

# Analysis on the Trends of the Middle East Turmoil

AN Huihou<sup>①</sup>

(China Foundation of International Studies)

**Abstract:** *The extremist organization "IS" brought additional chaos to the Middle East. It is expected that Egypt will restore order. The main hot spot issues have witnessed some changes but are still hard to solve. The US is the producer of the Middle East turmoil. Internal disputes in the Middle East are still prevalent. China still has great potential to develop the friendship and cooperation with Middle East countries.*

**Key Words:** *ISIS; Middle East Hot Issues; Egypt; US Middle East Policy; China's Relations with Middle East Countries*

When mentioning the Middle East, people immediately think of chaos. Indeed, since World War II, the Middle East has constantly been in unrest and a place of hot issues. However, this is not the entire picture because most of the time unrest happens in certain areas and the intensity is controllable. Most countries remain relatively stable and pursue normal development. This is the normal status of the Middle East. The outbreak of upheavals in the Arab world by the end of 2010 and the subsequent US "neo-interventionism" have broken the

---

<sup>①</sup> AN Huihou, Council Member of China Foundation of International Studies, the committee member of the Think Tank of the Middle East Studies Institute in Shanghai International Studies University, and senior research fellow of China Institute of International Studies.

status quo: mass protests swept through almost all Arab countries. Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya experienced frequent regime changes; two wars broke out in Libya and Syria, adding a lot of new hot topics to international studies. In 2014, changes and trends of the situation in the Middle East, and its impact to the world, are matters of concern.

## **I. The Extremist Organization “ISIS” to Make the Middle East in Chaos**

“ISIS is a Sunni Muslim extremist group. It is originally a branch of Al Qaeda in Iraq, and had participated in anti-US activities and anti-Shiite struggle of Sunni, and gained support from the Gulf countries. In 2006, the organization changed its name to “Islamic State”, independent from the Al Qaeda. In 2011, United States and other foreign powers provoked a civil war in Syria. ISIS sneaked into Syria, and started anti-Assad regime “jihad”, which was supported by the United States, some other Western countries, and local great powers in the region. It grew rapidly, and was renamed as “Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham”. Its goal is to establish a unified “Caliph of the Islamic State” in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and other places. In early 2014, the organization returned to Iraq, occupied Fallujah, which located around 69 kilometers west of Baghdad. In June, it occupied Iraq’s second largest city Mosul and other large areas, and shocked the world. The organization again renamed “Islamic State” on June 29, clearly stated that their “Homeland” ranged from Aleppo in Syria to Iraq’s Diarra province, and planed to occupy the entire Middle East and part of Africa, Europe, Asia, and western China in five years. The leader of the organization, Baghdadi, proclaimed

himself as the caliphate of “Islamic State”, requesting Muslims around the world to show loyalty. The “Islamic State” occupied lands in Iraq and Syria rampantly.

The “Islamic State” advocates extremism and violence. They negate the modern state system and attempt to return to the orthodox caliphs system. They are very cruel, killing innocent people as well as prisoners of war, and even behead Western reporters. For Shiite Muslims and pagans, the “Islamic State” either forces them to change beliefs or kill them, ignoring basic human rights, and challenging the bottom line of civilization. They are also arrogant and have enemies everywhere, not only hold a position of anti-American, anti-Western, and anti-Israel, threatening to bloodbath United States and Europe, but also against the Arab monarchies and republics. Therefore, it has become a malignant tumor in civilized society that the international community can hardly tolerate. History cannot be reversed. The “Islamic State” may be rampant at the moment, but is doomed to failure. Some scholars believe that the rise of the “Islamic State” marks that the Middle East has stepped into a new “chaos”. The political map of the Middle East after World War I is about to collapse (*China Youth Daily*, 2014: September 23). However, this is a sensational exaggeration.

President Obama announced armed air strikes towards the “Islamic State” on August 7, and formed a broad coalition against terrorism. Some European countries and a few countries in the region participated in the air strikes. The US emphasized that it would not dispatch ground forces (*Beijing Daily*, 2014: August 9). Although air strikes weakened the “Islamic State” to some extent, blocking its offensive momentum, they can hardly frustrate its armed forces due to the absence of ground troops. Iraqi government forces, armed Kurdish

and Syrian “moderate” opposition forces are fighting against the “Islamic State” with armed force, but they are not strong enough to contain the “Islamic State”. The US, assistance program targets at strengthening these forces, but cannot resolve the problem efficiently. Iran and Syria are willing to jointly combat the “Islamic State”. However, due to some political considerations, the United States refused to cooperate with them. Other regional powers have their own calculation and will not really contribute. The momentum of the battle against the “Islamic State” is strong, but action is limited. There will still need more time to thwart the “Islamic State”. US military believes three years will be sufficient.

Upheavals in the Middle East provided the soil that cultivated extremism and terrorists. The terrorist forces are difficult to curb. The only way to eliminate terrorism in the Middle East is to achieve the restoration of peace and stability, economic development and improvement of people’s livelihood, unity countries in the region, and that the United States and other Western abandon double standards on terrorism.

## **II. The Main Problems to Crack down the “Islamic State”**

(A) On July 29, 2013, driven by the United States, the Palestinians restarted peace negotiations with Israel, and developed a timeline to reach agreement within nine months. However, the Arab world was experiencing drastic changes, and therefore unable to provide powerful support to Palestine. Moreover, internally Palestinians were split and failed to reach unanimity. The United States continued to support Israel. The Palestinian side was facing unfavorable balance. Israel took a tough stance, asking for more and more: they required

Pakistan to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, and the Israeli army stationed by the border of Jordan and Palestine. Palestine could not accept these provisions, and adhered to have the east Jerusalem as its capital since the founding of Palestine, which was rejected by Israel. The negotiations thus stalled. Israel then refused to honor its promise of releasing the fourth group of the Palestinian people in custody, and approved the expansion of housing for Jewish people in Jerusalem. Pakistan was again striving to become a recognized normal state in the United Nations and ended the internal split to form a coalition government. On April 24, 2014, Israel announced the suspension of peaceful talks (*Beijing Daily*, April 25, 2014). In July, conflict broke out between Israel and the Hamas militants in Gaza. The conflict lasted 50 days, resulting in 2,133 Palestinian deaths and 11,000 wounded, 17,000 houses were destroyed and 100,000 people became homeless. Israeli deaths were 68 people. Under the mediation of Egypt and the international community, the two sides reached a ceasefire. The large gap between casualties of two sides suggests that this is actually a bloody killing. This is the third Gaza war in six years. In absence of a fair solution to the Palestinian issue, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians would be difficult to avoid.

(B) Although the crisis in Syria is partly due to the discontent of people and their requests for change, its real substance is that the US-led foreign forces interfere in Syria's internal affairs, provoking a civil war and attempting to overthrow the Syrian regime. Back in August 2011, President Obama declared, "Bashar has lost legitimacy of governance; he must step down." However, Bashar regime does not fall so far. There are a number of reasons, but the most important reason is that the United States so far has not launched any military strike against Syria yet. In August 2013, the chemical weapon crisis

occurred in Syria. Obama threatened to carry out a military strike against Syria, but finally accepted the “Chemical Weapons for peace” plan initiated by Russia.

The US power relatively declined, becoming increasingly powerless in maintaining global hegemony. Obama’s implementation of “Asia-Pacific rebalancing strategy” has shifted its global strategic attention eastward, which has led to decreased investment in the Middle East accordingly. The United States was not only incompetent to launch a war in Syria; the war was also contrary to its global strategic plan. In addition, due to opposition of Russia and China, the US could not get UN authorization to use force against Syria. Syria was supported by Hezbollah in Iran and Lebanon, as well as and Shiite forces in Iraq. The use of force against Syria might have serious consequences. Moreover, extremist terrorists are the main anti-Syrian government forces, therefore, allowing them to replace Assad regime does not meet the interests of the United States.

In June 2014, Syria held a new round of presidential election. Bashar was overwhelmingly re-elected (*Global Times*, 2014: June 6). The United States had no alternative. Bashar has been through the most difficult period. The United States also acknowledged that political negotiation would be the only way to resolve the crisis in Syria, while it still requested Bashar to step down, leading a political solution to the impasse. At this Moment, the “Islamic State” occupied ground in eastern Syria. The United States also carried out air strikes against it. This adds new complicated factors to the Syrian crisis.

(C) After Gaddafi’s death, Libya “Transitional Council” presided and formed a “transitional government”. However, it did not effectively manage the country. More than 1,000 militias ran their own administration and fired against each other. These militias evolved

into two militia forces: secular and Islamist militia. In July 2012, Libya held a “National Assembly” election, and religious forces dominated parliament. The parliament should have been disbanded in February 2014, and the country should hold another “National Congress” election. However, the council decided to extend the mandate of its own by the end of 2014, resulting in strong resentment among the secular forces. Militia factions’ clash occurred from time to time. On June 25, Libya held a “National Congress” election and religious forces was defeated. Intensified conflicts between militia factions of each side occurred in Tripoli and Benghazi, the second largest city of the country. Islamic militants dominated. In August, the “National Congress” was forced to convene in the eastern town of Tobruk near the Egyptian border and the established the new government. However, the “National Congress” declared that the “National Assembly” and its government were illegal. Libya then had coexistence of two parliaments, and two governments. On October 11, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Libya, calling on both parties to end hostilities status and to strengthen the legitimacy of the “National Congress” (*Reference News*, 2014: October 13). On October 18, the United States, France, Italy, Germany and Britain issued a joint communiqué, urging the two fighting militia factions to immediately ceasefire. However, these efforts have not produced positive results. Instead, on November 6, the Libyan Supreme Court responded to Islamic members and ruled the “National Congress” as illegal (*Reference News*, 2014: November 7). The coexistence of the two parliaments and two governments, alone with the continuing fires between Islamic militia and secular armed forces, composes a question: when the chaos can end in Libya?

(D) In June 2013, Hassan Rouhani was elected President of Iran.

He adjusted foreign policy and showed friendliness to the United States. The US gave a timely response to Iran. Their bilateral relations have improved. On September 23, President Obama speeched at the UN Conference, while still stressing the determination to forbid Iran's effort to develop a nuclear bomb, he said, "We do not seek any regime change; we respect the rights of the Iranian people to peacefully use nuclear energy" (*Global Times*, 2013: September 26). On November 24, the six-party and Iran reached a preliminary agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue, including the provisions of the respective obligations within six months, and determined to reach the final agreement by July 20, 2014. After several rounds of negotiations between the six GCC countries and Iran, including direct bilateral US-Iran talks, they failed to reach a final agreement on July 20. The two sides announced the deadline to reach a final agreement would be extended to November 24.

Since July 20, 2014, the parties also held several rounds of talks: US Secretary of State met with the Iranian foreign minister at least six times, but due to the difficulties to bridge their differences, they failed to reach a final agreement by November 24. All concerned parties decided to extend the deadline of a final agreement to June 30, 2015. It is reported that the main differences remained in three aspects: first, the number of centrifuges Iran can keep; the second is the timetable for the West to lift sanctions against Iraq; the third is the length of the effective period of the agreement. Despite the re-extension, all parties have indicated that the negotiations have made progress and are confident on reaching a framework agreement by the end of March 2015, and then to discuss the technical details (*Jiefang Daily*, 2014: November 14).

US and Iraq both wish to solve the Iranian nuclear issue, thus



improving their bilateral relations. The US and Western economic sanctions against Iran have caused great problems to Iranian economy, affecting the livelihood of people and leading to a popular discontent. Iraq is eager to relieve the pressure of Western sanctions. The Obama administration has few achievements in their foreign policy. As a result, they hope to solve the Iranian nuclear issue as part of their diplomatic achievements. However, the US and Iraq have structural contradictions and opposites in strategic orientation, values and geopolitical aspects. US hegemony and the Islamic regime are incompatible. America wants to lead the Middle East affairs, while Iran desires to expand influence in the region. They actually are against each other and distrust each other. The US is not only experiencing domestic disagreement, but also hampered by Israel and the Gulf countries. This situation affects the process of Iranian nuclear negotiations.

### **III. The US Is the Instigator of the Middle East Unrest**

After the 9/11 incident in 2001, the US has launched wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq, and paid a heavy price. It not only startled the Middle East, but also weakened itself. Original domestic balance of power in Iraq has been broken, exacerbating conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites. Two wars have overthrown Iran's two main enemies - Saddam Hussein and the Taliban regime. Consequently, Iran has expanded influence in the Middle East. This exacerbated concerns of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, intensified the conflicts between the Shiite-led Iran and to the Gulf countries, which are mainly Sunni countries. The US took advantage of upheavals in the Arab world, and initiated a "neo-interventionism". The United States

launched the war in Libya, killing Gaddafi. Libya has been in anarchy as well as endless wars since then; the US also provoked a civil war in Syria, resulting in hundreds of thousands of Syrian casualties, refugees, and tremendous devastation. Even more serious is that Syria has become a platform for extreme terrorist forces to recruit and expand their power. According to the Syrian official statistics, anti-government groups owned as many as thousands of arms, which came from more than 80 countries. Middle East unrest has provided the conditions for the development of terrorist forces. United States carried out double standards on the issue of terrorism. It utilized terrorist forces to accomplish its political purposes selfishly by conniving and even helping develop some terrorist forces. However, this in turn hurt the US itself. The rise of the “Islamic State” is a typical case. The US is the instigator of unrest in the Middle East.

Due to the Gulf War in 1991 and the Iraq War in 2003 in the Middle East, along with the impact of the economic and financial crisis, as well as emerging economies and the rise of populations in developing countries, American power and the ability to dominate in the world affairs have been relatively weakened, and it is no longer able to do whatever it wants as in the past (Qian, W., 2014). In 2011, the US shifted its global strategy focus to the Asia-Pacific, and reduced inputs in the Middle East, adjusting its Middle East policy accordingly. Following the withdrawal from Iraq, it decided to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014; the “neo-interventionism” has been slowed down, seeking stability and avoiding chaos. It also strived to avoid military intervention. US ability to lead the Middle East affairs is diminishing. Facing the Libya chaos, the US chose to do nothing; regarding the re-elected president Bashar, the US seemed helpless; in terms of failure of the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks, and a

military conflict with Hamas, the US could hardly deal with them; with regard to the rampant “Islamic State”, it can only implement air strikes. The US inaction, although avoids new unrest, it could not ease the existing unrest, instead, expanded the space for development of terrorists and violent forces.

To maintain its global hegemony strategy, the United States has transferred strategic focus to the Asia-Pacific, but it will not give up the Middle East. Middle East hotspots and Ukraine crisis become containment factors to the United States, so that the United States is often facing embarrassing situations. Even though, the US will still adhere to the decisions of “Asia-Pacific rebalancing strategy”.

#### **IV. The Internal Contradictions Are Complex in the Region, Which Makes It Difficult to Truly Quell Unrest**

Middle East unrest continued, in addition to major powers’ intervention and other external factors, complex internal contradiction in this area is also an important reason.

(A) The secular and religious forces to compete for political power

Mass protests that erupted in the Arab world in 2010 had the most serious impact on republics ruled by the secular forces. This resulted in step down of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Tunisian President Ben Ali, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and the death of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. Islamists utilized the people’s dissatisfaction with secular rulers to expand its influence. Islamic parties in Egypt and Tunisia came to power through elections. Secular forces are not reconciled to fail. They strived to make it difficult for the Islamic ruling party to govern the states. The Muslim brotherhood ruled in Egypt for a year, but was of poor performance and lost

people's support. They were overthrown by the military. In 2014, the military joint hands with secular forces and came to power through elections. Tunisia held parliamentary elections in 2014. The secular political parties prevailed. Religious and secular forces in Libya had fierce fights. The religious forces seemed to have more advantages. In these countries and some other countries, the game between secular forces and religious forces is still ongoing.

(B) The struggle between Sunni and Shia Muslims has intensified

As early as 1300 years ago, the Muslims were split into two sects: Sunni and Shiite. There has been conflict and fight between the two factions. In 1979, Khomeini in Iran established a theocratic state power and self-proclaimed leader of the world's Shiite Muslims. He regarded Iraq as the preferred target of Islamic revolution following Iran. This is also one of the reasons for the outbreak of the eight-year Iran-Iraq war and also an important manifestation of intensified Sunni and Shiite conflicts in contemporary history. In 2003, the United States launched the Iraq war, which not only intensified the sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq, but also intensified the conflict between Sunni dominated countries and Shiite dominated countries. Saudi Arabia and other countries believed that the emergence of Shiite forces in Iraq and Iran, and the "Shiite Crescent Alliance" formed by Syria and Hezbollah of Lebanon, together with Iran's attempt to develop nuclear weapons, had posed a threat to them. In this context, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries supported the anti-Shia struggle by Sunni forces in Iraq. They also provoked Syrian civil war with the United States and together with Turkey in an attempt to overthrow the Bashar al-Assad regime established by Alawite, a Shiite branch. They brought Sunni Muslims, which were the majority in total population, to power, in order to weaken Iran's influence; meanwhile,

they were also strongly opposed to any efforts that may improve relations between the US and Iran.

(C) The religious extremists and terrorist forces have developed in disarray, making the existing disorder chaos. Upheaval in the Arab world and the war in Libya and the Syrian civil war provoked by the United States and the West provide the soil and platforms for the development of extremist terrorist forces. All kinds of terrorist forces are extremely active in southern Algeria and sub-Saharan Africa, the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Iraq and other places.

(D) Local great powers are in a power game, in order to expand influence in the region

Turkey, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other regional powers tried to expand their influence. Turkey has significantly increased investment in the Middle East, actively promoting the “Turkish model” towards Arab countries in transition and actively cooperating with the United States to provoke a civil war in Syria. Faced with rampant “Islamic State”, Turkey on the one hand strengthened vigilance against the IS to prevent it from sneaking into Turkey; on the other hand, in concerns of the increased strength of the Kurds, it offered no help when the “Islamic State” attacked the Syrian border city Kobani, where Kurdish gathered (*Global Times*, 2014: October 9). Turkish performance has raised resentment in some Arab countries.

In order to weaken Iran, Saudi Arabia has involved in provoking a civil war in Syria, and to prevent improvement of relations between the United States and Iran. Due to the domestic chaos, Egypt was once unable to play the role of leader in the Arab world; the Saudi Arabia-led Arab League took the advantage and carries out its plans. Although Saudi Arabia is rich, it has limited influence in the Gulf

region and has been challenged by Qatar in the Gulf. Therefore, it clearly supported the Egyptian military to depose President Mursi, who had a background in Muslim brotherhood, hoping to revive Egypt under the leadership of Sisi.

Since Sisi came to power, Egypt has re-engaged in regional affairs. Hamas and Israel reached a ceasefire agreement in Gaza in mediation of Egypt. Egypt is a big country in the region, as well as the Arab world's leader. Once its domestic economy improves and it restores stability, its impact on regional affairs will be restored.

Bahrain Shiite, backed by Iran, has caused some concern. Iran supports Bashar regime, Iraqi Shiite forces and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran also persuaded Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to give up re-election, which solved the cabinet crisis after the election in Iraq. If Iran can properly resolve the Iranian nuclear issue with the US and the West, stop Western sanctions, and effectively play its own potential, it will become a regional great power that cannot be overlooked.

Israel continues to raise price for peace talks, suppress Hamas and continue expansion of Jewish settlements. It also tried to stop the US from getting close to Iran. In addition, in order to contain Arab countries, it openly supported Kurdish to establish an independent state. Israel will be even more isolated in the Middle East.

## **V. Whether Egypt Can Shift from Chaos to Stability will be the Benchmark for the Arab World**

In May 2014, the Egyptian presidential election was held after the overthrow of Morsi regime. Defense Minister Sisi, who had deposed the Muslim brotherhood president Morsi, resigned his commission and was elected as the president with an overwhelming success

(*Beijing Daily*: 2014: June 5). This result suggests that: a) After three years of turmoil, people desire stability and want to have a strongman with military background to restore political and social stability, revive the economy and improve people's livelihood; b) the military and the secular forces together suppress the Islamic forces and achieved results; c) the Islamic forces had poor performance in its one-year ruling; they lost people's support and exposed its incapability to rule. The rapid rise of Islamists in the Arab upheavals has experienced reversal in the momentum.

In terms that Sisi was elected president, some scholars believe that it is a retrogression of the democratic process as he seized power through coup, which was illegal and a return of Mubarak regime.

In fact, the priority concern of the Egyptian people is their livelihood, followed by "democracy". Facts have proved that street politics lead to turmoil and social disintegration; it can neither solve the livelihood problems, nor can realize the real "democracy". Developing countries such as Egypt need authoritative government established by a strongman to stabilize the situation, restore the economy, improve people's livelihood, and eventually promote democracy. In Egypt, Sisi is the best candidate. If he is able to learn from the lessons of Mubarak's failure and pioneer the new road towards the revival of Egypt, he will gain people's support.

Sisi still has a long way to go as a president. First, he must restore political and social stability. After Sisi came to power, political and social situation in Egypt tends to be stable, but still faces challenges in three areas: First, Muslim brotherhood is not reconciled to its failure. Although Muslim brotherhood has been announced as a terrorist organization, and the government has arrested a number of its leader and key members, it still has deep roots, and thus will still affect

people at the grassroots level; the second is the main force of street protests - young people, they received nothing, and therefore were very disappointed. They are dissatisfied with that political power is now back to the hands of the military; third, extreme terrorist forces are launching attacks in the Sinai Peninsula and other areas. Moreover, Sisi must progressively develop the economy, and improve people's livelihood. Egypt has long been facing economic problems. Economic recovery will not be easy. Inaction on the economy might lead to failures in maintaining social stability. It is a critical issue that relates to the survival of the new regime. After Sisi came to power, he took a series of measures to revive the economy. In particular, on August 5, he announced construction and operation of the Suez Canal, in order to boost economy. This was welcomed by the Egyptian people, and has caught attention from the international community. Finally, he needs to create a favorable external environment. Egypt needs economic development and foreign aid. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have provided a large amount of financial aid. The US once reduced its aid, but in April 2014, restored part of the original aid. Sisi paid two visits to Russia respectively for support in February and in August as the Defense Minister and the president (*Jiefang Daily*, 2014: February 15). In December 2014, he visited China and was warmly welcomed. The two countries decided to upgrade their bilateral relations to a "comprehensive strategic partnership". Overall, Egypt still faces many difficulties and uncertainties, but it is turning from the chaos to stability. Egypt is a regional power, and has been a leader in the Arab world for long. It is the "benchmark" in the Arab.

In addition, in the over two years' ruling of Tunisia Islamists, social instability and economic difficulties were the two outstanding issues. In Tunisia, secular and religious parities—the two major



political parties are relatively mild. In October 2014, the country held a new round of parliamentary elections. The secular party “Call of Tunisia” dominated, and the Islamic party relegated to the second largest party (*Reference News*, 2014: October 31). The Egyptian revolution may be one of the factors contributing to this change. On December 22, Tunisia held a new round of presidential election. In this second round of voting, secular candidate Beji Caid el Sebsi received 55.68% of the votes, and was elected president; incumbent President Marzouki acquired 44.32% of the votes, and acknowledged his defeat (*Jiefang Daily*, 2014: December 23). Tunisian parliamentary and presidential elections went smoothly in a relatively stable atmosphere, indicating a stable outlook for the development of Tunisia.

The wave of protests that once affected almost all Arab countries, as well as the implementation of the US “neo-interventionism”, has led to unexceptional upheavals in the Middle East. In 2014, the Middle East continues to face some unrest. However, there have been many important phenomena at the same time: First, the unprecedented wave of protests stopped in Syria, and did not continue to spread. Since 2012, the majority of Arab countries have quelled the protests, and restored political and social stability. Second, among the four countries that experienced regime, Egypt and Tunisia, although still facing many difficulties and uncertainties, finally started the process of governance. Third, the big countries in this region, except Egypt, such as Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Iran, Turkey, Israel, etc. Although each is facing a lot of problems, they will remain stable. Fourth, the United States has reduced investment in the Middle East, slowing down the implementation of “neo-interventionism” and seeking stability. The overall situation in the Middle East is: “chaos in governances, stable but still chaotic”. The situation is likely to gradually return to that

“wars are confined in some areas, intensity is controllable, and most countries have remained relatively stable and in normal development.”

## **VI. There Is Still Room for the Development of Friendly Cooperation between China and Countries in the Middle East**

As previously mentioned, the Middle East Turmoil occurred one after another, but in most countries remain relatively stable and in normal development. Gulf countries were unhappy with China’s position on the Syrian crisis. Nevertheless, with some efforts, as well as the impact of objective reality, they gradually understand China’s principle and stance. Egypt and Tunisia are expected to be stable. They need foreign investment and foreign aid for economic recovery. After four years of upheaval, countries in the region desire for peace, stability, and development. They generally view China as political partners and reliable friend, who has clear principles and upholds justice; in economic field, China is strong economy that owes technology, and a partner of equality, mutual benefit, win-win principle and common prosperity; in terms of exports of energy, China is a sincere, sustained and reliable buyer. In addition, US Middle East policy is unpopular in the Middle East. It decreased investment in the Middle East and sharply reduced energy reliance to this region as well after energy revolution. The Middle East countries start to look eastwards, particularly to China.

China has already changed its Middle East policy of “Overall Detached with Certain Intervention” since 1980s, and implemented the “positive intervention within capabilities and with focus”

approach. The Middle East is an area of hot issues. These hot issues are not only a threat to peace and development in the region, but also affect the stability and prosperity of the world. As a world power of growing influence, China is looking forward to playing an active role in solving these issues in the Middle East. Middle East countries are mostly developing countries, and thus are important for China in international affairs. Middle East is also a major supplier of energy for China, and an important partner of trade and economic cooperation, as well as a region critical to curb the three forces in western China. The Middle East is of growing importance for China. The Middle East is also an area that the world's major powers are actively expanding their influence. For China, it is an important platform to balance relations among great powers.

China should not be detached from the Middle East affairs, nor should "appropriately intervene", but should "actively involved". However, in the "active involvement", we have to do things within our capabilities in the meantime. Although the United States is relatively weakened, and moves its global strategic focus eastward to the Asia-Pacific region, it did not give up on the Middle East affairs. Though its capability to lead in the Middle East has been weakened, its dominance is not simply diminished. Even compared with European powers and Russia, in many respects, China's influence in the Middle East is still lagging behind. In addition, the complex conflicts in the Middle East--there are power games between secular forces and religious forces, the fights between Sunni and Shiite sects, and the contest for influence between regional powers. When intervening in the Middle East affairs, China needs to be cautious, and never beyond its own abilities. China should not involve in the internal contradictions in this region, but to balance among great

powers. China should also be “focused”: first, to actively develop relations with regional powers, and then expand to more countries; second, to pay attention to the hot issues; third, based on the “One Belt, One Road” strategic vision to accelerate the development of regional and international economic and trade cooperation.

## References

- Aisaiboxi elected president of Tunisia (2014: December 23). *Jiefang Daily*.
- Ban Ki-moon’s visit to Libya: called for a ceasefire dialogue (2014: October 13). *Reference News*.
- Bashar’s reelection stimulates global media war (2014: June 6). *Global Times*.
- Failed to reach Agreement, Iranian nuclear negotiation extended for another seven months (2014: November 14). *Jiefang Daily*.
- Libya’s Supreme Court ruled: the Parliament is not legitimate (2014: November 7). *Reference News*.
- Palestinian factions reached a settlement, Israel decided to terminate the Palestinian peaceful talks (2014: April 25). *Beijing Daily*.
- Qian, W. (2014). Obama Foreign Policy of 2013, in Liu Guchang, ed., *International Studies Report (2013-2014)*, Beijing: World Knowledge Publishing House.
- Rampant “Islamic State” marks the Middle East has stepped into a new chaos (2014: September 23). *China Youth Daily*.
- Sisi elected President of Egypt (2014: June 5). *Beijing Daily*.
- Sisi’s visit to Russia: Egypt towards “Balanced Diplomacy” (2014: February 15). *Jiefang Daily*.
- The Islamic party lost parliamentary elections in Tunisia (2014: October 31). *Reference News*.
- Turkey’s neglecting is criticized by US media (2014: October 9). *Global Times*.
- United States and Iraq dubious: An indirect dialogue (2013: September 26). *Global*

*Analysis on the Trends of Middle East Turmoil*

*Times.*

US air strikes against Armed Extremists in Iraq (2014: August 9). *Beijing Daily.*