned to their homes by the end of April, when Iraqi force operations had ended and all Kurdish cities had been successfully recaptured, with only a small proportion remaining in the UN-designated refugee camps. To this day, it is not possible to know exactly how many people have fled to neighboring Iran from the southern part of the country.

Following the events of the 1991 civil war, the outflow of Iraqi citizens continued until the liberation of Iraq in 2003. In addition to the Gulf States, by 2002 there were a total of 19,100 Iraqi asylum seekers in the United States, 6,000 in Canada, 8,200 in Norway, 10,000 in Australia, 12,000 in Denmark, 12,000 in the United Kingdom, 26,900 in Sweden and 26,100 in the Netherlands (*Iraqi Refugees, Asylum Seekers*, 19).

In 2003, the United States launched Operation Iraqi Freedom, which triggered another wave of refugees from Iraq that was larger than before. The liberation of the country took place

in nearly a month and a half, and then reconstruction and real problems began. Ethnic cleansing began between 2003 and 2004, there were two Shiite uprisings and the formation of Iraqi al-Qaeda, a systematic challenge to the Iraqi population and law enforcement forces. The number of atrocities against the population began to rise gradually as terrorism, Sunni and Shiite conflicts intensified. Between 2005 and 2007, there was a drastic increase in terrorist attacks in Iraq against the civilian population as well as against U.S.-led coalition forces. According to some assessments, there was a state of civil war in Iraq, although this was never stated by the US administration. As a result of the violence, by the end of 2007, nearly two million Iraqi citizens had fled to neighboring and Middle Eastern countries, and two million people had become stateless, mostly in Sunni areas, and had been sent to camps.

According to figures released by the UNHCR, between 1 million and 1.5 million Iraqis have found refuge in neighboring Syria, while half a million in Jordan and 350,000 to 400,000 refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, Iran, the Gulf States, Egypt, and Israel. Of all the refugees, the UNHCR managed to register only less than 250,000 of them (Harper,172). In Syria and Jordan, Iraqi refugees were essentially “guests” and authorities did not officially register them as refugees. In addition, between 38,000 and 40,000 Iraqis applied for asylum in the EU, representing 17% of all applicants (Phillmann and Stiennon,7). It is noteworthy that, with the intervention of the international community, between 100,000 and 190,000 internally displaced persons returned to their homes each year between 2003 and 2007, while the number of returning refugees ranged from 20,000 to 25,000 per year.

Terrorism was suppressed between 2007 and 2011, benefiting internally displaced persons but not triggering a mass return from the ranks of refugees living abroad. Contributing to this was the fact that living conditions in Iraq improved very slowly, while inter-religious divisions gradually increased as the level of corruption and the number of people killed in ethnic cleansing increased.

Until the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, 44% of Iraqi refugees lived in Syria and Jordan (Errighi and Griesse,19). Simultaneously with the systematic deterioration of the security situation in Syria, the return of Iraqi refugees from the new conflict zone to Iraq began to increase from 2011 onwards. As the Syrian crisis intensified, the number of Syrian citizens who left their homes and fled to neighboring states grew. Iraq has also become a destination, but not to the same extent as Lebanon or Turkey.

Following the withdrawal of the United States in 2011, the international community paid much less attention to the security situation in Iraq than before because international forces were no longer present. From 2011 onwards, the number of Syrian refugees began to rise due to the Syrian civil war, who camped in the Kurdish areas, mainly in the northern part of the country. At the same time, Sunnis in Iraq have initiated anti-government movements because of their marginalization and poor living conditions. These demonstrations have been systematically transformed from initial peaceful marches into violent demonstrations, which Iraqi al-Qaeda, the ISIL / DAESH pre-organization, initially supported only on ideological grounds and then provided weapons to the protesters. In the Sunni region of the country, more anti-Sunni pogroms began, and more people were forced to leave their homes.

In early 2014, ISIL / DAESH launched its conquest campaign in Iraq, using unprecedented brutal violence against law enforcement forces and the civilian population. Within six months, the organization occupied one-third of Iraq and proclaimed the Caliphate of Islam. A section of the population that did not sympathize with the terrorist organization was able to flee even at the time of the acquisition of the territory and became stateless within Iraq. In the second half, U.S.-led coalition forces and Shiite militias launched operations against ISIL / DAESH. During the intervention, hundreds of thousands of people became internally displaced because many towns and villages were destroyed in the clashes. Part of the Sunni population found refuge in areas inhabited by Shiites, while others found refuge in the Kurdish region. The UN has never been able to record exactly how many people have become internally displaced. Nearly three million people have fled their homes, according to Iraqi and Kurdish regional governments. Refugees who were stuck in Shiite areas were subjected to constant harassment by Shiite militias. A significant portion of the Shiite community in Iraq viewed Sunnis as members of ISIL / DAESH. Assaults, pogroms, and looting were regular in the refugee camps. They were in a slightly better position in the Kurdish region. According to European Union data, the number of Iraqi asylum seekers has increased since 2014 (from an initial 10,200 to 30-35,000) (Asylum Trends,11). U.S.-led coalition forces and Iraqi law enforcement have managed to significantly push ISIL / DAESH into the country's central region in recent years. Nevertheless, the return of internally displaced persons to their homes was only realized because people simply had nowhere to return. According to UNHCR, in 2020, there were still 1.2 million Sunni refugees living in refugee camps near the capital and in the Kurdish region. Today, nearly 2.5 million Iraqis live in 27 countries around the world, most of them in Iran and the northern countries of the European continent (Harper,170)

8. Conclusion

In today's world states face many challenges in the form of traditional or non-traditional crises. When those crises reach a certain level, people choose to move away from their place to find a secure one within or outside the country. Armed conflicts, terrorist attacks, or natural disasters that directly threaten human life can trigger an immediate response from individuals to emigrate, ignoring other factors. Other issues like climate change, water shortage, economic hardship, social or religious problems are much more part of a slow process that can take years, and those affected are not immediately leave but hope for positive change that will make them feel more secure about their existing problems. The decision to migrate is usually the result of a complex chain process where the interrelating threats and challenges manifest in a cumulated form.

This thesis aimed to collect and analyze the main causes of migration in the Middle East and identify the most important factor(s) behind this phenomenon. Using Lee's theory of migration as a theoretical framework I identified the most common push and pull factors and throughout the dissertation I applied them in the different areas/researched countries. I pointed out that in the Middle East the most common push factors are desertification, durable drought, water shortages, flood, lack of food, climate change, terrorism, overpopulation, instable political environment, difficult economic situation, and armed conflicts. As for the pull factors safe environment, personal security, high standard healthcare system, good education, good job, good living conditions are the major incentives for international migration.

I investigated the different factors and draw the conclusion that among the social, economic, politic, and military components, the armed conflict represents the most important push factor behind an individual's decision to leave his/her home.

Using the case studies, I introduced the historical (chain) process that led to the today experienced large scale irregular migration both in Syria and Iraq. Lee's theory of migration was confirmed by the conducted analysis not only in Syria and Iraq, but some other Middle Eastern countries too, like Lebanon, Yemen, or the Palestine territory.

Overall, though violence in the Middle East is usually a result of a complex chain process my dissertation provided clear evidence (answered the research question) that from the many causes, armed conflict is the main factor behind migration process.

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