

THE GLOBAL DIWAN'S

# Newsletter

CONNECTING  
EAST-WEST  
LEADERS



The Aammiq Wetland in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

EDITORIAL

## It's now time to convene our first Diwaniya

Dear Friends of the Global Diwan,

Our Autumn newsletter comes with a number of good news !

First, we are honoured by the appointment to our Advisory Board of Dr Matsuura, the great Japanese diplomat and former Director-General of UNESCO.

Then, the webinar on India to be held on October 21 is another practical example of the Global Diwan's interest towards the Asia-Pacific region, economically strategic to Europe and the Arab world. And lastly, on the European front, thanks to new partnerships, Rome is now amongst our network of capital cities.

Please note that on November 2, HE Ambassador Karim Amellal will inaugurate our first Diwaniya in Paris together with Laurent Germain, CEO of Egis Group. Both will discuss the subject :

“The Mediterranean, strong ambitions for the Euro-Arab dialogue”. Other such events will soon follow throughout 2022 in Frankfurt, Kuwait City and Casablanca.

In this issue, you will discover through various articles the new partners and friends of the Global Diwan ; a portrait of Karima Anbar, our General Manager ; food insecurity in Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq ; the oil market in Iraq and a retrospective of European missionaries in the region during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Enjoy your reading !

**Éric Schell**   
Executive Chairman of  
the Global Diwan

<b>1st Diwaniya</b>	2
<b>Appointment of Dr Matsuura to the Advisory Board</b>	3
<b>Interview with Karima Anbar, General Manager of the Global Diwan</b>	4
<b>Introducing our partners</b>	6
<b>An overview of food insecurity in Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq</b> by Alexandra Troyano-Groux	9
<b>Total confirms its historical presence in Iraq</b> by Shathil Nawaf Taqa	11
<b>European missionaries in the Ottoman Empire and in Persia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century</b> by Thomas Tronet	13



THE GLOBAL DIWAN

# 1<sup>st</sup> Diwaniya – Paris

**THE MEDITERRANEAN,  
STRONG AMBITIONS FOR THE  
EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE**

**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November  
6:30 PM\***

With **Karim Amellal**

Ambassador, Interministerial Delegate to the Mediterranean

And **Laurent Germain**

CEO of Egis Group

With the support of



And in collaboration with



**\*Participation in this event will be by invitation only**

Limited seating available. To receive a personal invitation, please  
RSVP by 26 October at [contact@theglobaldiwan.org](mailto:contact@theglobaldiwan.org)

# Appointment of Dr. Matsuura to the Advisory Board



The Global Diwan is honoured to announce the appointment of Dr. Koichiro Matsuura as Advisory Board member. Alongside our partnership with SGS in Japan (Sustainable Gastronomy in Society), an organisation devoted to sustainable food production and consumption, such an appointment confirms and strengthens our will to open our endeavours further east with the help of established and like-minded actors.

Dr. Koichiro Matsuura was Ambassador to France from 1994 to 1999. After one year as the Chairperson of UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee, he then became the ninth UNESCO’s Director-General from 1999 until 2009.

Dr. Matsuura studied law at the University of Tokyo and economics at Haverford College (Pennsylvania, USA). He received

a Ph.D. from Ritsumeikan University in 2011 for his publication “The Emergence of a New Africa”. He is the author of many books on education, culture and Japan’s diplomacy.

He is currently President of the Africa Society of Japan, Honorary President of the Maison Franco-Japonaise and President of the Advisory Board of SGS.

## SAVE THE DATE

### Webinar :

#### Doing Business with India

**When** \_\_\_\_\_  
October 21, 2021, 11:00 to 12:15 PM

**Where** \_\_\_\_\_  
[Book your seat here](#)

**Who** \_\_\_\_\_  
H.E. Jawed Ashraf, H.E. Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, Sumeet Anand, Akshay Jaitly, Amair Farooqui, Patrick Viellard, Luc Rémont.

### Our 1<sup>st</sup> Diwaniya :

#### The Mediterranean, Strong Ambitions for the Euro-Arab Dialogue

**When** \_\_\_\_\_  
November 2, 2021, 6:30 PM

**Where** \_\_\_\_\_  
Paris

**Who** \_\_\_\_\_  
Karim Amellal, Ambassador, Interministerial Delegate to the Mediterranean and Laurent Germain CEO of Egis Group.

### The Global Diwan Annual Forum

**When** \_\_\_\_\_  
February 5, 2022

**Where** \_\_\_\_\_  
CUM (Centre Universitaire Méditerranéen) in Nice, France

**Who** \_\_\_\_\_  
Global Diwan friends, sponsors and keynote speakers, East and West entrepreneurs and leaders wishing to exchange and share business or success experiences concerning sustainable security on food, air and water in their respective country in the MENA region and in the EU27.

## INTERVIEW

# Interview with Karima Anbar

GENERAL MANAGER AND FOUNDING  
MEMBER OF THE GLOBAL DIWAN 



## How do you view The Global Diwan and its purpose?

I joined The Global Diwan in March 2020 as one of its first founding members as the spirit of the project embodied my own values. The commitment to dialogue and openness are crucial for those wishing to understand the world and its future. The Global Diwan is a unique pan-European business club open to all Europe's neighboring continents, including our friends from Maghreb, the Middle East, and the Gulf countries.

We are creating a place for exchanging views and bringing forth a better kind of knowledge that comes out of respecting each other's differences.

I've learned the importance of embracing differences not only through my early life but also through my career that spans three continents (Europe, Africa, Middle East/Asia) and a number of countries. Namely, I started my career at the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French government serving at the French Missions in Jordan, Palestine, the UAE, and Kuwait. I gained knowledge, expertise and built a network that adds great value to our mission at the Global Diwan.

## Please tell us about your role as the head of the Global Diwan Leadership and Women Mentoring Programmes.

Our Leadership and Women Mentoring Programmes are a great source of motivation to me as its core values are the ones I live by - inclusion, diversity, youth and women's empowerment in the Arab world and beyond.

It is important to me to contribute, in any way, to building bridges between people and communities and bringing in more humanity into any relationship.

In addition to this, I am also a strong advocate of women's empowerment, and I want to help women to free themselves from any cultural or social stereotype. Even more importantly, I want to help them to become psychologically strong and resilient and overcome any challenges they might be facing in order to build a better career for themselves.

My work within our Leadership and Women Mentoring Programmes will have a similar but slightly special focus because we will be supporting the growth of youth and women in the corporate world and entrepreneurship.

This program will enable the exchange of career knowledge and advice, sharing inspiring stories, and learning entrepreneurial skills between aspiring young women and successful women from a large number of companies, political circles and local authorities.

My goal is for our future mentees to see any personal, professional, or social challenges only as prime opportunities for growth.

## How is your mission within the Intisar Foundation an added value for the Global Diwan?

Let me reiterate that I was impressed with the idea of such initiative to forge ties among like-minded people from Europe, the Arab world, Africa and Asia, in order to enable them to enrich and enhance their businesses, projects, and initiatives for the benefit of all.

I became deeply convinced in the power of collaboration to change society for the better. That, I believe, will be what The Global Diwan will offer to all its members.

My work at Intisar Foundation has provided me with an even deeper understanding of how to align interests of different stakeholders - from our high-profile partners to our traumatised beneficiaries in refugee camps - in order to tackle deeply entrenched social issues which do not always have straightforward answers and controllable outcomes. I am convinced that the invaluable network of The Global Diwan, which is already evident from the high-profile personalities appointed Board members, will enable all of us to jointly work on projects.

Lastly, I believe that for the success of any project it is highly important to understand the local culture, especially if you are working on some sensitive topics. For instance, together with HH Sheikha Intisar, I lead a charity that operates at the intersection of two still sensitive and socially stigmatised areas in the Arab world - mental health and women empowerment. I can assure you that our work would not be possible without the two of us having a deep understanding of the local Arab culture. In line with that, the Global Diwan will enable its members to learn how to do business and operate in different cultures which will prove crucial for the success of any of their future projects.

#### **What is your final advice for young entrepreneurs in both Europe and the Arab world?**

I am a firm believer in the power of mentoring. At The Global Diwan, we have made mentorship a priority from the very beginning by launching a mentoring program for young entrepreneurs. If we take the example of Socrates mentoring Plato and Plato mentoring Aristotle, this

trio alone can show us the power of mentor-mentee relationships which date as far back as 400 BC. This is still important in our modern era, and I think we all have the responsibility to transfer our knowledge and support young generations to succeed. Throughout my career, I have always been advised by former ambassadors and managers, and I now want to pay it forward and would encourage everyone to do the same. Mentorship is one of the key to success!

## About Intisar Foundation



Our story began in 2017 when HH Sheikha Intisar AlSabah learned that no mental health support was being offered to Arab women affected by war and violence. She is a firm believer that empowering Arab women has the potential to transform them into the Arab world's most impactful Peacemakers – a goal that should be pursued in all other regions of the world.

Intisar Foundation is the first charitable organisation that utilises drama therapy with an aim to effect a

long-term and systemic social change across the Arab world by truly enabling the psychological recovery and self-empowerment of Arab women traumatised by war and violence. Our mission consists in alleviating trauma in one million Arab women through the use of drama therapy by 2050.

[www.intisarfoundation.org](http://www.intisarfoundation.org)  
[www.intisaralsabah.com](http://www.intisaralsabah.com)



# Introducing our partners:

THE GLOBAL DIWAN CONTINUES TO GROW AND PARTNER WITH ESTABLISHED PLAYERS. IN THIS ISSUE, WE ARE PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO PRESENT THE **SGS ORGANISATION (JAPAN)**, **THE LONDON ENERGY CLUB (UK)** AND **THE BOSPHORUS ENERGY CLUB (TURKEY)**, AND **THE JOINT ITALIAN ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (JIACC)**.

## SGS Organisation

SGS (Sustainable Gastronomy in Society) is a mission-driven, independent organisation founded in 2020, bringing together a diverse range of Japanese high-level figures. All of them already play an active and clear role within their organisations in promoting global change and solutions for safe/healthy, accessible, affordable and sustainable food production and consumption under the “Sustainable Gastronomy in Society” concept. SGS calls for building a multi-layered platform for action-based approach that sustains efforts at key moments to enable stakeholders to promote sustainable and quality food production including bringing the GIs system into Asia and beyond in the 21st century.

Now is the time for SGS to be recognized as a movement-setter by actively engaging stakeholders. By this, we mean managing authorities and playing agencies, policymakers and academia, farmers and consumers. SGS brings people together in a spirit of hope and collaboration for a better global food governance future. There is an ever-growing challenge with sustainability in the world. Food is a function of water, land, culture, labor, technology, economic and policy. From the way we produce, process and consume, food is complex. SGS’s vision is to connect the sustainable food system through an ecosystem to work on the further awareness-raising that needs to be done to convince all relevant actors that lack of citizen-consumer trust or awareness is a tangible outcome that is more essential than ever.

We believe that SGS has a role to play here: having a game-changing plan for this decade of action while engaging each of society’s stakeholders to support the establishment of Sustainable Gastronomy in Society. An opportunity to unite diverse stakeholders within the food and agriculture value chain to promote, define and

measure the sustainable affordability of food, in an effort to expand the production of safe and quality food based on the notion of respect for “terroirs” a different concept from industrialized mass food production.

By 2050, food production could be the primary cause of greenhouse gas emissions and we won’t solve this problem unless we start addressing what we grow, how we grow it and what we end up eating. It is not just the production method, it is also what we eat that present a major opportunity to make progress. As a key measure SGS’ governance mechanism for sustainable gastronomy calls for the promotion of collective action as it combines a moral imperative to act with a tone of sustainability responsibility and inclusiveness. SGS has integrated sustainability throughout the governance structure to facilitate advocacy, implementation of our arrays of actions.

With a comprehensive and widespread cross-sector collaboration mandate that ensures initiatives are coherent, integrated to tackle most challenges of human kind, SGS is a collaborative multi-stakeholders group in Japan with the aim to create a similar panel in Europe then globally.



# The London and Bosphorus Energy Clubs:

BUILDING BRIDGES AND FORGING PARTNERSHIPS IN ENERGY, INVESTMENT AND GEOPOLITICS

MEHMET ÖĞÜTÇÜ 

We are delighted to team up with The Global Diwan, a powerful platform for dialogue and partnership across sectors and regions, with which we share a common vision and purpose.

Our clubs, which will soon be replicated in Shanghai and Doha for greater connectivity in energy, investment and geopolitics, have complementary missions with The Global Diwan, established to boost business, academic and cultural projects and initiatives through exclusive events and networking in Paris, London, Berlin and Rome as well as in major Arab capital cities.

So much and so rapidly are happening in our sector and we need to keep abreast of these dynamics to make sound decisions and assessments. From energy prices to climate change and “Green Deal”, from geopolitical tensions to investment environment, there is no shortage of issues that pose challenges for decision-makers of energy. Our clubs’ real difference comes from their passion to turn challenges into opportunities. This means being the primary platform of bespoke insight by encouraging candid conversations among their corporate and government members. In all our activities, there is a compelling drive to handle complex issues in the best interests of our societies.

Dialogue and partnerships matter a great deal, not merely as a strategy for helping people talk together, but also leading to new levels of coordinated action without the artificial, often tedious process of creating action plans and using consensus-based decision-making. Therefore, the most important work in today’s new economy is creating meaningful and result-oriented conversations between various stakeholders.

Over the past two decades, both the Bosphorus Energy Club (BEC) and the London Energy Club (LEC), which I created and have the privilege to lead, have been

conducting a series of practical experiments to create such unique dialogue and foster new partnerships among the key players in the world of energy, finance, technology and security.

Briefings, discussions and engagements are held discreetly under the “Chatham House Rule” so that no opinion may be attributed outside our activity (unless we want to communicate) to any individual, media or organisation. The subject matters reflect members’ interests and cover industry sector-specific topics, international affairs, Government policy and regulation, investment, technology and global economic dynamics.



# The Joint Italian Arab Chamber of Commerce (JIACC)

We are extremely delighted to be part of this edition of the Global Diwan Newsletter: we strongly believe in the importance of building bridges between countries, cultures and people, and the Global Diwan exemplifies greatly this very idea. It is therefore a true honor to be part of this publication.

The Joint Italian Arab Chamber of Commerce (JIACC) is a relatively young, yet thriving organisation that was established in Italy in September 2015 under the auspices of the Union of Arab Chambers, the Arab League, the Arab Embassies in Rome, as well as with the support of the Italian business and institutional community with the very purpose of further enhancing the relations between Italy and the Arab world.

A not-for-profit association, today JIACC is the sole Italian Arab Chamber to be fully and officially recognised by both the aforementioned Arab institutions and Italian authorities, namely the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economic Development and the Union of Italian Chambers of Commerce. Moreover, the Chamber prides itself with a solid, diverse and verified network encompassing, on the Italian side, the most prominent companies, banks and institutions (e.g. Webuild, Intesa Sanpaolo, SaceSimest, Confindustria, the Italian Trade Agency, just to mention a few) and, on the Arab side, distinguished representatives of the Arab Chambers of Commerce from the Arab member states, as well as prominent businessmen.

Since the inception of the Joint Italian Arab Chamber of Commerce, we have worked hard with passion, commitment and dedication, to fulfill our mission, and to make the Chamber an authentic and effective organisation able to provide support and assistance to both Italian and Arab companies throughout the internationalisation process - as well as become the operational tool at the service of the institutions. In doing so, we have worked daily in close connection and cooperation with our partners from both the private and the public sector to assist companies in their daily operations, explore business and investment opportunities, help them seek the right partner for

their business needs, all providing a wide range of high-quality services that can be divided into three main areas of operation: networking, consulting, information and education.

Indeed, over the past five years, we have fostered new business and cultural relations and contributed to the enhancement of solid ties between Italy and its Arab friends, thanks to events, business missions, seminars, bilateral meetings and programs that we have envisioned and developed always keeping in mind that at the core of any successful relation stands the principle that together we are stronger, as our motto "stronger together" states.

Many of the Chamber's achievements make us very proud, like having created an international event (the Italian Arab Business Forum, the only one of its kind in Italy) which in its three editions gathered around 1500 participants, including representatives of the Arab and Italian governments; a harbinger of partnerships and bilateral meetings.

Yet, as the pandemic has well taught to all of us, we are aware that the path ahead brings many, interesting and sometimes unexpected challenges. It is our job to face and address those challenges and help companies navigate the multitude of opportunities that such challenges often bring with them.





## FOOD SECURITY

# An overview of food insecurity in Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq

Alexandra Troyano-Groux 

FOOD SECURITY PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN MAINTAINING STABILITY AND THE MENA REGION IS THE LARGEST IMPORTER OF FOOD IN THE WORLD. IN THE RECENT TIMES, FOOD INSECURITY HAS INCREASED IN THIS REGION, ADDING A NEW SOURCE OF WEAKNESS IN AN ALREADY FRAGILE REGION. THIS RISE HAS MULTIPLE CAUSES, SUCH AS POLICY CHOICES, CONFLICTS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND DROUGHTS, THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACT.

We have decided to focus on three countries in the region, Lebanon, which is facing a major economic crisis, Iraq where successive conflicts have destroyed much of the agricultural infrastructure and Egypt, facing a galloping demography and an acute shortage of resources. These countries have common problems in terms of access to water, strong dependence on imports of agricultural and agri-food products.

Access to water is a growing challenge as 11 of the 17 countries most affected by water stress in the world are in the region. Climate change is putting considerable pressure on water and agricultural resources. This year has already seen a sharp decrease in rainfall compared to the average regularly observed, leading to increased tensions between countries over the sharing of water resources. This is particularly the case between Syria and Turkey, Iran and Irak, or between Egypt and Ethiopia.

Governments have put in place policies to subsidise basic food products in the three countries. But in Lebanon, the depletion of the central bank's reserves has led to the end of these subsidies and the social

stability net envisaged via supply cards for the poorest is not effective to date.

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Access to water is a growing challenge as 11 of the 17 countries most affected by water stress in the world are in the region.

The [Hunger-Hotspots-March-2021.pdf](#) ([fightfoodcrises.net](http://fightfoodcrises.net)) report ranks Lebanon as “food insecure” for the first time. This report indicates that Lebanon's ability to cope with, and reverse, the effects of multiple political and economic shocks since late 2019 has diminished. Rising unemployment and poverty (now over 75% of the population), skyrocketing inflation, the COVID-19 pandemic and measures to contain its spread have contributed to deteriorating food security

for a growing share of the Lebanese and refugee population.

Basically, there are four pillars to food security, which are food availability, accessibility, utilisation and stability.

**In Lebanon, all the pillars of food security are affected:**

- Food availability is problematic due to both a decrease in agricultural production and import capacities. According to figures from CREAL, a Lebanese agricultural statistics institute, the agricultural GDP would have fallen from LBP 349,000 to LBP 260,038 in constant pounds between 2019 and 2020. The devaluation of the Lebanese pound has made imported inputs unaffordable for the vast majority of farmers, leading to a decline in yields and crop quality. Moreover, import capacities are affected by the suspension in mid-August of the subsidies by the Central Bank in favor of importers of wheat, essential medicines and fuel, which will lead to a further increase in the prices of basic commodities. The cost of the weekly basic subsistence basket

has already increased by 340% since October 2019 and by 45% between the beginning of March and the end of May 2021. The consumer price index (CPI), meanwhile, rose 223% between October 2019 and April 2021.

- Accessibility to food has dramatically decreased with the loss of income of the population. The Lebanese pound has lost more than 90% of its value against the dollar, leading to a significant loss of purchasing power. Thus, the median salary, which was equivalent to 1500 USD two years ago, is now equivalent to less than 100 USD and the minimum wage is now less than 30 USD per month. Accessibility has also been affected by fuel shortages, which greatly complicate transportation logistics, irrigation and cold storage.
- This shortage also affects the use of food (utilisation) by affecting food safety. Dietary intake is another issue, with a rise of inadequate intake.
- Stability: the fluctuation of the Lebanese pound affects the stability of supplies, as well as the political instability in which the country is struggling with a government that has resigned for more than a year.

Egypt presents quite a different picture as it is not in a situation of instability or major economic crisis. Its agriculture is

indeed confronted with the scarcity of water resources, which the filling of the Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia may accentuate. It also faces demographic challenges with a population growth estimated at 2 million per year and 32.5% of the population below the poverty line. According to the 2020 Global Hunger Index, Egypt suffers from a moderate level of hunger, ranking 57 out of 107 countries. Food availability, quality and safety remain challenges as Egypt continues to rely on global markets for more than half of its staples. Malnutrition is another growing public health concern, with a 21.4 percent stunting rate, 16 percent overweight and/or obesity rate. Egyptian President Sissi said it was necessary to change the food subsidy system, which has cost the Egyptian government 2 trillion Egyptian pounds (about 108 billion euros) over the past 10 years and could reach LE 3 trillion over the next 10 years if it is not reformed. The rapid growth of the population (from 9 million in 1900 to 100 million today) puts this system at risk.

With a population of 39 million and 2.4 million people in acute need of food and livelihood assistance, Iraq ranks 37 of 107 countries in 2020 Global Hunger index. Today, Iraq's food security challenges are multifaceted. First, conflicts and instability in the country have led to the destruction of many agricultural infrastructures such as irrigation networks. Then, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the decline in global oil prices has put pressure on Iraq's oil-based economy, slowed development and

heightened food insecurity. Finally, studies suggest that temperatures in Iraq will rise two to seven times faster than the global increase due to climate change, while the United Nations predicts that temperatures in Iraq will increase by two degrees and rainfall will decrease by nine percent over the next three decades. The consequences are already felt across Iraq with farming communities facing shortages of irrigation water and increasing soil salinity. Yet nothing is being done to find a solution with the neighboring countries with which Iraq shares its water resources, namely Iran and Turkey, which are also facing water shortages.

In all three countries, it is the most vulnerable part of the population that pays the price of regional instability, aggravated by corruption, bad governance and the lack of appropriate public policies. As the region will be among the most impacted by climate change, instability, food insecurity and migration are likely to increase.

## ENERGY

# Total confirms its historical presence in Iraq

By Shathil Nawaf Taqa 



FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON'S VISIT TO IRAQ WAS FRUITFUL FOR THE FRENCH INDUSTRY, NOTABLY TOTALENERGIES, WHICH REACHED AN AGREEMENT, COMING INTO EFFECT IN SEPTEMBER, WITH THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT FOR AN AMOUNT OF \$ 10 BILLION FOR VARIOUS PROJECTS.

TotalEnergies will “invest in installations to recover gas that is being flared on three oil fields and as such supply gas to 1,5 GW of power generation capacity in a first phase growing to 3 GW in a second phase” and will “develop 1 GWac of solar electricity generation capacity to supply the Basra regional grid”.

The deal between Iraq and Total includes three agreements:

- The construction of a new gas gathering network and treatment units to supply the local power stations, with TotalEnergies also bringing its expertise to optimise the oil and gas production of the Ratawi field, by building and operating new capacities.

The construction of a large-scale seawater treatment unit to increase water injection capacities in southern Iraq fields without increasing water withdrawals as the country is currently facing a water-stress situation.

This water injection is required to maintain pressure in several fields and as such will help optimising the production of the natural resources in the Basra region. The construction and operation of a

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Total (...) which is undertaking a difficult overhaul of its activity, caught between maintaining oil and gas projects which generate most of its profits, and the desire to increase investments in cleaner energies.

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After suffering a recession of more than 10% of its GDP in 2020, and experiencing several budgetary difficulties, the expected recovery in hydrocarbon prices in 2021 could give the Iraqi economy some leeway.

photovoltaic power plant with a capacity of 1 GWp to supply electricity to the grid in the Basra region. According to various sources, this deal comes in a special context for Total, which is undertaking a difficult overhaul of its activity, caught between maintaining oil and gas projects which generate most of its profits, and the desire to increase investments in cleaner energies. The agreement with the government confirms this new balance that Total wants to put in place.

Total has had a notable presence in Iraq for almost a century. The company was founded when a syndicate of French industrialists and financiers took over the French government's stake in Iraq Petroleum in 1924, then called Turkish Petroleum, and has maintained deep roots in Iraq ever since. President Macron's second visit to Iraq in less than a year confirms this historical relationship between the two countries.

The Iraqi economy faces enormous challenges. If Iraq is one of the largest markets in the region - with a population of 40 million, the country is now heavily affected by the collapse in oil prices, on which more than 90% of the economy

depends and by the effects of confinement (Covid-19) on the informal economy. Indeed, the economy is dominated by the hydrocarbon sector, the main engine of the Iraqi economy (over 90% of budgetary resources and around 50% of GDP).

In addition, Iraq has an oil reserve of about 150 billion barrels, the third proven in the world. The country's production could reach between 6 and 9 million barrels per day according to forecasts by the International Energy Agency (IEA), but it is currently limited by the quotas imposed by OPEC +.

#### **A fragile economy**

After forty years of war and embargo, civil wars, the presence of hostile militias, followed by destruction linked to the presence of Daesh, the needs are immense in the sectors of transport, education, energy, electricity, water, communications and health. The main infrastructure of this historical leading country has been destroyed. An international conference on the reconstruction of Iraq was held in Kuwait in February 2018 without providing any real solutions. The cost of Iraq's reconstruction is estimated at 88 billion USD by the World Bank.

Iraq has been facing a wave of demonstrations for five years, with a new generation coming out to challenge the government as they no longer tolerate the endemic corruption, denied political rights, the confessionalisation of society, the rigidity of social relations and the social pressure that weighs through religious blackmail from the clergy. After suffering a recession of more than 10% of its GDP in 2020, and experiencing several budgetary difficulties, the expected recovery in hydrocarbon prices in 2021 could give the Iraqi economy some leeway. Moreover, unlike 2020, Iraq has a budget for 2021 voted by Parliament in April.

Patrick Pouyanné, TotalEnergies's Chairman and CEO seems to be aware of these challenges: "Our ambition is to assist Iraq in building a more sustainable future by developing access to electricity for its people through a more sustainable use of the country's natural resources such as: reduction of gas flaring that generates air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, water resource management and development of solar energy".

## CULTURE

# European missionaries in the Ottoman Empire and in Persia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Thomas Tronet 

The nineteenth century was the great century of Christian mission, whether Catholic or Protestant. The Muslim world was one of the preferred destinations of these missionaries. However, the mission in Islamic lands had its own particularities. Firstly, it took place in the Ottoman Empire and the Qajar Empire of Persia.

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The European elite became increasingly interested in Islam and its civilisation during the 19th century. The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded in Calcutta in 1784. Then in the 1820s, the Société asiatique of Paris (1822) and the English Royal Asiatic Society in London (1823) were founded.

These two states, despite the appetites of the European powers, managed to maintain their independence throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These states were therefore able to impose their conditions on the missionaries, the most important of which was the ban on proselytising Muslims. Most of the missionaries therefore reserved their missionary activities for the Christians living in these two empires. They invested massively in education, creating schools that welcomed Christians and Muslims.

Numerous Orientalists with missionary zeal went to the Ottoman Empire, which still covered the eastern half of the Mediterranean at the time, and also to the Persian Empire and as far as India. These men of ardent faith were also renowned scholars who were interested in the languages and cultures of the Islamic world. Two missionaries, one Catholic and one Protestant, were pioneers among these ‘missionary scholars’.

The first was Don Leopoldo Sebastiani (1770-1843). This Italian priest, a good connoisseur of Arabic and Persian languages, was sent by Rome on an apostolic mission to Persia, Kabul and Kandahar. Opposed to the policy of France, which then occupied Rome and the Papal States, he was also a political agent in the service of the British crown. His stay in the Ottoman Empire and in Persia enabled him to re-establish relations between Rome

and various Eastern Churches. His mission led him to India. He entered this country at the same time as another important missionary left it : Henry Martyn (1781-1812).

After studying Arabic, Persian and Urdu at the University of Cambridge, this Englishman became a chaplain employed by the British East India Company.

Arriving in Calcutta in 1805, he took advantage of his stay in India to translate the New Testament into Urdu, even before the translation of the Koran into this language. He also began trying to convert Muslims to Christianity in that country. He then travelled to Shiraz (Persia). There he met the religious leaders of the city, with whom he tried to demonstrate the validity of Christianity. His action provoked numerous reactions throughout the Persian Empire, as far as in the Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala (Iraq). More than twenty refutations (*radd-i pādri*) were written against him by various Islamic scholars during the reign of Fath-Ali Shah (1797-1834). Despite his proselytism, he was well received by the Persian political and religious authorities, who called him a “man of God” (*mard-i khodā*).

European missionary activities really took off in the 1830s. This coincided with the development of Orientalist studies in Europe. The European elite became



increasingly interested in Islam and its civilisation during the 19th century. Numerous learned Orientalist societies were founded. The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded in Calcutta in 1784. Then in the 1820s, the Société asiatique de Paris (1822) and the English Royal Asiatic Society in London (1823) were founded. Finally, in 1843, the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* was founded in Leipzig.

The missions in the East had two major consequences. Firstly, the development of knowledge of the Islamic world in Europe and secondly, the creation of noble schools, in which some of the elites of Muslim countries, both Christian and Muslim, were educated. In Constantinople, the St. Benedict's School was founded in 1583 in Galata, the historic European quarter of the Ottoman capital. It trained the Christian elite of the Empire and after the Crimean War (1853-1856), in which the United Kingdom and France were allies of the Ottoman Empire, Muslim students were increasingly numerous.

French, Italian and Austrian catholic missionaries also set up schools in other parts of the Empire, notably in Lebanon where the Christian population was large and the Jesuits went so far as to establish a university, Saint Joseph University, in 1875.

In Persia the situation was different, the Christian population was much smaller than

in the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, the Muslim Persians had a reputation for being more tolerant and open to theological discussions with Christians.

There were Armenians and Christians of the "Church of the East", a Church born in the ancient Persian Empire, separated from the rest of the Church following the Council of Ephesus (431), which condemned the ideas of Nestorius, who maintained that Mary was Christotokos (Mother of Christ) and not Theotokos (Mother of God). These Christians are therefore commonly called "Nestorians". Some of them joined the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century, and are called Chaldeans. It was among these populations that the efforts of European missionaries in Persia were concentrated. These Syriac Christians are mainly found in the province of Iranian Azerbaijan.

Swiss Protestants from the Basel mission founded a school in Tabriz in the early 1830s. The reformist Prince Abbas Mirza (1789-1833), son of the Shah and governor of Azerbaijan, encouraged Europeans to establish schools in the province.

In 1838, the Frenchman Eugène Boré arrived in Persia. He created a "University of Humanities" (*Dār al-'ilm-shināsā'i-yi milla*) in Tabriz to teach European science and culture, in French language, to Christians and Muslims alike. The future Shah of Persia, Naser al-Din (1846-1896) studied there. He was the first Iranian ruler

to travel to Europe, in 1871, 1873 and 1889.

Thanks to Boré, missionaries from the Congregation of the Mission of Saint Vincent de Paul settled in Persia. They founded many schools in Azerbaijan, Isfahan and Tehran. Two important schools were founded in the Persian capital: the Saint-Louis School in 1862 and the Jeanne d'Arc School for Girls in 1865. These two establishments trained the intellectual and political elite of Persia. Sadegh Hedayat, the most famous Iranian writer of the 20th century, and Farah Diba, the last empress of Iran, were among the famous pupils of these two schools. They were closed after the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

In conclusion, we can say that European missionaries played a major role in the 19th century in bringing the culture and history of the Muslim world to Europe. Through their educational action, they also contributed to the formation of the Muslim and Christian elites of the Middle East. In exchange, the latter were introduced to European culture, which facilitated relations between the two regions. Today, it is more necessary than ever that people from the West and the East continue to exchange and learn more about each other's culture in order to establish an honest, solid and lasting relationship.

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