THE SEARCH FOR A NEW REGIONAL ORDER IN THE MIDDLE EAST:
REALITY & ASPIRATIONS

AL SHARQ
STRATEGIC
RESEARCH

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AL SHARQ FORUM

TASK FORCE ON MENA SECURITY

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW REGIONAL ORDER IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REALITY & ASPIRATIONS

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CONTENT

Regional security architecture in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is in disarray. Counter-revolutionary forces are battening down the political hatches, while the failings of erstwhile national social contracts (in the form of substituting 'cheap meat' for 'social justice') and more broadly, the regional system, can no longer be hidden. People of all hues from Jordan, Lebanon, and Sudan to Iraq and Algeria continue to yearn and call for structural transformation.

The region continues to face a myriad of material and interconnected challenges ranging from 'food insecurity,' to a lack of sufficient clean water and energy, persistent unemployment amid population growth, and climate change. Militarization has been on the surge and is allowing ruling elites to collect strategic rental fees from their external allies. Authoritarian regimes are busy licking their wounds, intent on using 'reconstruction' to reconsolidate their rule. Mass exodus from the region continues unabated and is escalating the 'brain drain': Ten thousand Tunisian engineers have reportedly left the country due to worsening financial situation since 2016,[1] whilst a Gallup report found that 27% of Jordanian youth and 29% of the "highly educated population" want to emigrate.[2] It is not unfair to imagine that a considerable number of Iraqis and Lebanese want to do the same. The region teems with armed militias whose magnitudes and fate are anyone's guess but will certainly be difficult to tackle.

Currently, the aging political and economic structures, old-fashioned 'politics of baraka',[3] an archaic leviathan state (which etatized all political practice and opposition movements and nationalized civil

society[4]), and ramshackle regional cooperation institutions cannot meet any of these challenges, without extensive transformation. International actors either continue to prop up the regional status-quo or focus only on such shortsighted objectives as stopping migration flows into Europe or containing and neutralizing 'radicals' in conflict zones. China, Russia, the European Union (EU), India, and the United States of America (USA) continue to support authoritarian regimes in the region either in the name of hackneyed 'support for stability' and 'respect for territorial integrity' or under the guise of 'non-interference policy'. Among several other international forums and meetings, the first-ever summit meeting between the EU and the Arab League in Sharm el-Sheikh in late February 2019, only bolstered international legitimacy of an authoritarian leader. The Trump administration does not even attempt to hide its glee at the chance to work with authoritarian strongmen in the region.

The Al Sharq Forum has mobilized a taskforce to take stock of the architecture of the regional security in the MENA region with a view to proposing tangible recommendations for future steps. In doing so it has identified four major themes: 1. state and non-state dynamics; 2. regionalism and regional security institutions; 3. regional order within the global context; 4. energy and security. Joined by five research fellows and a research assistant, this taskforce has hosted several workshops and held a major conference with the participation of more than three hundred experts from twenty-five countries in May 2018. Additionally, there have been study visits to Lebanon, Singapore, Russia, the USA, Belgium, and Qatar as well as interviews with dozens of academics, intellectuals, experts, and former politicians in the year following the conference. Within the same timeframe, the taskforce has published eighteen expert briefs and analyses with translations in Turkish and English.

Theme 1: State and Non-State Dynamics

This theme looked deeply into the crisis of the modern nation-state in the MENA region, the impact of inter-state rivalries on regional security, and the complex phenomenon of the non-state actors. The aftermath of the First World War saw an emergence of top-down Arab nation states based on excessive centralization of state authority at the expense of several ethnic and religious communities. Constructed and maintained as such until the end of the Cold War, these states now find themselves in deep crisis.

Although armed and non-armed non-state actors have often been associated with criminal behavior, their existence has not only predated the emergence of nation-states in the region but was also not always forced upon people. Operating outside the status quo, non-state actors may provide a breathing space for people oppressed by the state. They have often challenged political boundaries, crossed borders to fight in other states, occupied territories, established new forms of governance, and most importantly, they have challenged states in all their functions without exception. They may also have provided social and health services and ensured order and protection for the people when neither existed previously. This theme distinguishes between the non-state actors and seeks to provide a comprehensive roadmap to address non-state actors in the region. Whereas some non-state actors only thrive to instigate regime change and could be content with reforms; others refute the state, its borders, and identity.

Theme 2: Regionalism and Regional Security Institutions

The Middle East has been defined as 'a region without regionalism.' However, it is host to multiple regional cooperation institutions; from

the Arab League to Maghreb Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council, with some members of these institutions also forming part of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. This track studies these, and a plethora of obsolete cooperation schemes in the region such as the Arab Cooperation Council, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syria-Lebanese Union, to explore why and how these institutions came into being, assess their performance, and examine what can be done to establish functioning inclusive cooperation organizations in the MENA region.

Theme 3: MENA Regional Order within the Global Context

In this track our researchers have explored the impact of international actors on MENA regional order. The track has canvassed the evolution and consequences of policies followed by both traditional non-regional actors such as the USA, Russia and the EU, as well as non-traditional non-regional actors such as China and India. While the USA continues to view the Middle East through a militarized lens, the EU suffers from short-term thinking, resulting in a narrow vision which is devoid of strategy and which eventually favors 'crisis management' instead of addressing the root causes of regional chaos.

Theme 4: Energy and Security

This track studied a core subject that sits at the center of Middle East politics, economy, and external relations: energy. The theme brings to the fore the link between energy, climate, authoritarianism, and security challenges in the Middle East. As a result of the growing domestic energy demand in the Middle East, energy developments are increasingly entangled with the broader politics and economics of the region. These, however, are characterized by multiple crises

featuring violent conflicts, the legitimacy of ruling regimes coming into question, economic stagnation and unemployment, as well as inadequate socio-political arrangements.

MENA Regional Security

At the start of this research, the major issue the taskforce had to grapple with was how to approach the subject of regional security architecture in the MENA region. Many other thinktanks and research centers have recently published on the same question, however, many were written from foreign capitals outside the region, looking from the outside-in and at times providing a tendentious reading of regionalism in MENA. As Al Sharq Forum, we wanted to explore the topic of MENA regional security architecture from inside the region. While convening a major conference and separate workshops by inviting experts from inside and outside the region into İstanbul for this purpose, the taskforce also conducted study visits in the region as well. In order to avoid a 'Eurocentric' perspective especially when discussing regional security institutions, and aware that the European experience with regionalism (the European Union) may not necessarily be the only model for others to emulate, the taskforce wanted to be open to other regionalism experiences, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Discussing non-state actors was challenging. Gauging how to classify the abundant number of armed non-state actors in the region proved crucial, especially in terms of providing pointers about modes of engagement with them. Would it be better to still consider Hezbollah an armed non-state actor given its weight in Lebanese politics? It became apparent that non-state actors differed from one another

on account of ideology, command of resources, modes of connection to local communities, and overall demand. There also emerged the question of integration of armed non-state actors into state structures. Should all militias be integrated into the army? Or should some instead be eliminated? Given how the number of non-state actors mushroomed in the region recently, how should the issue of devolution of authority be tackled henceforth?

Another issue up for debate was the institutional backdrop to regional cooperation. How should we assess the strengths and weaknesses of cooperation institutions in the MENA region? Which institutions need to be taken into account? Given the widespread feeling that existing regional institutions such as the Arab League has failed to deliver, should or could they be rejuvenated? If they are to be allowed to die, how should and could new regional institutions be established? Would it be led by business elites? Or civil society through bottom-up processes? To answer these questions, the taskforce needed to look into regime-business relations in the region as well as feel the pulse of civil society. The state of regional cooperation schemes is also linked to the roles and policies of non-regional international actors toward the MENA region.

Outline of the Book

In the following chapters, four themes will be explored in great detail:

The first chapter looks into, state and non-state dynamics in the MENA region. The main idea of the chapter is that new regional or local security arrangements require all concerned parties, insurgents and incumbents to move away from violence. In Libya for instance, some militias even have a veto power; they are powerful local actors,

not obedient proxies of any outside actor. Militias play a similarly pivotal role in other countries in the region. Some groups would face disarmament and disbandment, others would transform into political forces or integrate into state structures, while others would merely accept the legal consequences in exchange for a de-escalation of violence. Power-sharing schemes could fall short of reaching a sustainable compromise with non-state actors that contest the state in place. In cases such as the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq, a credible and genuine devolution of authority is required to engage non-state actors in constructive dialogue. Even though devolution of authority is often associated with federalism and could be perceived as a power fragmentation, a broad spectrum of solutions ranging from local administration to political decentralisation could be implemented.

The second chapter asserts that a paradigm change is needed in the region in order to make regional cooperation more effective, meaning that, the referent object of security cooperation in the MENA region should be people (in the spirit of human security), not states or regimes. Unless it has a normative dimension, "regional cooperation" cannot be given blanket positive meaning. After all, regional cooperation for internal security via exchange of terrorists' names and profiles may seem satisfactory on the surface. Yet, such otherwise high-level security cooperation may not be as good for the people as we think. In order to remain meaningful and even survive under changing conditions, existing regional organizations must learn and adapt, just as any living organism needs to.

In order to make regional security institutions in the MENA region more responsive and relevant, a triple-stage move toward more inclusivity

is urgently needed. States in the region must become more inclusive; first by amending their national constitutions so that they are not based on ethno-sectarian tribal identities (and are not perceived as such by their own people); then the basis of regional organizations such as the Arab League needs to go beyond ethnicity as a criterion for membership. The Arab League must become more than a club exclusive to Arabs if it is to function effectively and responsibly. In the next stage, the region must address its abject failure to engage with other regions and form inter-regional relationships for the benefit of the people, not to further entrench the regimes. The Arab League, for instance, has been woefully weak at reaching out to Africa as a region and establishing more effective cooperation with the EU.

The third chapter focuses on the MENA regional order within the global context. Global actors and environments such as cold-war politics have played a towering role in the current crises in the MENA region by extending various types of extra-regional support for authoritarian regimes. This chapter claims that instead of feeding increased military confrontation, global actors such as Russia together with the EU and its member states (led by Germany and France) should advance regional de-escalation efforts. Promoting regional dialogue remains important and should include concerted efforts to move regional actors away from their current zero-sum calculations and address their perceptions of existential threats. However, for local conflicts to be fully resolved, these must be de-coupled from regional and global power competitions. Arms exporting countries (namely the USA, European states, Russia, and China), should re-consider their provision of arms to Middle Eastern states currently engaged in regional conflicts and violations of international law.

In the fourth and the final chapter, energy and security challenges in the MENA region are discussed. In most Middle Eastern countries energy is central to the political legitimacy of ruling regimes. In the absence of effective democratic institutions, goods such as fuel, power, and water at highly subsidized prices are provided in return for public acquiescence/silence as part of the social contract. Yet, a combination of volatile political situations in the region, peaking energy demand, and the changes in the realm of global energy (including climate change) are challenging the role of energy in the politics and economics of the region.

Notes

1- "OIT: 10 mille ingénieurs ont quitté la Tunisie depuis 2016," Mosaïque FM, 30 September 2018, https://www.mosaiquefm.net/fr/actualite-national-tunisie/415691/oit-10-mille-ingenieurs-ont-quitte-la-tunisie-depuis-2016

2- Renad Aljadid , "Nearly 20 per cent of Jordanian population wish to migrate to another country — Gallup report," The Jordan Times, 20 December 2018, http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/nearly-20-cent-jordanian-population-wish-migrate-another-country-%E2%80%94-gallup-report

3- "A Personal Appraisal of Hassan's Regime," The Central Intelligence Agency (Library of the CIA), p. 8, Accessed November 2019, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP80R01731R002300070008-6.pdf

4- Isam al-Khafaji, 'The Arab Left after Glasnost: Who's Afraid of Bureaustroika?" Middle East Report, No.167, On the Edge of War. November-December 1990. p. 32-33.

Chapter 1 - State and Nonstate Dynamics

A large number of experts, practitioners, and academics believe that the nation-state as an entity in the MENA region is suffering from an existential crisis, and a perpetual problem of conception. Analyzing the root causes of its contemporary crises – further revealed and exacerbated by the Arab spring, is crucial to start understanding the reasons behind the regional disintegration and instability. Often associated with the Sykes-Picot agreement, borders and contemporary states were and still are the main subject of contestation in the region. Nonetheless, when compared to Central and Southeast Europe, Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the Soviet Union, these borders have in fact been among the most stable in the world.

With the end of the American and Soviet strategic competition over the MENA region, incumbent states were pushed to deal with their challenges on their own. This reality was more evident with the US withdrawal from Iraq in 2011. Deprived of what has proven to be essential foreign support to survive, the ability of the MENA states to accommodate and manage the expectations, needs and demands of their people have dramatically declined. Countries with fewer resources and worse human rights track records were the firsts to witness sweeping popular unrest and uprisings. These challenges and turbulences presented new opportunities for aggressive actors to grasp power and exercise leverage in an increasingly defunct regional order. Violence, disorder, and unsolicited foreign interventions created an institutional void in the most vulnerable states. This void was then filled by foreign, local and trans-national non-state actors and as a consequence, ethnic, sectarian and religious tensions increased and the space for dialogue and cooperation shrank.

Often associated with the increase of criminality and abuses of human rights, non-state actors are usually dealt by states with ruthless force and authority. Nonetheless, the perception of non-state actors and how they should be approached should change. Their existence is not a contemporary phenomenon, and they are growing in importance and significance. Inclusive approaches should be adopted in order to de-escalate and engage grass-root and politically aware organizations in the public debate and state reformation. Dialogue, negotiation, intermediation and reconciliation have the potential to lead to stability and correct the very state-centric politics that have long dominated the region.

This chapter delves into the crisis of the nation state in the MENA region, the impact of inter-state rivalries on regional security, and the complex phenomenon of non-state actors. The chapter attempts at classifying, categorizing, and organizing the observations and findings of renowned experts on these subjects. Then, it concludes with suggestions on how to continue this work in the hope of achieving a more candid understanding of the security crisis in the MENA.

The Crisis of the MENA State

The Middle East and North Africa region today consists of twenty-three states, most of which have gained independence only recently. The MENA states manifest a considerable degree of diversity among themselves. The Arab peninsula states −except Yemen, are oil-rich, tribal and are governed by monarchies, but are the least populated countries of the region. The rest of the MENA states on the other hand, are in their vast majority republics, with highly dense urban agglomerations, and diverse sources of natural resources and income.

Despite these differences, they share common traits beyond language, ethnicity and religion.

One main characteristic shared among MENA states, is the top-to-bottom process through which they were established. In the case of Turkey and Iran, both have inherited the legacy of long-standing empires and dynasties and both have gone through an arduous modernization process led by their national armies before adopting a more inclusive form of political order. In contrast, Arabs have gone through an independence process before claiming self-rule and determination. However, in the absence of a credible governance alternative project, it was controversially the imperial powers that created the nascent authority structures. In North Africa, the Levant, Mesopotamia and the Arab peninsula, colonialism either established an elite class of rulers in charge of protecting the newly imposed order or eventually infiltrated with men subject to global powers' imperatives. In both cases, colonialism was a determining factor in shaping the region borders and politics.

Moreover, following the end of the second world war, elites across the region have adopted an extreme form of centralization with little regard for their diverse communities and societies. Consequently, three forms of national identities have emerged, the first dominated by an ethnic or religious majority, the second subject to a minority or coalition of minorities in power, and the third levied by tribal affiliations and loyalties. Under these three forms of imposed identities, a large sector of the population has remained reminiscent of a wider collective sense of belonging that has challenged modern boundaries, borders and statehood, while at the same time also maintaining a strong

attachment to their respective local communities and cultures. Herein lies the paradox of the region's politics. This strong sense of belonging to a trans-national identity is a reflection of yearning for a glorified past and hence legitimacy. While stubborn communal affiliations are a reaction to threats endangering cultural singularities and rights to which their preservation is popularly perceived as a cornerstone to any viable social contract. Therefore, it is safe to assume that another common trait among the MENA states, with the exception of few, is the deficit of legitimacy and prevalence of weak social contracts. Aware of these deficits, elites have justified their rule through three venues: ideology, political economy and military dominance.

Ideologies, whether Pan-Arabism adopted by new republics mainly in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Algeria, and Sudan or Pan-Islamism mainly adopted by Saudi Arabia, Morocco to a lesser degree and later Iran, has rejected statehood. Both ideologies have only recognized states with borders identical to the "Nation" boundaries. Arab nationalism, for instance, defined the existing states as territories as part of a larger Arab nation "ummah أُمّة" that expands from Morocco on the Atlantic to Oman on the Indian Ocean. Whereas, pan-Islamism has maintained a further elusive definition of the nation referring to it as the universal Muslim community.

Political economy too was a determining factor in creating the current nation-state crisis in the region. The economy of the region for an extended period was mainly based on trade and exchange of goods with limited production capacity. With the establishment of the contemporary MENA state, the promise of the ruling elite to their populace was to bring modernity to their societies in exchange for

their obedience. In their pursuit of this quest, two political-economy models emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, socialism in the newly founded republics and rentier economy in the oil-wealthy monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula. Both models shared the principle characteristic of a state-run economy with no individual contribution to the country's wealth. This central approach of managing the state's economy was deliberate in order to resolve the representation problem, no taxation hence no representation. Eventually, socialism ran its course during the 1970s and evolved into state capitalism in the 1980s and 1990s before transforming into crony capitalism in the new millennium under the guise of selective privatization and aggressive open-market policies. Rentier economy, on the other hand, thrived and persisted throughout this period before coming under stress following the drop of oil prices and the increase of public expenditure in the last decade or so.

While ideology and political economy naturally overlap, one can argue that the choice of ideology and the adoption of one economic model or the other both serve to consolidate the authority of the ruling-elite and to assert their dominance over their populace. If the modern version of the western social contract is defined by an exchange of freedom and liberty with prosperity and protection from chaos and foreign invasion, then the dominant version of the region's social contract is subordination to authority in exchange for food and protection from state violence. Indeed, the MENA state is best described as "Mukhabarat" state, a security apparatus-run authority, in-service of the ruling elite. Thus, the state apparatus and established public institutions are nothing more than instruments to ensure the survival of the ruling regimes. However, even though the MENA

state's most common attributes are strong and deeply entrenched regimes and weak states, the level of the regimes' penetration differs from one case to another. In some instances, like in pre-Arab Spring Egypt, the ruling class was large enough to create margins of relative liberty exploiting the lack of central authority. In others, like Syria, an additional class exists, consisting of a family clique to which even the ruling regime works and serves.

With passing time, the inherent crises of the MENA states have continued to grow under the strain of a growing population, increasing public expenditures, and younger demographics. The Arab Spring came as a culmination to the failures of the ruling elite in both state and consensus building. The widespread demonstrations led by the disappointed youth have announced the death of the principles upon which the MENA states were originally established. They have also demonstrated the limits of coercion, centralization and clientelism as a governance structure in the region. Moreover, they have also revealed the low levels of commitment to the state structures and social contracts in place. Nonetheless, these crises have not prevented the further empowerment of security apparatus nor the further disintegration of statehood, and as a consequence they have left the region's people in a complete disarray.

Recommendations

The solution to the MENA state crisis starts by establishing inclusive and pluralist governance structures that respect the considerations of local communities and their inspirations in a comprehensive integration within a broader state structure. Whether by adopting a top-down or a bottom-up approach or both, the elite and the populace

should join efforts in coming to a consensus to accommodate conflict and form an effective devolution of authority while maintaining a credible coordinative center. In that regard, consociational democracy can be seen as an institutional arrangement that produces as much consensus as possible in ethnically and religiously divided societies. These politics of accommodation and compromise were observed in Canada in 1840, in the Netherlands in 1917, both in Lebanon and in Switzerland in 1943, in Austria in 1945, in Malaysia in 1955, in Colombia in 1958, in Cyprus in 1960, in Belgium in 1970, in Czecho-Slovakia in 1989, and in South Africa in 1994.

Two aspects of consensus democracies are worth highlighting. First, most of them were established in situations of tension or violence. Second, they led to the establishment of inclusive governments with a significant degree of autonomy for almost all local communities and a veto power over the most fundamental issues. Consensus democracy may either be based on a consensual culture or be a response to an insufficiently consensual one to produce the minimum level of compromise required for accommodating conflict. Then, in the long run, such arrangements could eventually lead a majoritarian democracy if perceived necessary by the different communities. Nonetheless, the MENA state crisis is not the only cause of insecurity and instability in the region. Inter-state rivalries and exaggerated perception of threats have also contributed to the mistrust environment that is currently reigning in the region.

Inter-state Rivalries

Instead of adopting an inclusive definition of citizenship, states in the region have embraced sectarian or ethnic identities to define the basis of citizens' loyalty. This trend has been partially motivated by internal power dynamics to justify or protect the ruling elite but has also been instrumentalized in rallying loyalist bases against regional rivals. One of the most divisive and recurrent themes in the MENA region is the exploitation of the Sunni and Shia rift. This split is most clearly articulated in the geopolitical competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and it plays out through violence in Iraq, Syria and most recently Yemen. Sectarianism at the individual and group level is a social and mostly harmless identity in pluralistic societies. The drivers of its escalation towards violence are mostly political in nature. The evolution of sectarian identities into political sectarianism is often informed by political and social contexts. This process could be motivated by competition for resources, rapid population growth or increasing rates of unemployment. Nonetheless, elites still tend to appeal to sectarian identities to mobilize communities in competing with other rivals on both local and regional fronts.

Sectarianism is deeply rooted in the historical and social evolution of religion and societies in the region but its most recent resurrection has been induced by foreign interventions and extra-regional politics. This is specifically the case of Iraq after the US invasion in 2003, when many Sunni Arabs felt targeted by a de-Baathification campaign lead by Paul Bremer. The difficult and sometimes impossible participation of Sunnis in domestic politics had led to an uneven access for Shia and Kurds to the central government in Baghdad. This feeling of Sunni disenfranchisement then encouraged the surge of Al-Qaida and

was further exacerbated by Iran's efforts in infiltrating Shia political parties and social movements. Similarly, in Syria, the Pentagon's decision to heavily rely on the Democratic Union Party (PYD) to fight the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria triggered tensions between Kurds and Arabs. Indeed, the US policies in the MENA region have unleashed Sunni-Shia tensions across the region. The US interventions disrupted balances and sponsor states of armed groups and militias exploited the chaos that resulted from these circumstances in advancing their own foreign agendas.

The MENA region is currently reigned by an environment of mistrust between the main regional powers represented by Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Iran, Iraq, Syria, Hezbollah and some Palestinian armed factions form an axis of resistance, while Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain compose a counter regional "moderate" bloc. The resistance axis is a mix of states and non-state actors united in their resistance to Israel and the US "imperialism" in the region. The Saudi-led bloc, on the other hand, is an alliance of authoritarian states joint in their efforts to counter Iran in partnership with the USA and the West. The competition and cold war between the two were further fueled by the Arab spring and the emergence of non-traditional Sunni powers that do not identify with either bloc and instead aspire to imitate the Turkish democratization experience. Consequently, a new alliance emerged between Turkey and Qatar, where the former endorsed a new regional role model, and the latter financially supported and empowered these transformative efforts.

Rivalries between MENA states are currently perceived as a zero-sum game among the major actors. Establishing a regional order of mutual respect and benefits seems farfetched as rivals are actively engaged

in regime change efforts and efforts of mutual destruction. Moreover, once a regime is challenged, it automatically reverts to sectarianism to consolidate its support bases, thus provoking counter-sectarianism among the opposition and creating a never-ending cycle of violence. Consequently, as political competition escalates into military confrontation and civil conflicts, unrestrained violence destroys all possibilities of compromise. Eventually, these conflicts lead to state failure and create power vacuums inviting external interventions. In Syria for instance, all regional blocs and alliances perceived the outcome of the civil conflict as a determining factor in the regional power balance. As Iran shipped in fighters, weapons and oil to support Assad, their regional rivals backed the most sectarian factions because they were perceived as the best fighters. Subsequently, radical armed groups came to enjoy more significant resources and ultimately trumped moderate mainstream opposition groups.

Indeed, states with a higher capacity to protect their borders, use media, financial resources, arms transfers and sectarianism to enable their aggressive interventions within weaker entities. In comparison, states that suffer from a low institutionalization capacity found themselves regularly infiltrated by regional and global powers ready to exploit their weaknesses. This is the case of eastern Libya where Egypt is intervening in support of Haftar, but also Syria by Iran, Turkey, Russia and the USA and Yemen by Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Recommendations

The continued absence of mechanisms to initiate effective cooperation among regional powers, and the lack of coherent policies for confidence-building are plunging the MENA region into a new dark age.

The only form of inter-state interaction in the Middle East is coercion and manipulation. The need to de-escalate regional tensions is vital for re-establishing security before all hope for stability is annihilated. Such dynamics could be introduced by small but repetitive wins, and by building trust over issues with low political priority before tackling the most disruptive issues.

Refugee issues could establish a promising sector of collaboration among hosting countries. The analyses of Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq and their approach to the Syrian refugee crisis, reveals a fragrant lack of coordination and standard policies. If united in addressing their needs with the international community, these states could alter the trajectory of the Syrian conflict, since many of its battles are being fought on a demographic battleground.

Similarly, cooperation can play a vital role in establishing a sustainable regional energy security. Intra-regional trade can help meet energy demands while maximizing the output of scarce natural resources. Following the same logic, common industrial policies could also be implemented to boost the region's global trade potential and enhance regional economic integration.

In a second phase, attempts at reaching regional consensus on divisive issues could be sought. These include joint counter-terrorism efforts and a comprehensive resolution to the Kurdish issue. However, deliberations on such controversial topics should be aborted with extreme caution since they were and still are subject to instrumentalization against regional rivals. The de-escalation process initiated in Astana for instance, even though it is most likely to fail in establishing sustainable peace in Syria, has started a dialogue between

Turkey and Iran on local security concerns. Alternatively, rivalries will keep undermining state structures in identity-fragmented societies and will keep spawning sectarianism and ethnic tensions across the MENA.

The Emergence of Nonstate Actors

Non-state actors are not a new phenomenon; communities as beholders of historical and social legitimacy have always maintained a claim to contest the state or the ruling elites. During the Ottoman rule, ethnic, religious and social homogeneous communities enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. Local groups claimed authority by providing services and judiciary for their respective constituencies while maintaining a loose relationship with Istanbul or the appointed "Vali" in exchange for their protection from foreign invasion. In comparison, nation-states are a newer concept in the region. Moreover, the establishment of new nation-states have created historical grievances and a fertile environment for contesting the newly formed authorities. The post-world war I division of states mostly ignored the ethnic, sectarian, and communal fabric characteristics. Consequently, communities and ideological actors fought their governments for political reforms, freedom, implementation of the rule of law, and to resolve their unresolved grievances.

Nowadays, corruption, nepotism, injustice, educational backwardness and governance failures encourage disenfranchised citizens to challenge the state. Similarly, in the face of state persecution, political parties and movements also metamorphose into violent reactionaries and in their turn contest the states and regimes in place. There are many reasons for the rise and proliferation of non-state actors, but they generally all follow the same trend. They rise when the state gets weaker or

fails to deliver security and services, and then they rush in to fill the vacuum that states leave behind. An emerging trend could be observed following the Arab spring, non-state actors are increasingly influential in shaping the region's politics. Arab states today face a situation in which their weak institutions are challenged by a myriad of non-state actors, spanning across diverse activities, from political and social movements to violent extremists.

Non-state actors are socio-political actors that operate outside the status quo. In some instances, non-state actors behave on behalf of foreign states, but various types operate independently or chose to fulfil their objectives in addition to their sponsors. Nonetheless, the main characteristics of contemporary non-state actors are their increasing capacity to put pressure on states to bring them to the negotiation table. Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, there has been a steady rise in the insurgents' capacities. The literature shows a significant rise in insurgents' victories over stronger incumbents or put differently, in the inability of incumbents to defeat much weaker insurgents. Indeed, armed non-state actors have been altering a historical trend where states monopolize power. Security, military and strategic studies literature provides a wide range of explanations as to why and how weaker insurgents beat or survive stronger state forces. These explanations primarily focus on geography, population, external support, military tactics and military strategy. Nonetheless, it is the access to knowledge in military, management and security by insurgents that has accelerated this shift, the state does not have full monopoly over power anymore, and the non-state actors are making use of this.

Despite similarities among themselves, non-state actors differ from one another; some are ideological with clearly defined political objectives, while others are not. Some adopt a governance model to win the hearts of their respective communities, while others have loose command and control capacities. Some chose to fight the state in urban areas, while others conduct guerrilla warfare. Some attack military targets, while others embrace terrorism against civilians. In general, non-state actors differ according to four distinctive characteristics: territory, ideology, resources and their relationship with local communities and the state.

The level of territorial control is often used as a measurement of success of a non-state actor. These "successful" actors often operate in the open and thrive to establish administrations similar to a state. Moreover, they usually gain partial international recognition, and in many cases, they enjoy external political and economic support to maintain their control. However, territorial control is not the only factor that grants success to a non-state actor. For many, their ability to persist and to prevent their enemies from total power seizure is considered a loss to the concerned state. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that these actors tend to operate transnationally to recruit and to gain new resources.

Another way of differentiating non-state actors is the extent to which they rely on ideology and identity to recruit and mobilize their social bases. Non-state actors manipulate loyalty, solidarity, status, skills and knowledge to appeal to recruits. In pursuit of their unique identity, these groups adopt their norms and values and indoctrinate in their members to stimulate a stronger sense of belonging. These doctrines

are crucial to attracting highly committed individuals. In contrast, economic resources stimulate financial opportunities to individuals seeking either personal gain or fame. In this case, non-state actors thrive to command weapons, money, service delivery, justice, health, and security, to ensure their members' loyalty. In practice, the most experienced and successful actors build their authority on both identity and resources.

In addition to territory, identity and resources, non-state actors also differ on the type of relationship they maintain with their respective constituencies. Some actors are grassroots organizations with a high level of local integration and legitimacy. Meanwhile, others coerce communities under their control into submission, either by use of military force or through their command of resources. Likewise, their relationship with the state and regime in place also have a different impact on their behavior toward the "other". Whereas some actors only thrive to instigate regime change and could be content with reforms; others refute the state, its borders and identity in its entirety. One case or the other, it is crucial to make these differentiations to identify the best course of action in dealing with the actors concerned.

Nonetheless, non-state actors are a complex and sophisticated phenomenon; they evolve and assume multiple identities. For instance, Hezbollah challenges the dichotomy between a state and a non-state actor. It recognizes the existing regional order and has practices that are usually attributed to a state actor. According to the classical Weberian definition, Hezbollah acts as a state since its administrative staff exercise a monopoly of violence in enforcing its authority and order over a broad sector of the society. However, it is

not formally recognized as a state and is still defined as a non-state actor. Furthermore, Hezbollah illustrates non-linear organizational practices as a result of its multiple identities. Indeed, the group acts as the Lebanese state in claiming a monopoly on the means of force, and maintenance of order. It also assumes a sub-national identity reflected in its representation of Shia Lebanese and acts as a part of a broader supra-state entity axis of resistance headed by Iran. Hezbollah's multiple identities evolved and adopted a new role with each critical juncture it endured. The group still engages in local and national politics, but it has also endorsed a regional role too. This is not the specific case of Hezbollah only; many other non-state actors follow a very similar evolution and are not anymore contented with claiming authority over their respective communities.

The dominant analytical paradigm adopted by academics reflects a very "state-centric" view of the world. According to this view, states are defined by sovereignty, recognition, and control over a territory and a population, all of which are challenged by non-state actors in the MENA region. Moreover, the international legal regime is inadequate when it comes to holding non-state actors accountable for their actions. By recognizing the multiple identities, roles, and behaviors of non-state actors, a broader understanding of their development could be reached. Such a new understanding is crucial to enable an alternative paradigm of how to deal with non-state actors. Nevertheless, no matter how widespread the non-state phenomenon has become, the state is expected to remain in regional order. What it is important to recognize is that states are no longer the single actor in the MENA region.

Recommendations

The dominating state-centric paradigm in dealing with non-state actors has proven harmful and ultimately incapable of producing lasting stability and sustainable security arrangements. The experiences of the last several decades suggest that non-state actors cannot be eliminated. They can be contained, their capabilities can be degraded, but by nature they adjust to new constraints, exploit opportunities, and reinvent themselves to meet new environments. These organizations are increasingly adopting states' characteristics; they control territory, engage in diplomacy, build constituencies, and play politics. Moreover, they often represent genuine interests and are integrated within communities. However, they are often responsible for violent escalations, the breach of international humanitarian law, and for creating parallel governance and economies.

Different strategies and concepts should be adopted to interact with each specific case, their degree of dispersion, their impact on communities, their view of the state structures and their engagement in regional politics should all generate different models of engagement. This section aims to introduce and explore inclusive approaches on how to deal with the phenomenon. It does not review existing CT, CVE and other coercive approaches. Instead, it adopts an initial framework that starts with de-escalation, then reconciliation, integration and reasonable devolution of authority.

Working towards new regional or local security arrangements requires inducing a transformation out of the violence of all concerned parties, insurgents and incumbents included. Some groups would face disarmament and disbandment, others would transform into

political forces or integrate state structures, while others would merely accept legal consequences in exchange for the de-escalation of violence. Observations made in Libya, Algeria, and South Africa, show that there are four conditions to instigate such a transformation:

1. Leadership: capable and rational leaders on every side are needed to introduce shifting politics. Needless to say, these leaders should believe in transformation, and they should retain a minimum skill set of negotiation capacities.

2. Recognition of the status-quo: without a status-quo, engaged parties would naturally be inclined to pursuing their objectives with violence. Moreover, even in the case when the status-quo is reached in a conflict, leaders from all sides should acknowledge its negative impact on themselves.

3. Common objectives: In many cases, the objectives of leaders on opposing sides could be reconciled if they both engage in a constructive compromise.

4. Foreign support: It has been observed that whenever regional or international sponsors agree or reach a compromise, often their local partners/clients follow their lead.

Many non-state actors are driven by historical grievances and political demands, which can be addressed through negotiations and reconciliation. In essence, reconciliation and conflict management are bargaining processes aimed at establishing new settings that acknowledge the preferences and interests of all parties of the conflict and accommodate grievances and conflict without resorting to violence. Several strategies and tactics have been observed in

similar cases to implement such an approach. Some aim at co-opting leaderships and integrating them into the state apparatus. For instance, they are given a share in distributing resources and sharing political responsibility. However, with loose or non-functional accountability or law enforcement, such power-sharing schemes could lead to further entrenchment with no formal or real integration. This is precisely the case of Libya after the end of the Qaddafi regime where armed opposition groups were integrated into a newly established political system, by offering them governorates and ministries. The allocated resources for each establishment was then exploited to empower their kinships and respective groups, and eventually, with the increasing conflict of interests, violence broke out again. Other strategies use a more formal arrangement with international support and guarantees. In Lebanon for instance, al-Taif agreement was enforced by foreign sponsors on local factions, and then collective financial and economic incentives were introduced to encourage co-existence and cooperation.

Following such agreements, the reconciliation process too could be initiated. In South Africa, an informal process of addressing the violent past, including the handling of war crimes and war criminals, was essential for the establishment of societal peace. Such processes present a framework for perpetrators of violence to accept basic norms of accountability and responsibility vis-a-vis their victims. Confessions of guilt, public remorse, but also criminal tribunals and formal amnesty are all standard tools for reconciliation processes. Nonetheless, it is important to note that some of these strategies need popular support and collective buy-in in order to succeed and not to harm the overall reconciliation process. For instance, amnesty

provisions are usually contested because they fail to implement justice demanded by victims, and if their grievances are left unappeased, then new cycles of violence could emerge. Bottom-line, these strategies require an acute knowledge of the environment, the failures of the concerned states, and the drivers and different characters of non-state actors in order to succeed. Moreover, they need to foster long-term transformation processes that involve a genuine change of policies and behavior, rather than superficial cosmetics and shallow reforms.

Ultimately, power-sharing schemes could fall short of reaching a sustainable compromise with non-state actors that contest the state in place. In such cases, like the KRG in Iraq, a credible and genuine devolution of authority is required to engage non-state actors in a constructive dialogue. Even though devolution of authority is often associated with federalism and could be perceived as a power of fragmentation, a broad spectrum of solutions ranging from local administration to political decentralization could be implemented instead. Beyond the political implications of decentralization, it also has economic considerations. Highly centralized and top-down service delivery is expensive, inflexible and adapts slowly to changes.

Furthermore, the void created by either regime collapse or state incapacity is almost always filled by spontaneous grass-root initiatives in governance. Recognizing and formalizing these efforts could harmonize decentralization and initiate positive transfer of knowledge and experiences. More importantly, democracy could better succeed in functioning local, participatory self-governance institutions, as a body of research suggests.

Nonetheless, even as principles of decentralization are incorporated in constitutional, policy and regulatory framework, its successful implementation could be endangered by a lack of commitment by the central government or by the failure by local administration/authority to adequately fulfil their functions and responsibilities. Therefore, decentralization should be approached incrementally and in a broad consultative manner.

What is next?

The conditions under which the majority of the region's states were established, have created historical grievances among marginalized communities, and have failed to deliver basic expectations in freedom, popular participation, and responsible governance. Over the last century, republican regimes have confiscated their respective state structures and used their command of authority and military means to coerce local population into submission. In contrast, monarchies have granted broader liberties to their subjects but still, thrive to control them through the command of rent and resources. The MENA state under the growing pressure of younger demographics and the fall in oil prices is no longer capable of maintaining a defunct, archaic and inefficient governance. This report delves into the reasons behind these failures and suggests establishing more inclusive structures to deal with the challenges of the state. Consensus democracy was presented as one alternative to accommodate all communities into a comprehensive power-sharing scheme. In addition to the rich and detailed description of the contemporary state crisis in the region, further deliberation is needed to define and explore sustainable and credible solutions. Such solutions should engage communities,

succeed at fulfilling their demands and contain authoritarian regimes without resorting to violence.

The report then transitioned to discuss inter-state rivalries, and how regional powers have shown a systematic tendency to exploit weak institutional capacities in the post-Arab Spring countries. The competition for regional hegemony has resulted in creating a zero-sum struggle among high-level ruling elites. This perception of an existential threat eventually reached local communities and was recruited to fight proxy wars on behalf of regional poles and alliances. This report suggests that moving forward areas of low politics such as refugees, common industrial policies and economic cooperation should be prioritized on the collaboration front in order to rebuild trust between the region's state. Explored solutions in the three other tracks should be included in detail to design a more comprehensive framework for regional cooperation. Additionally, it would be beneficial to explore the next stages to apprehend after reaching a sort of agreement on areas of technical cooperation.

Finally, the report studied the reasons for the proliferation of non-state actors' in the MENA region and have caught the nuances between the different groups and grassroots organizations. Aware of the necessity to explore alternatives to the traditional coercive strategies and methods on how to interact and deal with non-state actors, experts have suggested an inclusive framework consisted of de-escalation, reconciliation and later on integration. A certain consensus emerged during the workshop on the viability of adopting decentralization as an efficient governance structure to appease grievances and to guarantee a better repartition of authority and responsibility among

concerned actors. Similarly, the report underlines the necessity of maintaining a credible and capable center to ensure a more prosperous and sustainable devolution of authority. Further examination of previous experiences in the region could lead to the establishment of a comprehensive framework to more positively engage non-state actors into local and regional security arrangements. Additionally, particular attention should be spent on studying and analyzing the potential of civil societies in stabilization processes, including women, veterans and religious organizations.

Chapter 2 - Regionalism and Regional Security Institutions in the MENA Region

Regionalism

Regionalism's first wave started with a debate on regionalism vs. universalism in the 1940s and 50s and eventually resulted in the creation of the United Nations. The underlying idea was that regional organizations, with a better understanding of local conditions (values and culture), would be in a much better position to solve regional issues than distant global actors or global organizations. This paved the way for the recognition of regionalism in the UN Charter, with the Arab League and the Organization of American States being established as two of the very first regional organizations.[1]

The formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) triggered a new, second, wave of regionalism in the 1960s. This wave witnessed the formation of both micro-economic organizations geared towards enhancing economic integration and macro-regional political organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) created to manage conflicts. Regional integration theories such as neo-functionalism notably emerged in this wave. Neo-functionalists emphasized a liberal-pluralist understanding of power, put forward concepts such as 'task expansion' and 'spillover' in order to argue that regionalism efforts should start with low-politics issues such as disaster management and move on over time to cooperation over high-politics issues such as military cooperation. Transactionalism as a theory of regional integration also emerged in this wave. Transactionalists focused on the formation of a 'security community' among a group of states who would no longer perceive using force.

They also harbor longer term expectations based on gradual change. Such groups of states could either amalgamate their sovereignties or remain pluralistic in order to maintain their formal independence. The end goal of such an effort would be to form a collective regional identity, a 'we feeling'.[2]

A third wave, called 'new regionalism', took place after the mid-1980s and continued into the 1990s with the accelerated impact of new discourses of globalization and interdependence. In this period, micro-regional political bodies such as the Maghreb Union and Visegrad Pact and meso-regional security bodies such as OSCE and economic bodies such as Mercosur emerged.[3] The third wave recognized that regionalism is a more multifaceted and comprehensive phenomenon than previously conceived and as such that the role of both state and non-state actors need to be taken into account to explain it. New regionalism therefore "shifted the focus away from formal institutions toward studying informal sectors, parallel economies, and non-state coalitions."[4]

Regionalism can thus be understood "as a policy and project whereby states and non-state actors cooperate and coordinate strategy within a given region."[5] A closely-related term, regionalization, "implies concentration of activity at a regional level beyond the nation state. Regionalization thus increases with greater interdependence and interaction regarding ideas and communication, people and capital, goods and services."[6] 'Regional integration' however marks an advanced level of regional cooperation, in which regional identities may emerge and foreign and security policies witness a greater level of alignment. In other words, regional integration describes the process of supranationalization of authority or shifting sovereignty upward to a regional structure.

External actors may also contribute to development of regionalism. Outside actors can either encourage or impede regionalization efforts. They can support 'integration-friendly' political forces in a region and contribute to regionalization processes by favoring communicating with a region as a whole instead of using exclusive bilateral channels. Moreover, outside actors may themselves or through third parties encourage outside investment in regional infrastructural networks as well.[7] For instance, fairly early after WWII ended, Japan, despite lingering memories from the war, engaged Southeast Asia and invested fairly extensively to interconnect regional countries in order to play the overall role of external partner for intra-regional development. External actors may also be perceived as a threat by a 'region' and thus unwittingly help regional efforts to counter it. People of a region may also form regional awareness and identity in reference to an external threat.

At some level, regionalism depends on establishing inter-state or intergovernmental regimes or agreements, that is institutions. "Such [regional] cooperation can be formal or informal, and high levels of institutionalization are no guarantee of either effectiveness or political importance."[8] A regional organization without thick institutions can be as effective as others by embracing light bureaucratic organizations. Members of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members for example deliberately avoided formal institutionalization of regional cooperation, preferring informal links and ad hoc mechanisms. Institutional design -that is "formal and informal rules and organizational features that constitute the institution and that function as either the constraints on choice of actors or the bare bones of the social environment within which agents interact, or both"[9]-, however, matters for regionalism. For instance, when institutions choose to operate on the principle of 'consensus'/unanimity, not only

is reaching consensus difficult but also any agreement that could potentially be reached will be watered down as it will be based on the 'lowest common denominator'.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has not been an exception to regionalism efforts since the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Arab nation-states. The next session provides a brief discussion of some of these past attempts at regionalism in the Middle East and North Africa.

1- Syro-Lebanese Economic Union (1943-1950)

Over the 1940s, more specifically from 1943 to 1950, Syria and Lebanon tried to work out an integration scheme including a customs union that both sides believed would be economically and politically beneficial despite lingering mutual suspicions. Lebanese and Syrian Arab nationalists were the primary constituency and defenders of unity while Lebanese nationalists deeply doubted Syrian intentions regarding Lebanese sovereignty and whether Syria was pursuing a 'Greater Syria' scheme under the guise of cooperation.

What eventually doomed this unity attempt was domestic actors on both sides more than external actors. The discourse focused too much on liberating both states from the French rule and neither side invested enough in different areas of functional cooperation. "... Beirut, and in particular Damascus, utilized numerous means of economic pressure, such as frequent border closures and food [wheat] blockades, to enforce an agreement that only led to the deepening of the schism between the Lebanese and Syrian elites that had jointly, and a few years earlier, successfully ousted France from their homelands."[10] Despite the 1943 customs union between Syria and Lebanon (when still under French occupation), both Lebanon and Syria followed separate monetary and fiscal policies. Different philosophies governed their economies

as well. While Lebanon pursued free-market economy with its port acting as the hub of commerce in the region, the Syrian economy remained inward-looking and protectionist. Despite a shared discourse of unity, investment in infrastructure to connect both sides was also severely lacking. Syrian merchants complained about 'the lack of Syrian government spending on development projects, particularly the improvement of such infrastructure as the airports and railways… Beirut was a source of great envy, where passengers arriving from Europe to Iraq, Iran and India disembarked if they were travelling by air or sea. Nothing connected Beirut with Damascus except an old railway suitable for the transport of coal and stone'.[11]

2- The Union of Arab States

Iraq and the Kingdom of Jordan declared an 'Arab Union' on May 19, 1958, primarily to counter the concurrent formation of United Arab Republic between Syria and Egypt. Eisenhower administration was in full knowledge of this new entity.

The Arab Union was strongly supported by both the United Kingdom and the United States economically and politically.[12] The U.S. policy makers, while cautious to avoid antagonizing Nasser too much, believed that "the long-range threat of the United Arab Republic to take over neighboring Arab states was considered to be contrary to the interests of the United States in the area. The most likely challenge to Nasser's advance in the area would be a strong and successful federation of Iraq and Jordan." However, the Arab Union was a top-down project; it did not have popular backing.[13] The Iraqi leadership took this step to protect its 'national interests' while presenting it to the public as a "great step toward achievement [of] Arab ideals."[14]

On the contrary, the popular opinion in Iraq and Jordan was strongly in favor of the United Arab Republic seen as a step toward Pan-Arab

unity.[15] ". . . The Governments of Jordan and Iraq rest mainly on force and are regarded with cynicism and suspicion by all but a small minority in each country."[16] The Arab Union's constitution stipulated that "external affairs will remain as they are at the present time", implying no radical transformation in Iraqi and Jordanian foreign policy. The Union desired to attract Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait as additional members but failed. The military coup d'état in Baghdad in July 1958, effectively ended the Arab Union.

3- Egypt-Syria Union (United Arab Republic)

Different explanations ranging from a likely ascendance of the Communist party in the middle of fierce disputes among Syrian political parties and widespread support by the Syrian public for the unity under the charismatic leadership of Nasser and Egypt's need for allies exist to explain why Syria and Egypt decided to form a union in early 1958. The idea to form a union however came from and was pursued by the elites. As the union took place mostly on the political front, no integration took place on monetary and fiscal policies at the start. Both sides continued to use their own currency and maintained their central banks. While judicial authorities remained separate as well, political parties were terminated in Syria giving way to a single mass organization. A new provisional constitution made up mostly of provisions of the Egyptian Constitution was also formed. Commercial elite in Syria became frustrated with the benefits of the union as the Syrian market became inundated with goods imported through Egypt, which undermined local Syrian businesses. The unity also created an imbalance in the sense that Egyptians occupied key ministries as well as vice-presidential posts. Egyptian military officers were promoted to decision-making posts in the military while Syrians were sidelined or remained few in numbers in similar posts. The union did not produce immediate tangible benefits, especially for the Syrians, who lost some

of their trade with Lebanon and Iraq. A coup in Syria in 1961 led to the break-up of the union.

4- Tunisia and Libya Union

From 1972 to 74, Libya and Tunisia had established ties in education, industrial cooperation and trade development, and in supporting a gradual warming of relations. A joint communiqué in January 1974, known as the Djerba Treaty was issued on the Tunisian island of Djerba, where the two leaders had been meeting and said that the new nation formed -out of a merger between Libya and Tunisia- would be known as the 'Arab Islamic Republic'. The Treaty promised a single republic, to be called the 'Islamic Arab Republic', a single constitution, one flag, one president, one army and singular executive, legislative and judiciary bodies. It was decided that a popular referendum would be held in both countries to approve the decision. Under the terms of the agreement, Tunisia would hold the Presidency and Libya would hold the Defense Ministry.

Later, however, President Bourguiba said that the vote would be postponed to March 20 "for reasons of procedure." Both sides kept their mutual distrust in the post-Djerba process, especially a group within the Tunisian power structure dragging their feet and Libyans acting impulsively. The Tunisian government headed by PM Hedi Nouira also followed bureaucratic delaying tactics in order to undermine the union by positing that a constitutional revision was needed before submitting the merger proposal into referendum and deciding to create committees to study the potential impact of the union. The Treaty eventually failed to materialize as Bourguiba pulled out of the agreement in February and Libyan-Tunisian relations transformed from a possible merger into a full confrontation by 1977 over issues of delimitation of the continental shelf and Libyan oil drilling.

5- Libya and Morocco Union (Oujda Accord, 1984)

King Hassan pursued a few objectives by agreeing to a union with Libya in 1984: he opined that such a union would be a strategic challenge against Algeria, hoped to alleviate some of Morocco's economic problems that had caused riots in January 1984 and convince Libya to follow through the Moroccan-Libyan agreement of 1983 by cutting support for the Polisario. Unity was in perfect parallel to Qaddafi's overall regional rhetoric all along. It also fit well with the Libyan desire to prevent US-led international isolation and enhance its international standing. The USA was very critical of this union. In 1986, however, King Hassan started to perceive Libya more as a burden on its regional and global relations. Morocco was also less concerned about Libyan support to Polisario by now as it was winning the war in Western Sahara. An official visit of Israeli PM Shimon Peres in July 1986 and the Libyan and Syrian condemnation that followed as well as King Hassan's wish to make things right with the United States also put strains on the union. King Hassan of Morocco unilaterally abrogated the accord on 29 September 1986.

6- Arab Cooperation Council (ACC)

If the Arab Union was formed in response to the Syro-Egyptian union in 1958, the Arab Cooperation Council came into being as another 'reactive' regional cooperation organization, this time to balance the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) formed in 1981. Iraq, Jordan, Egypt and the Arab Republic of Yemen came together to establish the Arab Cooperation Council in 1989. The ACC was a consequence of the end of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Egypt, North Yemen, and Jordan had sent military assistance to Iraq during that war. This helped form some sort of trust between these states. After being ostracized from the Arab League for signing the Camp David Treaty with Israel in 1978, Egypt now re-established diplomatic relations with all Arab states

except Syria, Lebanon, and Algeria. (North) Yemen hoped to find an alternative relationship to Saudi Arabia through membership in the ACC and gain some political clout after its application to the GCC had been declined twice before. Iraq had also been left out of the GCC, founded in 1981.

In an announcement in 1988, King Hussein of Jordan said they respected the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) wish to become the sole representative of the Palestinian people and therefore, they renounced Jordan's claim to the Israeli-occupied West Bank. In this environment, Jordan saw the ACC as a new instrument to remain relevant in the region. Jordan also witnessed massive domestic riots in April 1989 as remittances from Jordanian migrants in the Gulf decreased, the Gulf Arab states cut aid, and the domestic economy contracted. The sheer number of formal occasions (17 times in 1989) that ACC members met at either a summit or ministerial level was very promising. However, Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak remained very suspicious of Saddam's true intentions through the ACC. Saddam Hussein's decision to attack Kuwait sounded the death-knell for the ACC. It became instantly deadlocked, as its two most powerful members, Iraq and Egypt, went from being allies to military adversaries overnight.

The Drivers of Regionalism in the MENA region

Top-Down

Regionalism projects often originate with the elites and take place through a top-down process. Feeling domestic and/or regional pressure or convinced of the much-needed (economic and/or political) benefits of regional cooperation, ruling elites, as in the case of the European Union or ASEAN, may decide to 'hang together instead of being hanged separately'. It could also be the case that a regional hegemon creates pacifying and even cooperation-generating effects.

As for the MENA region, there are successful examples of micro-level low-profile cooperation such as in matters like banking and the harmonization of tax codes, both of which have led to a relatively higher level of intra-regional trade. However, the future of the state itself is in question in the region. Several members of the Arab League have been engaged in armed violence through proxies in conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya for several years. The region is failing miserably in terms of economic prosperity, food, water, and human security as well. It is difficult to imagine regional cooperation starting with such dysfunctional states. In states like Libya in the region, resisting disintegration instead of working toward regional integration has become the paramount objective.

At the same time, once they achieved their independence, states in the MENA region have rested on three main pillars: strong executive power, excessively centralized systems, and strong coercive institutions (the police, intelligence, and army). This brings into question whether the region needs go beyond the traditional understanding of national sovereignty. In other words, restoring the old 'rump state' in order to resist 'disintegration' at the expense of disregarding people's real needs may further exacerbate the current disorder in the region. Besides, regional cooperation and 'state functionality' should not be construed as mutually exclusive issues. Regional cooperation does not necessarily engender a decline in the state's legitimacy. On the contrary, regional cooperation may boost domestic legitimacy of a government. Regional cooperation may no longer even be a choice; given post-Arab revolts developments in the region, it may be a pipedream to fully secure 'the national' before 'the regional' in MENA.

Bottom-Up

Sub-state or non-state actors may inspire or push for regionalization attempts. Bottom-up regionalization processes imply society-induced regionalization in either (or all) of the following fields: cultural, economic, political or military. This type of regionalization does not rest on the conscious policy of states to promote. "Although seldom unaffected by state policies, the most important driving forces for economic regionalization come from markets, from private trade and investment flows, and from the policies and decisions of companies."[17] The incentives may arise also from flows of people through markets, migration and the flow of ideas via social networks.

However, civil society in the MENA region, as just one such prospective political actor, is in deep recession. States have dominated the scene, especially in the second half of the 20th century, so much so that regional civil society remains crippled. That is, transnational regional civil society (transnational associations and movements) may not be strong enough to push such cooperation onto the political agenda. Even the modicum of cooperation in some minor areas in the region, though successful, is possible only because states allow it. For instance, the Qatar crisis shows the limits of cooperation on banking in the Gulf. Commercial banks followed the lead of states during the crisis as they pulled away from past agreements done with Qatar or Qatari firms and were warned by governments not to enter into deals with them. Some UAE banks reportedly pulled deposits and loans from their Qatari counterparts. Before the same crisis, the GCC had the most advanced level of coordination and collaboration on disaster management in the region. The GCC had established a 'disaster management center' in Kuwait set up for the whole sub-region. With the crisis, however, whether the Gulf nations would inform Qatar in

case of a disaster emergency is very much in doubt, which does not augur well for future cooperation.

The state overshadows the private economic sector in the region as well. It is extremely difficult to decouple economics from state or regime security. Ruling elites believe that if left unchecked, private sector development may engender political aspirations. Therefore, regimes try to eliminate any possibility for private capital to serve as a base around which the opposition could organize. In Syria for instance, the regime made sure that chambers of commerce and industry in Damascus and Aleppo were either 'men of the regime' or owed to the regime. This prevented such business associations from becoming autonomous pressure groups.[18] In a regional order composed of states that feel existentially insecure, investments are highly 'geopolitical' as well. Both countries and sectors receiving intra-regional investment are selected based on political considerations, not necessarily economic ones. The low-level of cooperation between private businesses in the region is also difficult to sustain without states' consent.

The problems of the private sector in the region is compounded by two additional interrelated facts: the number of multinational companies operating in the region is limited and investors doubt the security of their investments in the region because of lack of rule of law, competition law, transparency, the lack of an equal playing field, and accountability. Not only is the number of multinational companies operating in the region small in number but also most of these multinationals work in non-tradable sectors that do not create much jobs. As a World Bank report pointed out in 2013, "The presence of leading multinationals in the region is limited, especially in non-oil manufacturing. Of the 50 largest multinational firms in MENA, nearly half of them operate in resource and oil manufacturing

sectors; and only 18 are multinationals from R&D oriented countries with strong institutions, of which just 9 are engaged primarily in Greenfield projects in non-oil manufacturing and services. In total, only 12 of the 50 largest multinationals in the MENA region are engaged in tradable non-oil activities – two of them invest primarily in non-oil manufacturing and the other ten invest in commercial services."[19] Foreign companies pondering investment generally opt to stay out of the playing field because they are unsure of the security of their investments, from arbitrary monopolization for instance. Some companies are also scared to do business in Saudi Arabia (and other Arab states) because of "marifa and wasta", the need to find strong connections and powerful intermediaries to provide access at the highest levels and secure government contracts, gain an edge over their competitors, and become exempted from some quotas and limitations. This has been a long-term problem in the region. Investors have long avoided long-term investments in the region, as epitomized in Iraq under Saddam Hussein's strongman rule because "attempts to attract serious long-term investments, such as the sale of the large government-owned luxury hotels, failed due to investors' lack of confidence in the [Iraqi] regime's commitment to upholding property rights. The government's desire to retain shares and representation on the boards of directors increased this apprehension."[20]

Examples abound. The number of banks in Egypt had increased from 7 in 1974 to 98 in 1999 in order to finance investments and consumer imports of the oil-boom years thanks to a high-volume stream of remittances. However, the four large state-owned banks among them have made loans mostly to public sector enterprises. At least 30 percent of these loans were non-performing. But the state banks also partly owned the private-sector banks, enabling them to channel public funds toward a small group of wealthy and well-connected

entrepreneurs.[21] This had not changed much under Mubarak's rule. "In Egypt, for example, the firms of 32 businessmen closely connected with then-President Hosni Mubarak received, in 2010, more than 80% of the credit that went to the formal private sector and earned 60% of the sector's overall profits, while employing only 11% of the country's labour force. In Tunisia, former President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's cronies received 21% of all private-sector profits in 2010, though their firms employed only 1% of Tunisia's labor force."[22]

These practices have been largely pervasive in the region. After barely surviving two successive coup attempts in 1972, King Hassan of Morocco initiated a campaign of 'Moroccanization' (through initiatives such as land redistribution) to ingratiate himself with the people and bolster his legitimacy. What happened instead however was that the rules of the game remained the same, as 'the Fassi elite' who had been in control of the economy, became further entrenched in the process.[23] In Iraq under Saddam Hussein, "a procedure called al-amana, whereby contracts are handed to "trustworthy" people without recourse to tenders, under the pretext that they deal with matters of strategic national importance" was used.[24] 'In such crony-capitalist systems businessmen and bureaucrats ally in cabals to seek benefits by shaping state intervention in the economy. State-created rents are given in a blanket manner; not pegged to performance nor productivity of a firm.'[25] This stands in stark contrast to other regional bodies such as ASEAN where there is genuine competition in the private sector.

The Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and startups can be potentially liberating for the youth and promising for future regional cooperation. However, SMEs are largely overdependent on the state through the provision of funds as well. Bank financing leans heavily towards large companies that are owned either by influential business families or the state. SMEs that lack the necessary connections find

access to funding difficult.[26] One can add to this the problem of varying levels of armed forces' control over economies and monopoly over some economic sectors in the region. The extent of the Egyptian army's involvement in the economy kills competition immediately as it crowds out the SMEs. When it comes to the bottom-up approach to regional cooperation, the problem is not only about the dismal state of civil society or overdependence of the private sector on the state but also the lack of predictability because the independent judiciary is lacking, with the exception of Dubai, for instance.

Regional Institutions, Their Functioning and Performance

The following section addresses the largest four regional security institutions on both micro-regional, regional, and extra-regional levels: The League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Maghreb Union.

The Arab League

Representatives from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan signed the 'Protocol of Alexandria' on 7 October 1944 to initiate the League of Arab States (LAS). The charter of the League of Arab States (the Arab League) was adopted in Cairo the following year on 22 March 1945. Saudi Arabia and Yemen also joined the initial group of five Arab countries as signatories to the charter of the League. In the five months that passed between the signing of the Alexandria Protocol and the adoption of the charter, several crucial changes had been made in the principles and articles. These changes eventually determined the evolution of cooperation within the Arab League, set its limits, and curtailed some of its original objectives.

■ Whereas the Alexandria Protocol did not prescribe any basis of inter-Arab cooperation except with the goal of unity, the Charter insisted on the "respect for the independence and sovereignty of these states."

■ Whereas the Protocols insisted on periodic meetings, the Charter did not.

■ Whereas the Protocols discussed the importance of binding decisions, the Charter reserved veto power for states.

■ The Protocols demanded that Arab states adopt a common foreign policy while the Charter insisted that each state be free to pursue its own foreign policy.

■ Whereas the Protocols made no mention of domestic forms of government, the Charter insisted that states respect each other's choice of a system of government.

■ The Protocols hinted of Arab states yielding their sovereignty to unification while the Charter insisted on the retention of sovereignty (although Article Nine paid homage to the possibility of unification). And, finally, the Arab states debated and eventually discarded any mention of a collective security system or institutionalized military cooperation.

The Protocols seemed to be more than what many Arab states were willing to bear for Arab unity.[27] The League Council (as the summit meeting) adopted 'the Pact for Mutual Defense and Economic Cooperation in April 1950'. The 2nd article of this Pact stated that any aggression against an Arab country would be deemed an attack against all. Article 10 in the same Pact stated that member states cannot sign a treaty in contradiction with this Pact. The Pact also created an economic council to boost and oversee economic cooperation between Arab states. Decades later, the Arab summit convened in Amman in 1980 and decided to adopt a charter for Joint Economic Action. This charter was boycotted by Algeria, Syria, and Libya while seventeen members adopted it. The 1st article of this charter seeks to compartmentalize political, economic and social issues among the

member states to protect economic cooperation from the vagaries of Arab politics. It also established the principle of freedom of movement for both Arab capital and Arab labour.

The institutional structure of the Arab League consisted of the Summit of Heads of States, the Permanent Committee, the Secretariat, and the Transitional Arab Parliament. Decision-making in the Arab League is based on consensus and 'unanimity', which mean that all states must reach unanimity for a decision to be binding. Thus, member states retain the right to have a final decision on important issues. Both the popular and elite discourse of Arab nationalism and the long-awaited 'Arab Unity' played a crucial role in the formation of the Arab League. Egypt played first hegemonic role in the Arab League from the 1950s through the 1960s and even into the 70s. Under Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, the Arab League functioned as an extension or arm of Egyptian government. Its Secretary-Generals were Egyptians until Chadli Klibi, a Tunisian diplomat, was selected in 1979. In the 1950s, Egypt funded 40 to 50% of the LAS budget. In 1974, almost 70% of staff members of the League consisted of Egyptians. Arab states such as Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia were deeply afraid that the League would infringe on their sovereignty. In a conversation with the US Secretary of State Dean Rusk in 1962, the Crown Prince Faysal said of the Arab League that "The League was weakened by the advent of the Egyptian Revolution and Nasser's attitude of condescension toward and "trusteeship" over other Arab states."[28] With the independence and later post-oil crisis rise of the economically-rich Gulf nations, Egypt lost its dominant position in the Arab League. Oil-rich Gulf nations made sure that when they extended aid to members of the Organization of African Unity in the name of fostering cooperation, the aid would be perceived to be coming from them directly instead of from the Arab states as a whole.

In the Arab League, it was not geography that determined who would be included and who would be excluded from membership. Membership rested on Arab identity of a state. The League Charter established 'arbitration' and 'mediation' as two methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes between member States. Article 5 states that the League Council 'shall mediate in all differences which threaten to lead to war between two member states, or a member State and a third State, with a view to bringing about their reconciliation'. Decisions concerning mediation are taken by a majority vote and create no binding obligations. In line with Article 5, the League Council may also undertake 'arbitration'. However, arbitration is only available for disputes between member States, and where the dispute 'does not concern a State's independence, sovereignty or territorial integrity'. Crucially, the Council cannot attempt arbitration without the consent of the parties to the dispute. However, decisions concerning arbitration, from which the disputants are excluded, are 'enforceable and obligatory'.

Gulf Cooperation Council

An idea of forming a sub-region out of the Gulf existed at the moment Britain decided to withdraw from the Gulf. The British desired to leave behind an orderly pattern of Gulf state relationships once they formally left the region after 1971. The original scheme planned for a 'Federation of Nine' —seven Trucial states, Bahrain and Qatar'. When Qatar and Bahrain made it known that they wanted to become independent, the option that remained was to create two independent states in Bahrain and Qatar, a federation of the remaining seven smaller states and finally Oman as an independent state. The USA preferred a federation of nine to seven, nine independent states being the least favored option.[29]

Much-desired unity in the Gulf finally came through with the establishment of the GCC in 1981. It was the result of the concurrent emergence of two external threats, the revolution in Iran in 1979 and subsequently Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). As the founding Secretary General of the GCC, Abdulla Bishara, later said "it was Iran and Iraq's resorting to armed conflict that provided the immediate geostrategic and geopolitical context and also the pretext for the GCC's establishment, indeed its necessity... each had armed forces that were larger, better equipped, and more experienced than all six of ours." A regional organization such as the GCC was a seamless fit with American support for regionalism in the Gulf.[30] The idea of sub-regional unity in the Gulf had been set aside earlier when Iraq insisted on being a member and could not be ignored. With Iraq preoccupied with its war with Iran, the remaining Gulf states saw an opportunity and felt the necessity to push for a political as well as an economic grouping of the six traditional ruling regimes in the Arabian Peninsula.[31] Common external threat perceptions were so dire that normally hesitant and slow-moving conservative Gulf states took less than three months to unanimously agree on the broad ideas and goals of the GCC.

The American expectation from the grouping was not for regional economic integration. As Kenneth A. Stammerman, Economic Counselor in Kuwait City (1987-1989), and Consul General, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, said "They [the GCC] were a gentlemen's club. We didn't see there would be any integration of the economies, there was nothing to integrate. They would keep from competing on certain things, so that one company would build the petrochemical plant and the other would build a different kind of petrochemical plant. But they would not compete in export markets... we did not see any future political integration. The Saudis like to think of it as, this is what will be the future state dominated by Saudi Arabia or GCC, the club of the Gulf. A

lot of the other Arabs didn't like that idea, but they couldn't speak out against the Saudis, they were just too big."[32] Accordingly, the GCC did not transform into a collective security system, a security community or a military alliance. The decisions of the Supreme Council, the highest decision-making body in the GCC hierarchy, are non-binding on members. The General Secretariat has no enforcement power other than persuasion. Prevalent affinity between the ruling elites in the Gulf played a major role in facilitating the GCC as well. Similar to the Arab League, the GCC too did not design any dispute resolution mechanisms, relying on non-formal, personal reconciliation attempts. The recent Qatar crisis provides a good example of the limits of such informal conflict resolution mechanisms. In this case, Kuwait assumed a mediation role but to no avail.

The Maghreb Union

The precursors to regional integration in the Maghreb date back to the 'Tangiers Conference' in April 1958 when the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria, Neo-Destour, and Istiqlal parties from Tunisia and Morocco respectively met to support Algerian independence and discuss a 'North African Economic Community' in reaction to the 'European Economic Community'. The formation of the United Arab Republic and the Union of Arab States (Jordan and Iraq) were additional push factors from the outside. "Social, economic, and ethnic factors in common underlie a considerable popular feeling of community among the Moslem populations of Northwest Africa, which is felt with particular force in the sense of solidarity in Morocco and Tunisia with the Algerian nationalist movement. Thus, the concept of "Maghreb Union", i.e., the close association of the three North African territories with each other, has widespread popular appeal and tends to partially displace the attraction of a wider pan-Arab nationalism."[33]

Tunisia (1959), Morocco (1962-72), and Algeria (1962) embedded in their constitutions the ideal of unity of the Greater Maghreb. The Ministers of Economy of Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia met in 1964 and formed a regional institution named the Comite Permanent Consultatif du Maghreb (C.P.C.M.), 'Permanent Consultative Committee of the Maghreb'. CPCM was seen as the first attempt to liberalize intra-Maghreb trade, coordinate, and harmonize economic policies and relations with the E.C. In 1967, annual meetings of the Economic Ministers and a Permanent Consultative Committee took place in Tunis. Seven permanent commissions for specific problems or commodities have been established and worked on such possibilities as 'common Maghreb airlines' and the elimination of impediments to regional trade. 'Maghreb Center for Industrial Studies' was established in Tripoli in 1968 with financial and technical assistance from the United Nations Development Program. Moreover, in the area of sub-regional connectivity, a 'Maghreb Coast Line' shipping company was created in 1969, though it suspended its operations seven years later due to financial problems. A jointly-owned 'Air Maghreb' was approved in 1970, and a railway project including a 'Trans-Maghreb Express', linking Casablanca, Algiers, and Tunis was proposed.

Three issues hampered the progress in Maghreb integration: In November 1975 Spain agreed to leave the 'Spanish Sahara' and share its administration with Morocco and Mauritania in a secretive pact that left two-thirds of Western Sahara to Morocco. The Libyan government under Muammar Qaddafi was implicated in an attempted coup d'état in Morocco in July 1971. The fact that Moroccan officials believed that Qaddafi had prior knowledge of the abortive coup attempt caused deterioration in relations. Libya broke diplomatic ties with Morocco a few days after the failed coup. Following Spanish withdrawal from the Western Sahara, the Polisario Front got engaged in a small-scale

war with Moroccan forces and declared 'The Saharan Arab Democratic Republic' (SADR) in 1976. SADR received recognition from many governments both in and outside the region. A series of reconciliation steps in the 1980s also allowed a fresh attempt at regional integration.

Neo-Destour, Istiqlal, and FLN met again in Tangiers in 1983 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of their earlier conference in 1958 to reactivate the process of integration by declaring 'the attachment of the three peoples (Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria) to the unity of the Grand Maghreb. In 1983 the Union des economistes algeriens (Union of Algerian Communists) and the Ministère du plan et de l'aménagement du territoire (Algerian Ministry of Planning and Land Management) assembled sixty Maghreb scholars and managers to discuss economic integration. President Chadli Bendjedid, who took the helm in Algeria in 1978, decided to follow a policy of 'good neighborhood' or 'positive neighborhood' in the region. On the political front, peace was made on several bilateral and trilateral levels.

Le Traité de Fraternité et de Concorde (The Treaty of Fraternity and Concord), first concluded bilaterally between Algeria and Tunisia in March 1983, later extended by including Mauritania in December of the same year. This facilitated a partial, trilateral Maghreb summit between Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania in Algiers in May 1983. A 'political union' (Oujda Accord) between Libya and Morocco, announced in July 1984 after thirteen years of discord, followed. This union worked to end Libyan support for Polisario and ended Morocco's feeling of isolation in the Maghreb. This also enabled the Libyan-Moroccan joint committee to 'improve cooperation in the economic, political, and social fields. The Moroccan King also wanted to persuade Libya through this reconciliation to stop arming Polisario. Tunisia agreed to start joint ventures with Morocco in textile, mechanical, and agricultural sectors, as well as a consortium to finance common

projects soon after. Tunisia reactivated several mixed commissions with Libya too, and agreed on common commercial, tourist, and cultural projects. Libya agreed to compensate for the losses of 30,000 Tunisian workers deported from Libya in August 1985. Acting on Saudi diplomatic initiative, Algerian President Chadli Bendjedid met King Hassan II of Morocco in February 1983 and hosted the first top-level talks between their states since 1975. Interestingly, it was also Saudi Arabia who had encouraged Libyan leader Qaddafi and Moroccan King Hassan to meet in 1983. In order to encourage that rapprochement between Libya and Morocco in late 1983 and early 1984, Saudi Arabia reportedly doubled the amount of grants it gave to Morocco in the form of two million tons of crude oil that saved Morocco hundreds of millions in foreign exchange.[34] Bendjedid and King Hassan II met near Oujda and pledged to resolve existing problems through consultation. Algeria and Morocco re-established diplomatic relations in 1988.

With the backdrop provided by these conciliatory steps and in the face of a common looming external threat emanating from an enlarging and closing Europe, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania signed the 'Treaty to Constitute the Union of the Arab Maghreb' in Marrakesh on 17 February 1989. Some of the objectives of the treaty were:

■ consolidation of fraternal relations between member states, the realization of progress and well-being in their communities, and protection of their rights

■ the progressive achievement of the free movement of people, services, goods, and capital between member states

■ adoption of common policies in all spheres.

■ In the economic domain, the common policy aims to ensure the industrial, agricultural, commercial, and social development of member states.

The agreement also had an item on military cooperation and mutual defense against outside aggression.

■ Article 14 declared that "any act of aggression against one of the Member Countries will be considered as an act of aggression against the other Member Countries".

■ Article 15 stipulated that "the member countries undertake to allow on their respective territories no activity or organization which might prove harmful to the security, territorial integrity or political system of any member country".

The annual budget of the organization is financed by the member states, in equal portions by member governments. Special projects require additional funding from members. The parties to the founding charter also guaranteed to abstain from joining any other pact or military/political alliance that would be directed against the political independence or territorial unity of other member states. The organizational structure of the Maghreb Union consisted of; a Presidential Council made up of the leaders of five member-states; a council of foreign ministers; and a 100-member consultative assembly. The charter left the door open for other Arab or African states to join the union on the condition that all founding member states accept. The Presidential Council is the only supreme organ with the power to make decisions concerning regional issues. Its decisions require unanimity. It was decided that regional identity cards would be issued, which would facilitate the flow of skilled and unskilled workers from labour-rich Morocco and Tunisia to labour-poor Libya. This allowed unemployed Tunisian and Algerian professionals to balance the chronic shortages of human capital that Libya and Mauritania suffered from. The Maghreb transport ministers met in Tripoli in May 1989 and set up commissions that would work on, among other

things, resurrecting the Air-Maghreb project, creating a mixed-owned shipping company, and constructing a trans-Saharan railway line linking Libya with Mauritania.

The Charter did not design any conflict resolution mechanisms. The plan for the Maghreb's integration was laid out by the 3rd Summit of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) that convened in Ras Lanouf in 1991: first a free-trade area; then a customs union to be achieved by 1995 and a common market to become operational in 2000. An economic union was the ultimate ideal. The renewed fighting in Western Sahara in 1991 put further strains on the Morocco-Algeria relationship. Algerian leaders continued to be preoccupied with their own internal reforms following the serious riots of October 1988 and the 1990/1991 coup d'état, and civil war that ensued. The meeting of the Heads of State scheduled in Tripoli in September 1989 had to be postponed to January 1990 and moved to Tunis, reportedly because Qaddafi was again becoming more interested in turning towards Egypt. The UN decided to impose sanctions on Libya in 1992 and 1993 over the 1988 Lockerbie bombing. Libya expected support from other AMU member-states, but this support did not come.

It was decided at the 4th summit held in 1991 that the AMU General Secretariat would be located in Rabat and that Tunisian diplomat Muhammed Amamo would be its first Secretary-General. The summit also decided that the SYG would hold his seat for three years and his term could be renewed for only one term. However, SYG Amamo remained in the seat from 1991 to 2002. Libyan Foreign Minister Ali Al Muntasser boycotted a ministerial meeting of the five-member AMU held in April 1993 to protest continued compliance with the U.N. sanctions by the other four states -- Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia. A terrorist attack on Atlas Asni Hotel in Marrakesh took place in 1994. Moroccan authorities accused Algerian intelligence of

assisting the terrorists. In response, Algeria shut down the border with Morocco, thus making the border between Algeria and Morocco, which is 1,600-km long, one of the longest closed frontiers in the world. AMU's work toward integration totally halted in 1995. Libya refused to host the AMU summit in 1995, accusing its partners in the AMU of enforcing United Nations sanctions in contradiction with the Union's charter. Betraying the original objectives of the union, the Maghreb states negotiated new free trade agreements with the European Union individually, without any coordination.

Organization of Islamic Conference (Cooperation)

The Organization of Islamic Conference (later Organization of Islamic Cooperation, OIC) was established as an intergovernmental organization in September 1969 at the first summit of leaders of Muslim-majority countries in Rabat, Morocco. The summit was organized to protest the attempted arson of the Al-Aqsa mosque in occupied Jerusalem. The PLO was given 'observer' status at the meeting. Today the OIC has 57 members. While King Hussein of Jordan preferred to call for an Arab summit and President Nasser, suspicious that the British and Americans encouraging an Islamic Pact that is anti-Nasser in nature[35], launched a counteroffensive seeking to postpone the summit indefinitely, King Hassan of Morocco and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia wanted to take advantage of an Islamic summit to strengthen their inter-Arab position and provide an effective counter balance to Nasser's domination of the Arab League.

The official conference declaration of the Summit in 1969 called for restoration of Jerusalem's pre-June 1967 status and the speedy withdrawal of Israeli military forces from all territories occupied as a result of the 1967 war. The Summit appealed to the USA, UK, USSR, and France to secure compliance with the 1967 Security Council resolution. On Palestine, a solitary sentence affirmed "full support

to the Palestinian people for the restitution of their rights" and their "struggle for national liberation."

In March 1970, the first ever Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to review common action undertaken after the summit and to establish an Islamic permanent secretariat. It established a permanent OIC General Secretariat and decided to appoint someone suggested by Malaysia as its first Secretary General for two years. Jeddah was selected as a temporary headquarters of the organization until Jerusalem was liberated. In the Third Session of the ICFM members adopted a charter to strengthen Islamic solidarity among member states, foster cooperation in the fields of politics, economics, social, cultural and scientific levels, and assist the struggle of all Muslim peoples to protect their dignity, independence and national rights.

The 2nd ICFM took place in Karachi, Pakistan in December 1970. In this meeting, former Malaysian PM Tunku Abdul Rahman was officially appointed as the first Secretary as suggested by Malaysia. The 3rd ICFM convened in 1972 and approved the Islamic Conference charter. Attending ministers suggested that a new 'International Islamic News Agency' be established for the purpose of broadcasting news from all over the Islamic world. It was also decided that a research center would be established to work on Islamic culture and feasibility of an Islamic University would be studied. The 4th Islamic ICFM conference in Tripoli did not lack ideas. It was decided that the OIC would set up a 'jihad fund' in order to assist Islamic liberation movements, provide aid for Islamic cultural activities and assistance after natural disasters, and assist in school and hospital construction.

The 2nd Summit brought together heads of states in 1974 in Lahore, Pakistan. With the help of rising oil prices after 1973, the conference allowed resource-rich Muslim majority nations to offer economic

assistance to poorer Islamic nations. The summit also decided to establish the 'Islamic Solidarity Fund' in order to support Islamic solidarity, the development of Islamic culture and values and to satisfy the demands of universities. In the 7th ICFM, organized in Istanbul in May 1976, it was proposed that the 'OIC Research Center for Islamic History, Art, and Culture' and 'The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)' be founded. The 3rd summit was key in establishing the permanent and sub-committee institutions of the OIC. Some of these are: OIC's Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH); OIC Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC); The Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC). The conference also decided in the 3rd summit to establish an 'Academy of Islamic Jurisprudence' that would bring up solutions based on Islamic thought and tradition to contemporary problems and questions.

Finding its performance non-satisfactory over the years, OIC underwent a humble reform process on a few issues: its outdated charter; its institutional weaknesses because of lack of personnel to respond to high expectations and a new recruitment policy based on patronage in lieu of merit; the small budget because some members did not pay their dues on time or ever. The first caused Saudi Arabia to assume the lion's share of the OIC budget, which allowed it a large sway over the OIC from the range of issues covered to the appointment of assistant secretary generals to represent the Arab region.[36]

One leg of the reform process on three aforementioned issues was the 'Niamey Process' in 1982. It was assessed at the 13th ICFM that committees and institutions of OIC were lacking synergy and harmony. The Secretary General was therefore authorized to put together an expert group to review OIC's work and institutions to improve their

efficiency. In the process of their review through 1986, the Saudi Institute of Public Administration also engaged in a study to review harmony among OIC institutions and made recommendations. In 1994, the 7th Summit tasked the Secretary General with establishing an 'Eminent Persons Group' to also review the OIC experience, its strengths and weaknesses. The Eminent Persons Group formed three sub-groups: A Committee for Political and Institutional Affairs; a Committee for Economic, Social, Science and Technology Affairs, and a Committee for Cultural and Information Affairs. The resulting report prepared by the political and institutional affairs committee charged that the OIC has been weak in solving conflicts in Bosnia, Palestine, and Somalia. It also suggested that the OIC be armed with preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution tools and mechanisms. The committee thought that the OIC Charter was still relevant and sufficient; referred to the issue of changing the name of the Conference of Islamic Organization but did not propose a new name. In December of 2000, it was decided that a management consultancy firm should be tasked with revamping OIC institutions in order to increase its relevancy. The Malaysian Accenture Consultancy Company took on the task and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) funded it. In June 2004, ICFM, SYG was selected for the first time based on democratic voting and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu was selected as its next Secretary-General. İhsanoğlu's term witnessed several bold reform attempts such as empowering the Secretary General in terms of both organizational resources and authority. The OIC took up the task to push Islamophobia onto the global agenda and presenting a more correct image of Islam in the post September 11 environment. It is important to note that the post-9/11 environment coupled with the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan may have helped the proactive work the OIC was able to do in this period. However, this new posture did not continue once İhsanoğlu's term as secretary general ended.

The Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Government is the decisive authority of the OIC. It holds meetings once every three years to decide on the policies regarding issues in the Muslim World. The Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, referred to as ICFM, is the second policy-making body of the OIC with the responsibility to implement the policy of the Conference, to appoint the Secretary-General of the Organization and adopt recommendations and resolutions by a two- thirds majority. The Secretary General of the OIC is appointed by the ICFM for a period of four years (which can be renewed once). Morocco's King Hassan II told an 8-member congress delegation he received in Casablanca in January 1984 that the OIC was not created to be a political organization but rather to focus on cultural, economic and social goals.[37] In terms of fostering economic cooperation, intra-organizational trade remains low and the volume of intra-OIC exports and imports have actually decreased. Through Pirzada's appointment in 1985, Pirzada's interest in issues outside the Middle East such as the Ganges water dispute and Bihari refugees in India, and his appointment of a Malaysian as assistant secretary general instead of a Turk seems to have mollified their concerns a little, as OIC's Arab focus created frustrations among its Afro-Asian members as well.[38]

Performance of Regional Institutions

The perception that regional security institutions have largely failed is commonly accepted in the region. In survey after survey, citizens of Arab states express dismay over what they perceive as the League's ineffectiveness. In a survey conducted in 1977, 78.5% of respondents had been dissatisfied with the weak links as embodied by the Arab League. In another poll done in 1986, only 3% of those who responded said the League was successful in representing Arabs.[39] Extra or micro-regional organizations also failed to produce high intra-regional trade

levels. For instance, Intra-regional agricultural trade in the EU was 71%, NAFTA was 45 in 2006 whereas in the OIC it was 28% in the same year. Around ¾ of the imports of all OIC members originate from non-OIC countries. The share of non-OIC countries in the top 5 exported and imported products remained rather high in 2016 (ranging from around 44% to 88%). Despite increase in intra-OIC trade, with imports from outside of OIC increasing more rapidly than intra-OIC and exports. COMCEC countries' population represents one quarter of the world population while their share of world trade is limited to only around 10%. The level of COMCEC intra-trade is around 19.1%. OIC member countries' agricultural exports grew at an average annual rate of 4.2% during the period between 2008-2016 versus a 4.3% growth of their imports.[40]

The Arab League was established to achieve two primary objectives:

1) To help Arabs defend themselves against outside domination. Although colonialism formally ended in the region, the 1st and 2nd Gulf wars showed that some Arab states have been happy to invite foreign powers to the region instead of fending off foreign domination. Gulf states believe that their security is best served through vertical cooperation with western powers rather than regional cooperation (horizontal).

2) An end goal of the Arab League was to unite the Arab ranks. The League has initiated a lot of cooperation projects in different fields and promoted treaties to serve this purpose, yet member states only paid lip service. There have been periods of high levels of bilateral or even regional coordination on internal security issues such as the exchange of names of terrorists that took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, regional cooperation over the environment, education, health, economy, climate change, and development remain abysmal.

The League also failed miserably in conflict resolution efforts. It took the Arab League Council almost six months before it decided to take action on the Lebanese civil war front in 1975. Even technical issues such as common 'environmental outlook indicators' among the LAS member states or 'crisis response and management' run into deadlock because Arab states in the region do not want to confess that they have the worst environmental footprint in the region.

Regional cooperation organizations have largely also failed to adapt to changing circumstances and accommodate new realities. A reform initiative started by Dr. Lakhdar Brahimi at the request of the Secretary General of the Arab League Nabil al-Arabi and continued for two years to induce a structural change in the Arab League in 2014-2015 and strengthen 'joint Arab work programs' got shelved because the Gulf states, who want to remain as the central hub for 'Arab decisions', did not want it to move forward. In all regional organizations, the way to move forward should not be expanding membership to entrench regional status quo as a defense tactic. For instance, the GCC invited Jordan and Morocco into its fold during the 'Arab revolts', not because they believed that the GCC needed a reform in its membership structure but rather to preempt the effects of the revolts on the security of their regimes.

Conflict Resolution

A major expectation from regional security organizations is providing local resolution to conflicts before they turn into major hot conflicts. Both the Arab League, the Maghreb Union and Organization of Islamic Cooperation failed in this regard. The Algerian–Moroccan conflict of 1963 had started a new phenomenon of overlooking the Arab League and appealing to other international organizations such as the United Nations instead. Morocco then, viewed the role of Egypt as non-

neutral and pro-Algeria, which reflected on their attitude toward the Arab League because of Egypt's dominant role in it. Morocco did not trust even the Organization of African Unity to mediate because it was established based on the borders drawn by the colonial powers. Nasser has also offered to host a summit meeting and has stimulated the Arab League to propose a cease-fire, but Hassan saw both as stacked against him.

The Arab League's first mediation attempt in the case of the civil war that broke out in Yemen came in 1964. The League was able to act as a mediator to facilitate face-to-face meetings between Saudi Arabia and Egypt as patrons of warring parties. Yet, both countries had already made some progress bilaterally before the Arab League was able to act. The Saudis did not trust the Egyptians' intention towards Yemen, and the Arab League was perceived as pro-Nasser, and therefore not a fully trusted mediator. The 2nd mediation effort in 1967 was facilitated by the 1967 defeat against Israel. Nasser had to look for a face-saving exit from Yemen in the post-1967 environment. The Arab League was the most convenient tool; a change in regional conflict dynamics, namely the Six Day War and its aftermath, cleared the way for more successful mediation on secondary issues such as Yemen.

The League's track record during the Lebanese civil war was also far from satisfactory. Members of the League, namely Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the PLO, met in Riyadh on 16-18 October 1976 and announced a number of resolutions. The resolutions of the Summit were later approved in the Arab League Summit meeting October 25-26 1976. According to these resolutions; Arab countries would, according to their capability, contribute to the reconstruction of Lebanon and provide material assistance to remove the effects of armed struggle; Arab countries would form a special fund to fund Arab peace-keeping forces and each Arab state would contribute

an amount based on their capability. This special fund would be overseen by the Lebanese president and countries with at least a 10% contribution who would promulgate general regulations for the fund. The plan for Arab peace-keeping forces originally aimed for 30,000 troops but 25,100 were eventually deployed. While the aim was to preserve stability and facilitate a ceasefire, the Arab Deterrent Force was dominated by Syria. Sudanese, Saudi and Emirati contingents left Lebanon in 1979 while Libya and South Yemen terminated their contribution much earlier.

In the Iraqi-Kuwaiti dispute in 1961, Kuwait wanted to apply for membership to the Arab League after Britain withdrew its troops from the country. When the Iraqi government refused Kuwait's membership proposal and Saudi Arabia dispatched forces to Kuwait to help, the Secretary General of the Arab League tried to mediate the crisis by talking to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait. Hassouna visited Baghdad on July 12, 1961 to conduct negotiations with the Iraqi side and requested Iraqi commitment toward four basic principles in managing the conflict. In order to prevent internalization of the conflict, the Iraqi government would take an immediate initiative and inform the UN Security Council that it did not intend to use force. If Iraq wanted the British out of the Gulf, they would have to work for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Iraq did not entirely follow through these steps, upon which the Arab League decided to send a military force to protect Kuwait from Iraq. Saudi Arabia became the main contributor to the force, with smaller contingents from Egypt, Sudan, and Jordan while the ruler of Kuwait formally asked the British to withdraw their troops.[41]

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991 struck a huge blow to the Arab League and Arab unity. Members of the Arab League repeatedly failed to reach consensus in order to solve the crisis. Instead of finding

an 'Arab solution' to such a major Arab problem at such a critical juncture, the Gulf nations surrounding Kuwait invited foreign forces to protect an Arab state against another.

OIC failed in conflict resolution as well. In none of the conflicts discussed above nor in others not discussed here was the OIC ever instrumental. To illustrate, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, two of the most important nations during the Afghan jihad, did not view the OIC as an important venue for the Afghan issue. Although the OIC suspended Afghanistan's membership in 1980, it failed to go beyond this. The organization failed to embrace a single position during the Iran-Iraq war either. In 1981 the OIC formed a 'Peace Committee' composed of Gambia, Turkey, Guinea, Senegal, the PLO, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, and the Secretary General in order to mediate an end to the war. Notwithstanding the call for 'safeguarding the independence and national rights of all Muslim peoples' in its charter, the OIC members had conflicting interests during the 8-year long war and merely tried to save face by passing harmless resolutions. Iran had perceived the OIC as more pro-Iraqi during that war as well.

Only through a decision adopted in the Third Islamic Summit Conference held in Taif in 1981 did the OIC envisage the establishment of an Islamic Court as its fourth organ with the responsibility to peacefully settle the disputes arising among member states. In January 1983 the Secretary-General of OIC convened a group of experts to draw up the Statute of the Islamic International Court of Justice (IICJ). In terms of organizational resources, the 5th Summit in Kuwait 1987 approved that IICJ would be established to adjudicate intra-Muslim disputes in light of Islamic precepts. Yet, as much as Muslim-majority nations such as Libya in its quarrel with Tunisia on the issue of continental shelf refused to apply to International Court of Justice, the idea of IICJ failed as well.

AREAS OF COOPERATION

Labour Markets

One area which the region is said to be interconnected in is the labor market. The idea was that with capital flows from the oil-rich Gulf states to the rest of the region in exchange for the emigration of skilled Arab human capital, the Gulf would create a base and instrument for durable and productive transnational linkages and foster regional cooperation. Yet, this labor-capital complementarity between oil-rich but labor-poor Gulf nations and resource-poor but labor-rich Arab states did not spill over to other areas to promote political integration. Economic interdependence on this score never turned into economic cooperation, yet alone political cooperation for the benefit of the people in the region. Ruling elites in the region consider cross-border mobility as a security issue. This is partly related to the fact that authoritarian states in the region used 'emigration' as a political instrument to advance their aggressive foreign policy goals. This has resulted in two major outcomes: first, because of the use of migrant workers for political purposes in the past and suspicion against Palestinian emigrants living in the Gulf, the Gulf has come to prefer low-skilled South Asian migrant workers, considered cheaper and politically less 'threatening', to intra-regional migrants from the mid-1980s onwards. The number of Arab workers working in the Gulf and Libya in 1980 was more than 2,2 million. Yet, this percentage declined from 72% in early 1970, to 56% in 1985, then to 31 percent (of all migrant workers in these countries) in 1996. The figure was thought to be less than 23% in 2010. Where at the peak of the 1980s oil boom more than 20 percent of the Egyptian labour force was employed abroad (primarily in the Gulf), only 7 percent of Egyptian labourers worked in other Arab states in 2006. In Oman, of 300,000 migrant

workers, 250,000 were from the Indian subcontinent in 1985. Teachers from Jordan and Egypt were the only significant Arab presence in the country. Gulf states have taken this contra-integration measure despite the fact that migrant workers in the Gulf are purposefully (sometimes with mutual understanding, as in Egypt and Saudi Arabia in the 1970s and 80s, through the 'kafala' system) isolated from social and political structures, which hinders integration.

Secondly, cross-regime coordination between labor-sending and recipient nations in the MENA region, as in Egypt and Saudi Arabia after Sadat's post-1971 permissive emigration policy (abolishing visas required to travel abroad), may instead serve 'internal legitimation' for an authoritarian government. Close collaboration between different MENA states does not necessarily open up avenues for 'good' cooperation for the benefit of the people in the region either. Coordination on labor mobility for instance may ironically spill over into military, security and intelligence cooperation to the detriment of the people.[42] It is also possible that 'labour emigration is aimed at complementing a regime's ideological elements, and adding another layer to its management of political dissent, and co-opting a labor force into its development strategy.[43]

Admittedly, remittance flows in the region have sustained some level of regional connection especially when such a small percentage of these earnings remitted through official, legal channels. However, with the decrease in the share of Arab migrants in the Gulf states and also depending on oil prices and economic growth, remittances flowing from Libya and the Gulf states to the rest of the MENA region decreased over time as well. Intra-regional migrants have not become an autonomous factor shaping state policies through skills transfers, access to resources, and networks and therefore, have also been

vulnerable to political turbulence and shifting alliances. In order to provide a pull for the Moroccan government toward unity with Libya, Qaddafi offered to employ thousands of Moroccan workers. When the union failed however, the offer was not only pulled back entirely but also migrant workers already in Libya paid the price. Iraq deported tens of thousands of Egyptians in the late 1980s while Libya expelled thousands of Tunisian workers in 1985 for political purposes and Gulf states expelled Yemeni, Jordanian and Palestinian migrants after the 1st Gulf War. At the same time, a huge volume of remittances brought back home triggered inflation, caused housing and land prices to skyrocket, inflated the cost of construction materials, and boosted consumption of luxury goods instead of being employed or invested in productive ways. The amount of remittances Jordan received from Jordanians working in the Gulf reached $1.2 billion but went mostly into consumption.

Engagement with Non-State Actors

Regional organizations can hardly remain exempt from the rise of non-state actors (NSAs) and their challenge against states. Regional security institutions may start off as top-down but have to trickle down to the societal level in order to be sustainable in the long-term. This means that regional cooperation bodies must address non-state actors at some level. In fact, at certain times and on certain subjects some non-state actors matter so much that talking to non-state organizations rather than states may be more effective. In view of the collapse of the Arab state system as we know it, NSAs (both armed and unarmed) have come forward delivering goods and providing services to the people and controlling vast territories. We should not forget that some of these non-state actors stand more legitimate than states, which means ignoring them can come only at the region's peril.

This however generates the question of which NSAs regional organizations may need to engage with. A survey of the field for non-state actors would reveal that some of these complement states, while some only fill a void that states have left whereas others are direct armed extensions of the state. NSAs do matter because some cases indicate that once these armed non-state groups rise to a certain level of power, they may not be easily integrated into national structures. For example, the Janjaweed militias in Sudan were not integrated after 2005, when a comprehensive peace agreement was signed to end the 2nd Sudanese Civil War. The Janjaweed militias, rebranded as the 'Rapid Support Force' in 2013, were assigned to guard Sudan's borders, and later ended up helping stop illegal immigration to the EU after they independently received funds and weapons from the EU.

Here a specific problem is the disagreement over the definition of non-state actors. How to define actors as non-state actors and how to decide about selecting the ones deserving to be integrated into state structures? For instance, the PLO was not just a non-state actor, incidental to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; it met all criteria for a state. It still remains a fact that though the Arab League has empowered the PLO and recognized it as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, it lacked effective relations with the PLO or Hamas because the League remained an inter-state level institution. That is, existing regional organizations have not established mechanisms to engage such significant non-state actors. But this did not stop the Arab League to conduct diplomacy with informal, ethno-sectarian factions in Iraq after the invasion. It is difficult to have a functioning regional or sub-regional cooperation organization in the MENA region that does not accommodate a representation by the Kurdistan Regional Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic Cooperation

The only chance for the region to prosper is regionalism, not nationalism or globalism. Nationalism is no cure for the region economically because national markets such as those in Lebanon, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain among others still remain small; globalism is not a solution either because states in the region cannot compete with China. Regionalism is the only remaining answer as there is still huge untapped potential in terms of intra-regional trade. For this to happen however, labor mobility of skilled labor is crucial because Gulf States lack indigenous human capital to underwrite a macroeconomic transformation. Under the 'rentier-state' model, an economic model based largely on oil and gas revenues and other forms of rent and patron-client relationships between bureaucrats and businesspeople, Gulf states need mostly low-skilled labor. If Gulf states commit to economic diversification from an oil-centered economy and undertake macroeconomic transformation, they will need high and semi-skilled labour in larger numbers, which, if they wanted, could certainly be provided from within the region. This however should not replicate previous structures in which regimes solidify their authoritarian rule at the expense of the people. Migrant workers should no longer be seen as 'temporary workers' but instead be allowed to entertain economic, social and political rights in the host states after a specific period of residence.

The true obstacle before regional economic cooperation is in fact not rentierism; all governments eventually create some sort of rent. It is not only oil and gas that create rents anyway; revenue from the Suez Canal for instance is also a form of rent, as are arguably remittances, tariffs, privileged licenses to import, economic aid and grants, tax

exemptions, and revenue from tourism. What matters in the end is what governments do with the rents created. Where and how governments spend this rent makes a difference. Do governments dole out rents to enterprises based on their economic performance and their contribution to national development? Or, do they hand out rents to certain privileged groups or business cliques in order to win political loyalties and personal profits? Or further, do they use rent to generate more rent by building ever new cities where no one yet lives instead of investments in the infrastructure of existing cities and innovation, technology, and tradable manufacturing sector?

The region forgot 'industrial policy'. In the 1990s, a privatization discourse spearheaded by the Word Bank and promoted by the 'Washington consensus' ran supreme in the region and promised that with the shrinking role of states in national economies, the private sector would take over, grow and create more employment and spur national growth. However, what happened instead was that neither clientelist business-state relationships was disrupted nor the public sector shrank. In Syria the sum of money borrowed from the Agricultural Bank and Commercial Bank of Syria doubled from 1991 to 1998, whereas the lending pattern for the industrial sector remained the same.[44] By the end of the globalization era, between 60 and 80 percent of all formal-sector employment in the Arab world was in the public sector.

As opposed to expectations, it was the informal private sector rather than the formal private businesses that grew for more than two decades. In Syria for instance, in 2010 more than 60% of the total working population was employed in the informal sector. When public employment was omitted from this calculation, urban informal employment reached 87% of total urban employment.[45]This not only resulted in an absence of growth and lack of durable development

for job creation but also led to growth in the informal sector and reduced average wages in the region, pulling down demand and growth altogether. Feeding on the inefficiencies of the public sector companies or filling the void left by them, such small private business and industry (informal sector) remained to a large extent low-profile, survival-oriented, and lacked incentives, access and instruments to innovate.

The problem in the region is that the region has forgotten production/ manufacturing and embraced an import-oriented economic model. To illustrate, back in 1981,the manufacturing share of the total GDP of Saudi Arabia was 70,89%, Bahrain 57,8% and Oman 67,13% whereas in 2013 the same percentages declined to 10% for Saudi Arabia and 10,6% for Bahrain.[46] The manufacturing sector made up 16.5% of the Tunisian GDP in 1992 and only rose to 18.8% in 1995 and yet regressed into 16.67% in 2016. Import-oriented economic models allow privileged groups to receive exclusive import licenses and stifles productive forces within an economy. "The oil sector plays a major role in the GDP of Arab countries. The share of the sector represents about two-fifths of the total GDP (39.8%), followed by services (37.4%), manufacturing (10%) and agriculture (6%)."[47] Total non-energy exports from the region generated just $80 billion in 2003. The MENA region accounted for only 5% of global exports and 4.3% of total imports in 2017. Merchandise exports from the MENA region to the rest of the world stood at 893bn USD in 2017 (up from just under 250bn USD at the start of this century).[48] The following assessment of the Algerian economy made in 2007 is still valid today: "Local fortunes are to be made in imports, property and construction, and the domestic economy is one of consumption rather than production, dependent on the pipelines leaving Algeria's ports and the container ships coming in, without a self-sustaining base that might survive the interruption of either, or the reversal of their prices."[49]

The World Bank recipe for the MENA region today is, again, not to miss the 4th industrial revolution without ever mentioning industrial policy. Yet, it would be a grave mistake for the region to keep bypassing industrial policies. To make things worse, in the face of the increasing influence of China in the region, engaging China as an external power individually before the region does economic preliminary work on a landmark macro-economic transformation will only hurt the region even more. One recommendation could be for the region to emulate how Ethiopia engages China by setting such conditions as mandatory employment among the local workforce, a transfer of technology and know-how to the host country, and some share of export revenues to stay in the host country and be transferred back home. For instance, Ethiopia did this through Chinese companies' investment in Special Economic Zones (and also in assisting Ethiopia in setting these up) coupled with the funding of critical infrastructure projects (railways, roads, dams...). It should also be remembered however that Ethiopia is a unique case for two reasons:

1) a rather stable country with slightly stronger institutional capacity and leadership with a long-term view (big focus on industrialization) + huge population (cheap labour)

2) strategically situated at the end of the maritime silk road (part of the Belt and Road Initiative) – drawing additional interest and commitment from China.[50]

Creation of an industrial base requires long-term planning because investors can only get returns in the long term. However, intra-regional capital flow to be used as investments in the MENA region is also weak. It is not that capital flows did not take place in the region. Between 1974 and 1981, about 15% of cumulative current account surpluses of oil producing countries went to Arab countries either as loans or grants. [However] Most went to the capital markets of industrial countries

[in the West].[51] "The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are generating healthy FDI outflows as well, of which just over 10 percent is destined for other countries within the region. In several Arab countries, the inflow of FDI appears to be heavily oriented toward real estate and energy sector investments..."[52] According to the World Bank's lead economist for MENA region, "FDIs are skewed towards activities that create the fewest jobs or that create jobs in non-tradable goods. At the same time, the political unrest has discouraged the high-quality FDI in labour-intensive manufacturing and services needed for export upgrading and diversification."[53] Georges Corm, Minister of Finance in Lebanon from 1998 to 2000, wrote in 2006 that "...a large part of the FDI received by the region is, in fact, intraregional, as GCC investment has been rising in certain sectors, like tourism, luxury housing complexes, and commercial malls. Moreover, an important part of the FDI flows is due to investments in the energy sector by large international oil companies or to the partial privatization of the telecommunications sector in almost all Arab countries. FDI into the industrial sector or into high value-added services seems to be marginal."[54]

In such an environment, intra-regional or extra-regional investors choose the short-term investments and avoid 'hard' investment in technology, skills, and resources (expecting long-term return). They rather invest their money in nonproductive real estate (which pushed the price of land and buildings higher) and financial sectors, commodity speculation, and tourism, which are very low-value added sectors, based on short-term gains. National banks do the same as well for two reasons; not only do banks place the funds out of the country and tend to be politically connected and distribute credits to politically-connected firms for low risks such as in Lebanon and Egypt in the region but they also prefer to buy, for instance, treasury

bills and earn high interest for short-term gains. In place of lending, the region's banking systems exhibit a bias toward liquid assets, with cash, deposits to the Central Bank and other financial institutions as well as holdings of government debt forming a large proportion of the sector's asset base, particularly among resource rich and labor abundant economies.[55] Banks' preferences for directing credit to well-known clients with good reputations or political connections for short-term investments is also motivated by the fact that they cannot afford to take risks, in the absence of reliable balance sheets or financial information that firms requesting credits present.

Regional Organizations

In order to make regional security institutions more responsive and relevant, a triple-stage move toward more inclusivity is urgently needed:

1) States in the region must become more inclusive by amending their national constitutions so that these constitutions are not based on ethno-sectarian tribal identities and are not perceived as such by their own people. The region cannot afford to have cooperation with institutions based on nation-states with exclusivist ethno-sectarian-tribal identities.

2) In the next level, the basis of regional organizations such as the Arab League need to go beyond ethnicity as a criterion for membership. Being an organization consisting only of 'Arab' states harms the League's potential to mediate conflicts in the larger region. For instance, during the post-2003 invasion in Iraq the League failed to become a credible and legitimate mediator because "A pan-Arab organization attempting to mediate between these clashing narratives [Sunni, Shia and Kurdish narratives regarding Iraqi identity] ultimately raised the question inside of Iraq as to whether the Arab League could serve as

an impartial mediator in internal Iraqi affairs."[56] While the Arab League was unable to mount an effective opposition against the invasion of Iraq, it tried to preserve Iraq's Arab identity. The Arab League tried to make sure that that the notion of "Arabness" was enshrined in the Iraqi constitution, thus causing a backlash from especially the Kurdish groups in Iraq.[57]

3) In order to remain meaningful and even survive under changing conditions, existing regional organizations, as any living organism needs to do, must learn and adapt. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) (1964-2002) provides a good example in that respect. Decades after its establishment, OAU underwent an institutional transformation after the late 1990s. African leaders first issued a call for the formation of the African Union in Sirte, Libya, in September 1999. The next OAU summit in Lomé, Togo, then adopted the Constitutive Act and submitted it for signature and ratification by the OAU's 53 member states. After obtaining ratification from two-thirds of the membership, the AU was officially proclaimed in March 2001. In this process, the AU even decided to include civil society organizations in decision-making procedures and expanded their tasks to more substantive issues such as democratization and fighting HIV. These steps increased the legitimacy of the AU in the eyes of the people. What allowed this transformation was the emergence of new leadership and a new discourse that realized that with the end of colonialism came new challenges that needed new responses. The AU could transform due to the political will coming from Nigeria and S. Africa specifically. The Arab League however still has the same charter and same structure and remains distant from the people in the region.

Apart from these steps, the region needs to engage with other regions and form inter-regional relationships. The Arab League as an organization, for instance, has been perennially weak on reaching out

to the African continent. "Some cooperation also took place with the Organization of African Unity and later the AU, with a first summit held in March 1977 in Cairo and a second in October 2010 in Sirte, Libya. Arab states were not, however, committed to communal cooperation with Africa and the cooperation was de facto institutionalized in a hierarchy, with latter-day Arab regimes often looking down upon their African counterparts. Indeed, Arab–African cooperation, which in the 1970s had set a precedent in South–South collaboration, had by the 1990s developed into a sort of Third World variety of the North–South divide."[58] Afro-Arab cooperation consisted mostly of Arab investment and financial aid in return of African support for the Arab cause in the Middle East, denunciation of Zionism and imperialism. The Euro-Arab dialogue that was very much on the agenda in the 1970s did not produce many tangible benefits either. It did not have to go this way, however. The EC Nine was pushing for a 'no-nonsense dialogue' with the Arab League to stay away from controversial issues and instead focus on joint cooperation on agriculture and food, cultural technical and scientific cooperation, and industrial infrastructure. Yet at the same time, EC Nine concluded preferential trade agreements with Israel as well as Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco under the title of 'global Mediterranean policy'. Inter-regional relations should not also come for the sake of strengthening authoritarian structures at the expense of the people. The recent EU-Arab League summit meeting in Egypt is therefore a step in the wrong direction.

The Arab League has been afflicted over budgetary issues and organizational inefficiencies for so long. The budget of the League was a modest $32 million in the mid-1980s with one sixth of it spent on the directorate of personnel and accounting and one-third spent on 'information'. Getting member states to pay their dues on time has been a nagging problem that has to be solved.

Data Sharing

The difficulties in collecting reliable national data and purposive secrecy around data-sharing is also obstructing any chance of regional cooperation or regional planning. This problem is as much a factor of lack of capacity as it is a political decision. The situation can be dire at times. 'In 1989 a debate broke out between two Egyptian state agencies regarding Egypt's population. In 1988 the Egyptian ministry of agriculture did not exactly know the country's cultivated area. In Egypt for instance, the budget is kept as a dear secret, leaving in the dark the precise spending power that ministries actually have. The lack of reliable data, in addition to other factors (such as capital), also hinders many businessmen from having enough confidence and predictability to enter a new enterprise, especially in sectors requiring long-term commitment. In Lebanon, a major problem confounding decentralization and effectiveness of local government is again lack of reliable and official data on local government.[59]

Transnational issues such as labour migration suffers from a similar issue. Scale and composition of labour migration in the region was not fully known in the absence of any reliable data in the 1980s and 1990s. Lack of region-wide data on labour mobility for instance prevents any comprehensive study of transnational labour linkages. In a clearly political decision, the Egyptian state stopped collecting data on emigration flows from the country, in the absence of which there are only, and widely different, estimates of number of Egyptian emigrants. It is possible that governments involved in such a great volume of labour transfer do not want such data to facilitate accountability and any kind of public inspection.[60]

However, the absence of data-sharing impedes regional economic cooperation because it becomes impossible, for instance, to set tariffs

and share revenues accordingly in the absence of transparent data on national fiscal records. Lack of reliable data was one of the issues that marred a possible customs union between Syrian and Lebanon after 1943. As Chaitani said "It was clear that the lack of reliable data on Syro-Lebanese trade only served to increase speculations as to which side was abusing the other in the customs union. With no effective measures to mend this state of affairs, permanent mistrust was ensured."[61] States with rich oil and natural gas resources in the region earn huge amounts of revenues but data regarding where and how they spent this money has been largely missing. It is very difficult to model or design a regional agreement on how to share revenues from common tariffs because data-sharing and transparency in fiscal records are minimal.

Invisible Cooperation?

Cooperation in the region is taking place on the informal level because the informal sectors provide people with a much-needed margin of maneuver, meaning a wider latitude within which the informal sector may act outside the control and interference of the state. Despite states looming large, people try to bypass states and cooperate on the informal level through the flow of goods and people. 'According to the International Labour Office, 60% of the total labour force in Egypt and Morocco works in the informal economy, with Tunisia at 53% percent.' The informal sector made up 35.5% of the national GDP and 30% of all products consumed in Tunisia in 2016. 'Informality of integration' or 'integration through informality' means that so much regional activity goes on outside of state institutions, that refocusing too much on the state will cause us to gloss over it. International private schools opened in Iraqi Kurdistan with the help of SABIS, a Lebanese private education provider, can be a good example. "Hidden economies, however, are often poorly integrated and not of much

importance as a force for development". These informal sector occupations do not form a motor for national economic growth. The traditional hidden economy created employment and recycled money, but it was not characterized by the accumulation of capital, accelerator effects, or the linkage of markets necessary to sustain development."[62]

Because investors in the MENA region distrust Arab states in the region, so they buy houses in Turkey because of the relative stability it provides as well as the protection of private property, where there is relatively more stability. Integration therefore occurs more at the level of the people, not states.

Security for Whom?

The question that needs to be raised is whom we want regional security cooperation for? The referent object of security cooperation in the MENA region should be people (in the spirit of human security), not states or regimes. There is then an urgent need to build trust between the people and governments. The way to establish such trust is not necessarily just through democracy but also in fighting corruption (not to protect the regime), providing transparency and accountability, a sense of justice, rule of law, and real education to prepare people for the future.

Internal security cooperation in the region over such issues as the exchange of terrorists can be satisfactory on the surface but whether such a high level of internal security cooperation is good for the benefit of the people is another question. Some forms of cooperation in the security sector only cement bad governance and commit more injustice. More cooperation may also come to mean more state repression.

Unless it has a normative dimension, regional cooperation should not be given blanket positive meaning. For instance, in the case of ostensible informal integration in terms of the labour market in the region, what about the non-existent social, legal, and political rights of migrant workers and poor treatment they have received in the Gulf with the full cooperation and consent of their own governments? Intra-regional labour mobility must be achieved concurrently by securing legal and social rights for migrant workers.

External Actors

External involvement in the MENA region has been a complicating factor for regionalism. External support for the formation of blocs or counter-blocs of regional states has been geared towards authoritarian regime security. Similar to the formation of unions of some Arab states during the Cold War, immediate post-Cold War cooperation schemes such as between Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt following the 1st Gulf War looked more like 'dependent cooperation', facilitated by the USA as the external hegemon. Traditional non-regional powers still enjoy bilateral relationships with individual countries in the region at the expense of regional grievances and interests.

The question of the nature of external actors' influence in the region may repeat itself on the issue of Chinese engagement with the region. China's engagement in the region is undeniably political. Chinese entry into MENA will change production techniques and styles in the region. China's investments in the MENA region, including those announced by President Xi Jinping on his January 2016 trip, are part of the new Belt and Road Initiative, an effort to extend and secure trade routes westward from China, especially for oil — not to invest in manufacturing industries along that Road once it leaves Asia. Chinese investments in MENA, therefore, are largely confined to

infrastructure and energy. That is, Chinese engagement may not be transformational in the sense of democratization, human rights and 'conditionality principle' but will be transformational in many other senses.

Disaster Management

Apart for the unheeded Casablanca Protocol of 1966 applying only to Palestinians, no concerted efforts have been regionally attempted to establish the conditions for an orderly and effective response to forced displacement. There is lack of cooperation over crisis management in general in the region. On crisis management, contributions have always been voluntary and ad hoc. There is no central fund where everybody in the region can contribute funds for crisis management. The Arab League has a mechanism for disaster management called 'Arab Coordination Mechanism for Disaster Management and Preparedness', which includes non-governmental experts and meets regularly. However, coordination through this body has its limits as well; there is no coordination of exchange of databases of what resources each country has and what resources the others can add. This disaster management mechanism tried to develop a database for disaster management that analyzes and maps the whole region in terms of most vulnerable areas some years ago. However, member states have been very unwilling to share data even about disasters that have already occurred. The last time Egypt updated its own database was in 2008 and the country did not even share it with other states.

MENA Connectivity

Communication is key to regional cooperation, especially for intra-regional trade. Getting crops to markets for export necessitates a sophisticated system of cooperation between farmers, distributors, and importers. To remain competitive in the agricultural sector for

instance, transport quality is crucial because of the nature of products. In some MENA states national transportation systems do not allow this type of export orientation. Railroad systems, shipping canals, and road systems are all deficient to a large degree. The region overall has spent more resources to import airplanes, cars, buses, and trucks but regional transport links are left largely neglected. As a UNESCWA report pointed out "Almost half of the Arab countries do not have railways; available information indicates that the ratio of railway network length to total national area in Arab countries is the lowest of any region in the world." When the OIC countries are taken into account, its average index for quality of transport infrastructure in 2016-2017 was less than the world average for all types of infrastructure but port infrastructure.[63] This deplorable state of quality of infrastructure in the OIC countries may account for their little share in global trade.

Regional cooperation organizations have come up with several projects to improve intra-regional connectivity. For instance, the Maghreb Union decided to establish a common airline and studied trans-Maghribi road, rail, and pipeline networks in its third summit. Or UNESCWA is cooperating with the Arab League for the same purposes. Yet none of the institutions formed or projects proposed remedied the situation. Infrastructural investment in the Arab world remains very inter-governmental. The Arab League's 'Arab Union of Land Transport' lacks authority and capability to advance an agenda on regional infrastructure. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA), which includes all Arab League member states except four -Algeria, Somalia, Djibouti, and Comoro Islands- is currently running a project to study levels of service, the future needs, and identify the transportation network in the Arab world to present a proposal for improvement. In the end, it is a political decision and the final word belongs to national governments.

The reasons why the region lacks in infrastructure is twofold:

1- Political will/mistrust.

2- Questions over economic feasibility (the number of people who are expected to travel along a rail network or roads; returns for investments; whether there is enough trade in the region to warrant investment)

The first reason explains the absence of regional infrastructural connectivity better. There are several examples of regional projects hampered by prevalent mistrust between Arab states. The failure of a regional project to resuscitate the Hejaz railway in 1947 is a case in point. The Hejaz railway ran from Damascus to Medina (1300 km) through Hejaz in Saudi Arabia, including a branch connecting Haifa in Palestine. It had been ordered as an extension of the Ottoman railway network that already connected Istanbul to Damascus with the Bagdadbahn. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Hejaz Railway was never put into operation south of the border between Jordan and Saudi Arabia. There are only two connected sections of the Hejaz Railway that are still in service. The "Hejaz-Jordan Railway" and "Chemin de fer de Hejaz Syrie", from Amman to Damascus, and the "Aqaba Railway" from the phosphate mines located near Ma'an to the Gulf of Aqaba.[64]

Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia agreed to revive the line in 1947. Funds necessary for maintenance and repayment of construction costs would be provided from operating revenues. To undertake reconstruction, a committee was founded. In December 1955, the Executive Committee for the Recommissioning of the Hijaz Railroad, a trinational group of representatives from each country, opened bids for a proposed engineering survey of the railroad. Jordan truly wanted the railway to be built because it would also ease exporting Jordan's agricultural products to the Gulf. Syria felt the same way too; a railway easing

access to the Saudi Arabian market would be advantageous for export purposes. However, 'international power politics' - the nascent cold war in the region- cast a long shadow over the project. When the lowest bid for a contract to survey the project was submitted by a Polish firm and the Executive Committee on Reconstruction reportedly recommended that the Polish bid be accepted, King Saud cancelled the Polish bid under American pressure.[65]

The Baghdad Pact's (1955) economic committee also talked about a 'Pact Highway' from Istanbul to Karachi, through the connection of various railway links in the area. Egypt and Lebanon had a railroad used before Israel was even created. However, these projects too did not come to fruition. "One of the first objectives of the Algerian revolution in 1962 was to reestablish Algeria's trans-Saharan routes to central Africa. By 1964, the Algerian government began to plan the construction of desert roads with a view to linking Algiers to Niger and Mali. Plans were completed by the late 1970s but French and other pressure prevented Niger and Mali from constructing their stretches of the road to link with the Algerian road; they were, however, provided with international assistance to extend their roads to the Atlantic via Nigeria."[66]

Arab Unity Highway system (proposed in 1958) by the Bechtel Corporation (engineering company) in a letter to Allen Dulles, Director of CIA at the time is another interesting example. This project proposed to link up the capitals of the principal Arab countries in the Middle East (Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, Riyadh, Amman, Cairo, Kuwait as well as other cities) in order to 'bring order' to the Middle East. "By making possible rapid, low-cost travel between the countries such a highway would go far to stimulate genuine cooperation" according to the report.[67] This was an outside-in project for regional communication and it did not materialize.

Another example is a project that came up between Egypt and Saudi Arabia in 1989. It too illustrates how political suspicions hamper connectivity projects in the region. In a late 1989 meeting with President Mubarak, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia "agreed to the construction of a bridge and causeway across the Strait of Tiran; that is at the bottom of the Gulf of Aqaba, between Sinai and the part of the Saudi coast opposite that. This agreement quickly unraveled as Fahd's brothers in the royal family, the Minister of Defense and Aviation Prince Sultan, in particular, but others as well, and other Saudis, raised a question about whether Saudi Arabia really wished to have a land link to Egypt, given the propensity of Egyptian armies to arrive in Saudi Arabia with malign intent. And so, this project very rapidly was shelved."[68]

The GCC has invested billions of dollars into rail and maritime connection. With the recent intra-Gulf crisis and plans to turn Qatar into an island by cutting its connection to the land, as reported in the media, even this sub-regional plan to boost connectivity will be hampered. Instead of MENA connectivity, we may see more dysconnectivity. The GCC railway network, which, according to the original plan, would link up all GCC countries from Oman to Kuwait, did not stem from economic need. In other words, it was not a promise of increased intra-GCC trade volume, which has been around 7% for years, nor people's demand for rail network that dictated the GCC Rail vision. It was a political decision to invest $200 billion in the GCC rail network, which was supposed to become operational in 2018 but could not be finished partly because of a plunge in oil prices and relatively low oil prices being the 'new normal' and ensuing delays in construction. While GCC member states continue to build national rail networks, plans to go regional in terms of transportation connectivity was delayed until 2021.

We should adopt a 'holistic' approach to regional infrastructural investment. That is, building up the most extensive regional infrastructure network may not change much in terms of regional integration unless intra-regional trade and investment, which are at low levels currently, also rise. Indeed, if rentier-economies are still in place when and if transportation infrastructure develops, we may instead end up building infrastructure for cronies.

Food Security

Finally, food security continues to be an acute threat for the MENA region. "Despite enormous natural resources available in many Arab countries, the region imports about half of its grain requirements, 63 percent of vegetable oils, and 71 percent of sugar. These three commodities alone constituted about 76 percent of the food gap in the Arab region in 2007."[69] In fact the MENA region has suffered from food insecurity for a long time. The way to go about this in order to address the problem of food security however is critical. Under crony capitalism and extensive patronage politics, state incentives to increase and make more efficient agricultural output can easily be exploited and eventually serve regime security purposes. Even when the region tried to to boost production, food imports increased. MENA food imports spiked from $4 billion in 1973 to $30 billion in 1985. With climate change, the food import bill is projected to spike to $70billion in 2035.

A fatal mistake to address the problem of food insecurity would be to try to make a political army a part of the solution. Egypt committed this mistake decades ago.

> "Indeed, the most prominent example where the [Egyptian] military began consolidating its power was in the agricultural sector. With the help of U.S. experts in the USAID, state

subsidies, military research and skilled conscript labour, the Egyptian military launched a program to achieve 'food security' through the Food Security Division (FSD). Under the pretext of achieving food security for the nation, the military expanded its land reclamation projects across the country. By the mid-1980s, the FSD 'became almost overnight the single largest agro-industrial organization in Egypt'. The FSD established 'dairy farms . . . milk processing facilities, integrated poultry complexes, fish farms, and cattle feedlots' across the country. In 1986, the military's activities in the agricultural sector expanded into vegetables and fruits as the October 6th Agro-Industrial Complex was launched with the ability to grow produce in plastic houses over thousands of feddans of land."[70]

Inviting the military into the national economy even more in order to tackle food insecurity not only failed to solve the problem but also indulged the military even further in national politics.

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Traditional non-regional actors such as the USA, the EU and Russia have established a deep footprint in the MENA. Yet, previous certainty about the nature of their policies and roles within the region has been shaken in the wake of the Arab Spring and the instability which followed. On top of this, the region is witnessing the arrival of a new set of global actors, such as China and India, who are much more focussed on advancing economic ties and investment. The interaction of these new players with the region and traditional international powers is creating new networks of relationships and dynamics with MENA regional politics and security.

These multi-layered interactions between the traditional and new global players, international institutions and regional powers will also have major implications on regional security and cooperation.

Global Players and Their Shifting Regional Alignments

The United States of America

The USA has had a long history of involvement in the Middle East. In many ways, contemporary US policy has been shaped by a number of important milestones: the 11 September 2001 terror attacks, Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and before that, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, as well as the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars. During this time the USA framed its intervention as part of the global Cold War and the fight against the Soviet Union, and more recently the war on terrorism. While US actions have often been shaped by ideology, strategic interests have also come into play, in particular with regards to ensuring security and stability in the Gulf peninsula and the uninterrupted flow of oil to western markets.

During his tenure, President Obama attempted to reduce US engagement in the Middle East and turn more towards Asia. While this allowed other global and regional actors to assert themselves in the Middle East, the possibility of a full strategic re-orientation was limited by the eruption of the Arab Spring revolutions and efforts to secure a nuclear agreement with Iran in the face of strong Israeli and Gulf opposition. Under his successor President Donald Trump, efforts to re-orient the USA's outlook towards Asia continue somewhat. In many respects, the policy of the Trump administration towards the Middle East is one of continuity rather than rupture when compared to the previous administration.

While it is unclear to what extent the USA has actually withdrawn from the Middle East, it is certainly losing its status as the main reference point for other global and regional actors. The perception that American leadership and influence is on the wane in the region, and that the USA is becoming more insular, has created openings for other actors to step in to advance their own national interests. As a result, the Middle East has now entered a phase of multi-polarity.

There have, however, been some changes under Trump's administration. Narrowing US interests and strategic thinking over the long-term are moves which many analysts see as representing a more transactional (or business-like) foreign policy, free from any values-based considerations relating to international law or human rights. Trump also seems keen to undo the foreign policy accomplishments of his predecessor and chart a contradictory course on the world stage.

The arrival of President Trump has seen the USA de-prioritise multilateralism and diplomacy as key pillars of the international liberal order. This marks the reversal of Obama-era US foreign policy and has been most evident in the withdrawal from the Paris climate change agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA –

better known as the Iran nuclear deal), international trade deals such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the EU, Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) with Asia, and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico and Canada. In addition, Trump has upended decades of US and international policy positions relating to the Middle East peace process.

Under Trump, US foreign policy is characterised by numerous inconsistencies. For example, the Trump administration has talked up prospects of US military disengagement from the MENA region even as it pursues an increasingly hard-line on Iran's regional influence.

There do, nevertheless, appear to be a set of priorities which the Trump administration is pursuing when it comes to the Middle East; supporting Israel, maintaining stability in the straits of Hormuz, fighting ISIS, and rolling back Iranian influence.

However, despite the USA continuing to view the Middle East through a militarised lens, in particular when it comes to the fight against ISIS, it is no longer showing any interest in building institutions or stabilising areas which have been freed from ISIS control. It is also unclear what the Trump administration's strategy is for containing Iran, beyond tearing up the JCPOA and encouraging local actors to shoulder more of the costs.

In addition, the disruptive strategy being pursued by Washington towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, risks further instability in the region. Trump's arrival in the Oval Office has also impacted the USA's relations with regional powers. One example is in Turkey, where despite an initial warming of ties, the USA's relationship remains on uneven ground, principally as a result of continued divergences over the role of Kurdish forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Syria.

This deterioration in bilateral ties has been mirrored in Turkey's relations with the EU – although sources of friction in this case stem from Turkey's failed attempts to join the EU, its perceived illiberalism, and its role in regulating the flow of refugees to Europe. These dynamics have pushed Ankara closer to Moscow, into a relationship which has very much been born out of necessity and a short-term convergence of interests, despite mutual distrust.

Conversely, relations between the USA and Israel are currently closer than ever, with tighter strategic coordination evident on the Iranian and Palestinian files. US relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE have also improved remarkably under President Trump given his increased anti-Iran rhetoric, decision to tear up the JCPOA, and vocal opposition to political Islam. This relationship was cemented through an early willingness by the Trump administration to side with Saudi Arabia and the UAE against Qatar, framed as part of a broader campaign against Tehran and Islamist groups. According to reports, both the UAE and Saudi Arabia sought, and received, Trump's blessing to impose a sea, land, and air embargo on Qatar during his May 2017 visit to Riyadh.

The killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018, ostensibly on the orders of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, has strained US-Saudi relations. The result is strong bi-partisan censure from the US Congress, and American pressure on Saudi Arabia to wind down its war in Yemen. However, it is not yet clear whether this will lead to a qualitative deterioration in US-Saudi relations over the long-term.

The European Union

The pre-eminent position enjoyed by European states as former colonial powers in the Middle East during the first half of the twentieth century has been steadily replaced by that of the USA. A key turning

point in this regard was the failure of British-French efforts to seize the Suez Canal from Egypt under the cover of the 1956 Arab-Israeli war.

Nevertheless, the Mediterranean basin has continued to be of importance to European states due to its geographic proximity. The advent of the EU (and its predecessor the European Economic Community) gave European states a new set of instruments and policies towards the region. These focussed primarily on economic development and cooperation, and to a lesser extent, on moulding southern Mediterranean states into Europe's image by conditioning European assistance on normative changes. This has been embodied in the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

Furthermore, the EU has sought to address sources of instability and insecurity within the Middle East given concerns that these would spill-over into terrorism and migration flows into Europe. This largely reflects domestic European priorities and considerations and is a product of the various internal crises facing the EU and its member states. In response, the EU has launched a number of military and civilian security assistance missions in the Sahel, North Africa, and Mashreq. These form part of its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The EU's border agency Frontex also operates a maritime mission in the Mediterranean to rescue migrants and conduct law enforcement operations. In addition, several member states, such as France, are engaged in military operations outside of the EU framework, in Libya and the Sahel.

Europe has made progress on the defence front, agreeing in December 2017 on a Permanent Structured Cooperation on Security and Defence (PESCO) in order to deepen defence cooperation amongst EU Member States. While this has been envisaged as the cornerstone of a European

defence and security union, it is still not clear how and when this will ultimately take form. Alongside this, the EU has heavily invested in a number of diplomatic initiatives. By far the most important in EU eyes has been its promotion, and now defence, of the JCPOA. This has led to improved relations with Tehran, despite continued misgivings amongst Iranian hardliners about the EU's reliability as American pressure increases.

EU policy has had other successes: The ENP has increased political association and economic integration between the EU and partner countries along the southern Mediterranean. It has offered the EU increased political weight as a diplomatic actor within the conflict, providing it a unique and potentially powerful instrument in support of international peace-making efforts.

In spite of this, the EU has so far not risen up as a true global actor. Despite the EU's High Representative repeatedly emphasising the need for the bloc to become "a credible and reliable security provider" there is little sign of an imminent shift in EU military capabilities, let alone towards a more militarised role in MENA. This does not preclude future ad-hoc military interventions by European states such as France and the United Kingdom. But, as before, these are likely to take place outside of EU structures.

The EU has also been unable to formulate an overarching MENA policy beyond what is contained within the EU's Global Strategy review and ENP. From Tunisia to Israel and Palestine, the EU has been incapable of translating the ENP's policy potential into real political weight, nor drive the sort of change it has sought. This is partly the result of internal divisions amongst EU member states, but also a pre-occupation with internal consensus making, which limits the scope for effective EU action.

In addition, the EU has tended to suffer from short term thinking (linked to the length of mandates of its governments) which lends itself to high impact action and crisis management, even if such policies are not ultimately able to effectively address the drivers of the MENA region's conflicts. This has precluded deeper policy rethinks or the initiation of remedial action which may well only bear fruit over the long-term.

The fact that the EU is increasingly diverging from the USA on a number of key MENA foreign policy issues (from Iran to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) creates further challenges. Trump's effort to undermine the JCPOA and his decision to roll out secondary sanctions against European entities doing business with Iran have strained trans-Atlantic relations and raised further questions about the EU's ability to be an independent player from the USA.

For decades, the EU has largely sought US policy leadership and security guaranties in the MENA region, and the prospect of having to go it alone in MENA, and more generally look to itself for security provisions, could potentially have a transformational effect on EU policy. Such a transformation may, however, be slow in coming, and could be cancelled out by the arrival of a new presidential administration which is more willing to assume the USA's traditional role in the region and division of labour with the EU.

Russia

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has been largely absent in the Middle East. But its influence has once again grown since the Arab Spring revolutions and its military intervention in Syria in September 2015. This reflects a growing understanding in Moscow that the Middle East matters to Russia's national interests – a realisation brought on by the Arab Spring (and its similarity in

Russian eyes to the colour revolutions in countries of the former Soviet Union), coupled with the drop in oil prices.

This shift in Russian policy was also driven by Moscow's disillusionment with what it sees as failed Western policies in the Middle East. This reached its height following the US-led intervention in Libya in 2011 and the ensuing chaos. Despite this, Moscow does not want to replace Washington as the main regional problem solver.

Unlike Soviet policy during the Cold War, Russia's current motivations for increased involvement in the Middle East are more varied, and not purely spurred by ideology. In fact, Russian foreign policy towards the Middle East has evolved over the last 6 years and continues to do so. Since 2012, it has steadily shifted away from diplomatic dialogue towards direct military involvement, reflecting Russia's growing interest and pro-activeness in shaping regional developments.

Russia has invested a lot militarily and diplomatically in Syria, and now wants an exit strategy. But despite its positioning as the main external player in the conflict, the absence of political elements on the ground there has meant that it is now struggling to see how it can secure its military gains and launch a political process able to preserve its strategic interests. Moscow has also been disappointed that its increased involvement in Syria has translated into only limited dialogue with Washington.

In the meantime, Moscow faces the challenge of balancing its relations with key regional players and avoiding taking sides, something which is becoming ever more difficult as the Syrian conflict remains unresolved. Increasing conflict between Israel and Iran (both allies of Russia) puts Moscow in a difficult position, and it is not yet clear what effect the delivery to Syria of its advanced S-300 anti-aircraft system will have on Israeli operations against Iranian-linked targets.

Meanwhile, there continue to be question marks over the long-term fate of Russian-Iranian coordination in Syria, especially given the possibility of their national interests diverging in a post-conflict situation (or in the event of an Iranian- Israeli war). Although, it should be noted, Syria is only one component of Russia's relationship with Iran, which extends to defending JCPOA, and cooperation in Central Asia.

Regardless of the outcome in Syria, Russia is unlikely to disengage from the Middle East. Moscow is particularly interested in increasing its footprint in North Africa, through arms sales to Algeria, trade with Egypt, and by multiplying its contacts with Libyan actors.

Russia has the advantage of being seen by some Middle Eastern states as more reliable and more willing to stick with its allies than the USA (which was perceived to have abandoned Mubarak during the Egyptian revolution). In addition, it is seen as having a more coherent policy than the USA, despite analysts arguing that Moscow doesn't actually appear to have a clear strategy for the Middle East. In any case, the regional chaos and instability which has seemingly resulted from US actions has allowed Russia to cast itself as the guardian of regional order and 'status quo'.

China

China's foreign policy is shaped by the nature of its political economy. It has made political and economic inroads in the Middle East over the last few years and has invested heavily in infrastructure projects in the region, as well as in Africa where it is seen as a useful alternative to Europe. Middle Eastern businesses also find it easy to do business with China since it operates in the same way as Middle Eastern countries (top down and authoritarian). This reflects the structure of China's economy and its political priorities. Both are predicated on

economic connectivity, security of flow of energy resources, security of land and maritime routes for trade, with a focus on investment and infrastructure projects topping China's foreign policy priorities.

However, there seems to be a qualitative change in China's idea of being a great power and the nature of its power. Previously, China contended that it was not a traditional superpower, often describing its foreign policy as non-interventionist, focused on creating mutually beneficial economic arrangements and abstaining from establishing any military presence outside of its national territory.

But there are signs of increasing politicisation of its regional policy. For example, the choice of locations for placing assets and investments within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is as much a political, strategic and geopolitical decision, as it is economic. Most fundamentally though, Beijing sees the region as a stepping stone to the West, and its transformation into a member of the 'first world' as an equal partner to the USA and Russia.

Nevertheless, Beijing remains cognizant of its inferior status vis-á-vis the established global powers. It does not want to directly challenge either the USA or Russia in the Middle East. Nor does it want to force MENA countries to choose sides. Instead, it prefers these countries to have good relations and links with itself, as well as other international players. Despite this, its relations with Russia are fraught with tension and it is plausible to anticipate that these relations will break apart at some point. This is more likely within the context of central Asia rather than the Middle East, with their division of labor — China as the economic partner and Russia as the security provider — unlikely to be sustainable in the long-term.

For now, however, China has a vested interest in preserving the regional status quo in MENA. It is particularly sensitive to, and suspicious of

any major geopolitical transformation or political changes. It therefore has a clear preference towards working with central governments or authoritarian regimes.

In this regard, China's interests align with Russia. Like Moscow, Beijing does not want a repeat of the colour revolutions of central Asia or eastern Europe, or the Arab Spring revolutions of the Middle East to take place at home, or in its immediate neighbourhood. Like Russia, China is also flexible enough to work with any actors in the MENA region. It has also been anxious to remain on good terms with regional actors to preserve its economic access and avoid being caught in the region's intractable political issues.

The one exception to this is Islamist groups. This stems from Chinese concerns about its Muslim population in Uighur or Xinjiang provinces, along with what it perceives as the radicalisation of its Muslim Hui population. The presence of Uighur fighters in places like Syria has increased these concerns.

China's preoccupation with radicalisation and terrorism, combined with a desire to protect its foreign investments, has led to a more securitised approach to the Middle East. This led to the first joint training exercise and anti-terrorism drills between the Special Forces of the Royal Saudi Land Forces and the Chinese Army in 2016.

Despite this, China does not yet appear ready to put boots on the ground, aggressively deploy advisory missions, or send military training units to the region; although it has used private military contractors to protect Chinese investments and projects overseas. Nor does China show any interest in challenging or assuming the traditional security role played by the USA in the region, in particular guaranteeing energy and trade routes through the Straits of Hormuz (which China sees as vital to its own economic interests).

Ultimately, China is realistic about what it can achieve. Chinese political elites believe that it cannot play any diplomatic role of consequence on major regional files. Nor have they shown any willingness to invest the required political capital to accompany such efforts. Consequently, China has limited itself to declaratory policies: In 2012, China advanced a four-point proposal to end the Syrian conflict. In 2013, it floated a modest proposal on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2014, it offered a five-point proposal to end the Gaza war. In 2017, it proposed its own version of the Middle East process to deal with Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

New Global Actors

Brazil and India – two other members of the emerging economies bloc BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) – still remain relatively absent from the Middle East, despite growing economic ties. India has been growing closer to Israel – something that was highlighted through the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Israel in July 2018, and the reciprocal visit of Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu to India in January 2018. For its part, Brazil has tried to increase its profile in the region as a model for developing 'clean energy'. While it is still not fully clear what Brazil's MENA policy will look like under its new president Jair Bolsonaro, it will likely include a strong economic component, and draw the country closer to Israel.

As new global roles arrive in the Middle East they will be confronted with two choices in terms of relationship models: trying to avoid polarisation in order to maintain good relations with all sides (allowing them potentially to also play a mediating role in the region's conflicts); or alternatively, exploiting the region's tensions to maximise economic and political gains. Either way, they will have to negotiate the complex web of regional rivalries and alliances which has seen international powers advance their geo-political interests through regional partners.

These new actors may also have a different set of threat perceptions to traditional international actors such as the USA or Russia. And while they may be interested in supporting post-conflict recovery efforts, such as in Syria, they have so far shown less interest in advancing conflict resolution efforts. This reflects their desire to remain predominantly economic, rather than political, actors in the region. In addition, the current volatility and instability in large parts of the Middle East will likely encourage new global actors to limit their economic and political investments. This, in turn, limits their political leverage with Middle Eastern states, along with their ability to build regional alliances in support of their interests.

The interaction between global and regional states is, however, a two-way street. Middle Eastern states have been expanding their influence in Africa. Israel has been growing its ties with central African states such as Uganda and Kenya based on joint economic and security interests. In addition, Israeli diplomacy has been trying to find a destination for African asylum seekers deported from Israel and whittle away the number of African votes cast in favour of the Palestinians at the UN.

The Gulf and Turkey have been expanding their military and economic presence in the Horn of Africa which occupies a strategic location overlooking the Bab al-Mandab Straits. The UAE has been particularly active in Djibouti and Eritrea – both of which host Emirati bases. Djibouti also reportedly hosts Saudi naval forces. Additionally, Ankara has sought to increase business ties with Somalia, where it has also opened its largest military base outside of Turkey. However, it remains to be seen if and how African states respond to this external influence in the long-term, and whether they decide (or are compelled) to play a more active role in the Middle East in response.

Towards A New Regional Security Architecture?

The Middle East is entering a new phase of regional and international contestation and now, more than ever, a decisive de-escalation and stabilisation drive is needed. Furthermore, rather than supporting authoritarian regimes or entrenching an unsustainable status quo, this should focus on transforming socio-political structures in the region.

Within the context of promoting stability, a number of voices have also called for an accompanying transformation of the region's security architecture. While this remains currently out of reach, it is seen as an essential element in reaching a collective consensus amongst the region's global and local actors on how to solve the Middle East's numerous conflicts. At present, there is no scope to advance a conversation on developing a new regional security architecture.

Global actors are less interested in building a new regional order, and instead appear more interested in preserving the status quo (or in some cases, returning to that which existed before the Arab Spring). This desire has hampered efforts by regional actors to build a new regional order themselves.

It is also true that there is no clear consensus or collaboration amongst regional actors on what a new regional order should look like. Turkey, for instance, wanted to spearhead a new Islamist-friendly regional order after the Arab uprisings but has failed to achieve global or regional buy-in for this project. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and Israel have sought to enlist global powers in their front against Iran and its proxies. In particular, a common desire to roll-back Iranian influence in the region has led to a convergence of interests between Gulf states and Israel, and increased prospects of closer security coordination between them. For its part, Iran may intensify its involvement in

regional conflicts as a reaction to the USA's decision to walk away from the JCPOA.

These regional rivalries and divisions have, however, further fragmented the Middle East's security architecture. The deterioration of the region's geo-political fabric has been further amplified by the erosion of regional bodies such as the League of Arab States (LAS) and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). This has in turn further polarised and fragmented the Sunni and Arab regional order. The GCC has been particularly weakened by internal divisions created as a result of the Saudi/Emirati-led blockade of Qatar, which has forced Doha closer to Tehran and Ankara.

The proxy wars orchestrated by regional powers have also led to the proliferation of non-state actors, and the consequent undermining of centralised state structures. Current regional dynamics are in danger of escalating these localised proxy conflicts into a full-blown inter-state conflict between Iran and its regional rivals, in particular Israel.

Global and regional actors have not yet reached the conclusion that they are in a lose-lose situation. Instead, they remain committed to a zero-sum, winner takes all, competition. But a new regional order (even one promoted by Washington) cannot be constructed without buy-in from all parties, including Turkey, Iran, and Qatar. Preserving the JCPOA is also a key ingredient in resolving the conflicts of regional rivalries.

This all comes despite a number of pressing issues which require a coherent international and regional response to avoid new conflicts. These include the risk of nuclear proliferation, whether as a result of; the demise of the JCPOA, Iran walking away from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), or the potential of Saudi Arabia to initiate its own nuclear programme.

Further sources of conflict may also arise in the future as the result of renewed mobilisation by youth groups who feel economically and politically marginalised; as well as the desertification of large parts of the region which will give rise to food insecurity and resource scarcity.

Sadly, it may take a regional war to create a conducive environment in which to build new institutions, similar to the way in which the EU and UN were formed from the ashes of the First and Second World Wars.

Recommendations for Global Powers

Support regional conflict de-escalation and stabilisation efforts

- The region is on the verge of a serious inter-state conflagration resulting from the potential demise of the JCPOA, and increased confrontation between Iran and a regional front centred on Gulf states, Israel, and the USA. Iran's support network of non-state proxies has increased regional instability and weakened central state actors. However, the anti-Iran actions promoted by Saudi Arabia and the USA are also problematic and risk further volatility.

- Instead of feeding increased military confrontation, global actors such as Russia together with the EU and its member states (led by Germany and France) should advance regional de-escalation efforts. Given that there is no real opening to build a new regional security architecture, global actors should prioritise local conflict resolution efforts on a case-by-case basis, rather than striving for a regional grand bargain which will prove considerably more complex to achieve. A starting point could be in Yemen where it may be possible to elicit regional support for conflict de-escalation, and in doing so reduce Houthi scud missile launches against Saudi Arabia.

- Alongside this, the EU and BRICS countries (in particular Russia

and China) should work together to preserve the JCPOA by ensuring continued foreign business investment in Iran. The alternative would be to risk greater destabilisation and confrontation as a result of intensified Iranian involvement in the region's conflicts and its attempts to undermine the interests of the Gulf states, Israel, and the USA.

■   Even if a new regional security architecture remains out of reach for now, promoting regional dialogue remains important. This should include concerted efforts to move regional actors away from their current zero-sum calculations and address their existential threat perceptions. For local conflicts to be fully resolved though, these must be uncoupled from regional and global power competitions.

■   The Saudi-led blockade against Qatar has resulted in internal Gulf divisions which have not only allowed Tehran to make inroads in Qatar, but also threatens stability in the Gulf region and undermines the long-term prospect for a new regional (or sub-regional) security architecture. Global powers (including the USA) should help resolve this situation.

■   Finally, arms exporting countries, namely the USA, European states, Russia, and China, should re-consider their provision of arms to Middle Eastern states currently engaged in regional conflicts and violations of international law. This could be modelled on Germany's decision to stop arms exports to Saudi Arabia in light of its involvement in the war in Yemen and well-documented killing of civilians.

Creating favourable post-conflict environments.

■   The post-Arab Spring regional landscape has seen the multiplication of non-state actors and the weakening of central

state structures. This has led to the proliferation of non-governed spaces which have acted as incubators for further de-stabilisation, insecurity, and terrorism. While external military interventions may deal with the security related consequences of this, they will not by themselves resolve the root causes which created such situations in the first place.

■   As part of post-conflict efforts, global powers should work to empower central state structures and institutions in order to help support stabilisation and reconstruction efforts. This could include re-balancing governance relations between the central state and the peripheries, ensuring a more equitable distribution of power, and empowering local representation structures. However, such efforts must not be focused solely on security, but should rather promote institutional reform, economic growth, good governance and respect for human rights as well.

■   As part of a post-conflict phase, global powers must focus on institution building and human security. Institutions are important for ensuring future stability, re-empowering state structures, and promoting security sector reform (such as resolving the status of armed militias) in a manner that generates public confidence. Given the large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, considerable effort will also have to be made at a grassroots level to ensure the return and re-integration of IDPs and refugees. Advance truth and reconciliation initiatives for the conflicts' victims will also need to be implemented and all of this should be done in partnership with local civil society.

■   Global powers could look to strengthen bilateral relations between states and regional connectivity as a way of minimising conflict in the future. This could include advancing joint energy projects as well as increasing cross-border trade and investment.

Heading-off future crises

■ Beyond the short/medium-term threats of regional conflagration and inter-state conflict, there are a number of crises looming in the long-term which global actors should work with regional partners to resolve pre-emptively. As the Arab Spring revolutions showed, an increasingly youthful population which is underemployed and underrepresented politically, presents real issues for the stability of Middle Eastern states. This is especially acute in North Africa which (with the exception of Libya) has been spared the violent conflict seen in the Mashreq. However, other countries such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia will face similar issues over the coming years.

■ In theory, the EU should be well placed to help regional states address such issues, given its endeavours to do the same in North Africa. Beyond improving the socio-economic conditions of Middle Eastern youths, efforts should be made to empower them politically. Other global actors such as China may also have an important role to play in this, by virtue of their economic and investment power.

■ Global powers should also work with regional partners to address the consequences of climate change and the desertification of large parts of the region, including the conflict potential this could create linked to food insecurity and water resource scarcity.

■ Other problems that should be addressed now include the potential for regional nuclear proliferation. This will require effective collaboration between international and regional actors, at both state and grassroots levels.

■ Although the conditions are not yet ripe, it is important to continue supporting the development of an inclusive regional security architecture that can; (1) act as a mechanism to avoid

conflict between global and regional powers in the region; and (2) help anchor the region in respect of international law and the global nation state rules-based order. A starting point could be to explore sub-regional security arrangements, such as in the Gulf or Straits of Hormuz. Regional think tanks have an important role to play in conceptualising future modalities.
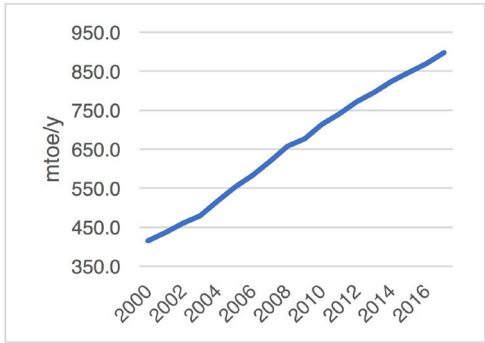
Energy has played a central role in the making of the Middle East we know today. In more than one respect, it has shaped the developments of societies, economically as well as politically. Energy has also been a key element in defining the Middle East's relations with the rest of the world. Today, transformations in the realm of energy are compounding the dramatic political and economic challenges confronting the region. Transformative energy developments include massively growing domestic demand, the harsh effects of climate change (see Fact Box), and the longer-term implications of global markets which are changing both in terms of trade patterns and the fuel mix.

In the long-term, these developments may re-define the position of the Middle East on the global energy map. Today, they add substantial uncertainty to a region which is already suffering from tremendous political and economic volatility.

Against this backdrop, this report discusses the link between energy, climate, and security challenges in the Middle East. To this end, the paper will examine the links between energy and regional security, changing energy dynamics and the region's energy challenges, as well as their implications for energy, security and both the potential for, and limitations to reform.

Fact Box: Middle Eastern Energy and Environment

Energy	Climate
Primary Energy Demand Growth in the Middle East **Source**: BP 2018 Between 2000 and 2017, the Middle East saw robust annual increases in energy demand, growing from an annual average of 5% or 28 million tonnes of oil equivalent (MTOE). Across the region, ensuring energy access in the future is among the major challenges for policymakers.	The Middle East suffers more from climate change than other parts of the world. The region is already facing numerous challenges in this context. Prospectively, the Middle East will increasingly be confronted with; ■ More intense and longer periods of heat ■ Less but more intense rainfall ■ Falling groundwater levels ■ Droughts ■ Soil degradation ■ Dust and sandstorms ■ Rising sea levels Parallel to increasing energy efficiency and saving, adaptation and mitigation measures will need to be implemented.

The Link between Energy and Regional Security

Middle Eastern energy developments unfold against an extremely volatile backdrop. The regional political order is transforming gradually, as demonstrated by political uprisings and conflicts across the region.

Meanwhile, energy developments are crucially affecting both the politics and the economics of the Middle East more than in other parts of the world. Some of the key factors include:

■ In most Middle Eastern countries, energy is central to the political legitimacy of ruling regimes and, as such, to political stability in a broader sense. In the absence of effective democratic institutions, numerous states seek to generate some form of public acquiescence through the provision of energy – mostly by offering fuel, power, and water at highly subsidized prices to the public. Throughout the region, this is the case in both energy-rich and -poor countries.

■ In the region's oil and/or natural gas-rich countries, energy is also central to economic diversification strategies. To varying degrees, these seek to boost petrochemical and energy-intensive industries. As such, the success of economic diversification rests on the abundant availability of cheap – i.e. subsidized – energy.

■ Finally, in the case of the Middle East's energy exporting countries, revenue from oil or natural gas exports is also central to foreign policy ambitions (e.g., when financing allies and proxies in the region) and petrodollar diplomacy.

These key factors in the politics and economics of the Middle East are being transformed by the combination of the region's volatile geopolitics and the changes in the realm of global energy (including climate change). Energy-related uncertainty for the politics and economics of the Middle East is already mounting.

Changing energy dynamics and the Middle East: competition in supply and challenges in demand

Global energy is in the midst of a profound transformation. Around the world, structural shifts regarding the energy mix, trade, and prices are underway. While assessments as to the pace, extent, and implications of change are varying, the general trend is a transition from high to lower carbon global energy systems.

In recent years, technological innovations have unlocked the potential of previously (economically) inaccessible energy resources. As for fossil fuels, improvements in technology and the easing of regulatory restrictions resulted in a 'revolution' of so-called unconventional oil and natural gas production in the USA.[1] Unconventional production began to rise in the late 2000s, when high oil prices allowed for investments into more expensive technologies at the time. This has allowed the USA to more than double its oil output in the past decade. As a result, the USA overtook Russia and Saudi Arabia and became the world's biggest oil producer.[2]

Figure 1: Oil production: Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the USA
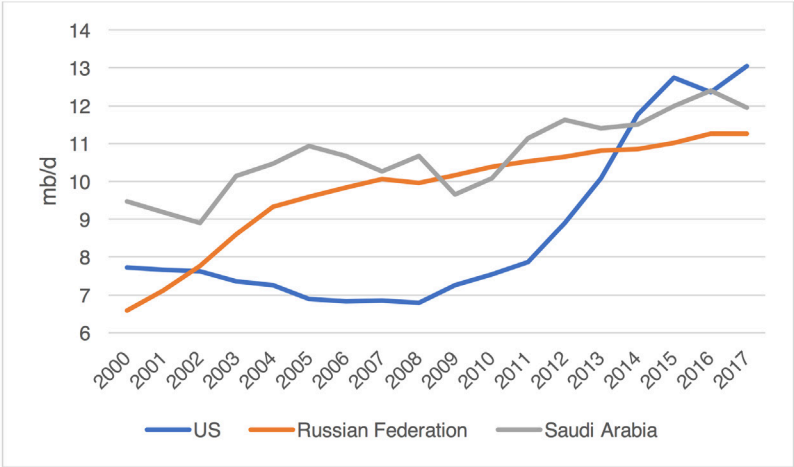
Source: BP 2018

Parallel to these developments, concerns regarding climate change have resulted in numerous political resolutions at national and international levels over the past decades. The main pronounced aim has been the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions – most prominently in the form of the 2015 Paris Agreement. While implementation of the resolutions is lagging behind their ambition, developments on the ground point in the direction of greater sensitivity towards climate-related aspects.

This sentiment is partly reflected in the growing diffusion of renewable energy and the parallel advancement of energy efficiency. Especially in power generation, renewable energy has been increasingly utilized in recent years (albeit only marginally in the Middle East). This progress has been facilitated by public support schemes in several countries and reductions in the cost of renewable energy production. In particular, solar photovoltaic, concentrating solar, and wind energy have become substantially cheaper, which allows for successful competition on price in many markets.[3] Between 2010 and 2017, global consumption of renewable energy (excluding hydropower) grew more than 2.8 times, which reflects an average annual growth of 15.6%.[4] In comparison, global primary energy consumption increased by an average 1.6% per year over the same period (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 : Renewable energy consumption (World and Middle East)
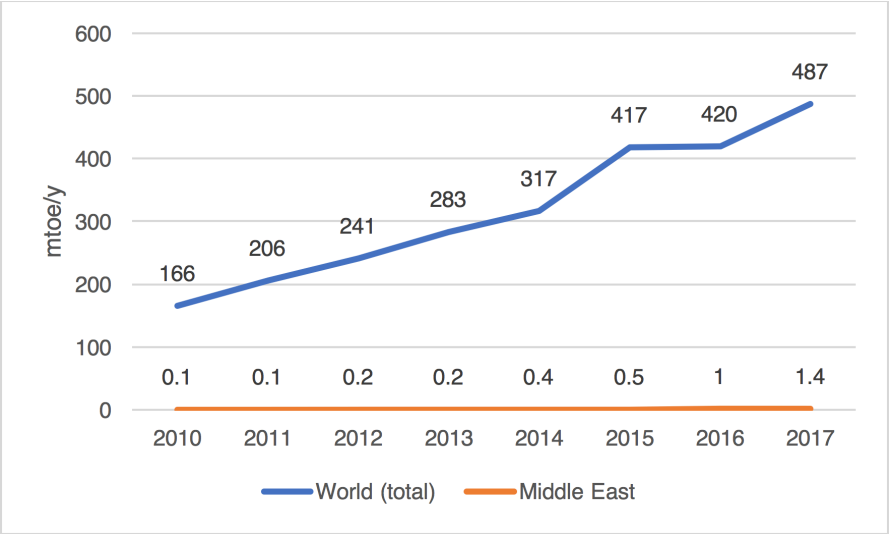
The world has also seen important improvements in energy efficiency in recent years. High oil prices in the late 2000s and early 2010s offered commercial incentives to improve energy efficiency, a challenge which

has led to investments into technological innovation. Moreover, in light of climate change, governments around the world have introduced policies seeking to promote energy efficiency. Between 2010 and 2016, global energy intensity[5] declined by 2.1% per year on average. This reflects substantial advancements and is in stark contrast to the preceding 40 years when the average annual decline rate was only 1.3% between 1970 and 2010.[6]

In the course of these developments, oil prices collapsed. Brent oil, which traded at over $114 per barrel in June 2014, saw its value shrink to less than $30 in January 2016. Despite this price drop, many unconventional oil and natural gas producers were able to remain in business as their production costs have also fallen. Meanwhile, renewable energy consumption has also grown consistently amid policy-support and lowering costs. Notwithstanding the (partial) recovery of oil prices in 2017 and 2018, and considerable price volatility in the short- to mid-term, the broader trend points towards lower prices in the long-run.

Against this backdrop, by and large, an "era of plenty"[7] is on the horizon, which offers increasing options on the supply side. This then leads to growing competition between fossil fuel producers and energy carriers.

Obviously, the Middle East's large oil and natural gas reserves will continue to be of great importance to global energy. Thanks to their cheap geological production costs, Middle Eastern oil and natural gas can successfully compete in any foreseeable price environment. Parallel to this, however, energy developments around the world will increasingly be shaped by new supplies – in terms of both energy carriers and geographical location. Unconventional oil and gas production in the USA will continue to increase the supply of

hydrocarbons to the market. Similarly, renewable energy carriers are continuing to become increasingly cheaper and cost-competitive in many sectors (especially. electricity/solar photovoltaic).[8]

In the Middle East, meanwhile, one particular trend stands out: a marked increase in energy demand across the region. In absolute terms, between 2000 and 2017, primary energy demand more than doubled from 415 to 897 MTOE. This reflects an average annual growth rate of 4.7%. Over the same period, global energy demand grew by just 2.2% on average per year. The relative increases in energy demand in the Middle East are even higher than in the economically vibrant Asia-Pacific region, where energy demand grew by an annual average of 4.6%.[9] In relative terms, this means the Middle East has the world's fastest growing energy demand.

Figure 3 : Average annual growth in primary energy demand by world region (2000-17)
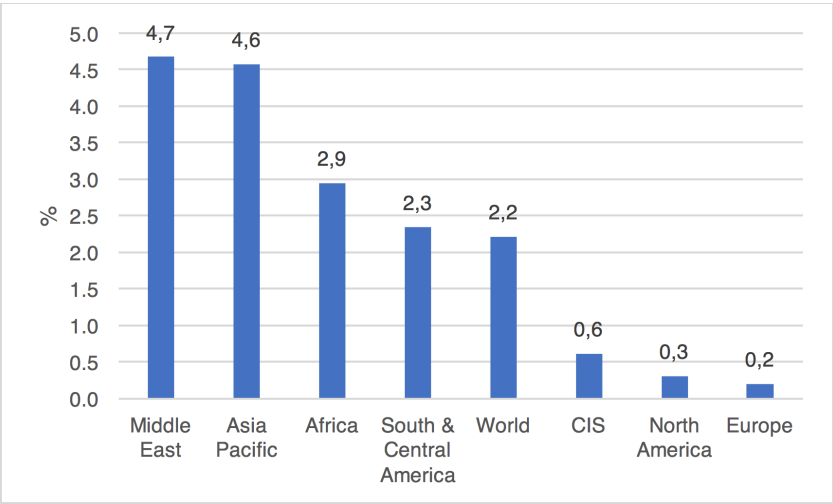
In this context, it is important to highlight the different growth rates of energy demand and supply in the Middle East. Oil and natural

gas production, which together accounted for more than 98% of the region's primary energy demand in 2017, has increased at a markedly slower rate than demand. Between 2000 and 2017, combined oil and natural gas output saw average annual growth rates of only 2.7%. Oil and natural gas production growth averaged at 1.6% and 7.1% respectively. This reflects the increased use of natural gas in the Middle East and highlights a move away from oil to natural gas. Overall, however, the growing use of natural gas is only partially offsetting the region's increase in demand, as the aggregate numbers show.

All in all, there is a twin challenge for Middle Eastern energy producing countries: On the global stage, competition on the supply-side increases. At the regional level, demand-side developments are increasingly a challenge (for both energy-rich and energy-scarce countries). This new situation is changing the role of energy in the region. While the Middle East has traditionally been an important source of energy supplies for the world (and continues to be), the region is increasingly becoming a center of energy demand as well. This development is accompanied by several challenges.

Energy Challenges facing the Middle East

Changing dynamics in the realm of energy will affect the Middle East in multiple ways. Domestically, regionally, and internationally, Middle Eastern countries will need to address several challenges in light of the growing utilization of unconventional fossil fuels, renewable energy, and energy efficiency technologies at the global level, as well as rapidly growing domestic demand inside the region.

Obviously, the extent and nature of these challenges varies from country to country. Nevertheless, several general observations can be made:

■ The Middle East's oil rich states are increasingly confronted by

competition. On the one hand, there is growing competition for international market shares in oil and natural gas. On the other hand, competition is also on the rise between oil and natural gas producers/ suppliers, as well as other energy carriers.

■ Beyond this, there is a more fundamental question on the horizon: whether or not there will even be a market in the future for all oil and natural gas reserves. At some − not yet determinable − point, a transition to alternative energy carriers might completely erode demand for oil and natural gas. In the case of oil, the International Energy Agency (IEA) expects demand growth to slow substantially between 2025 and 2040.[10] For Middle Eastern (and other) fossil fuel producers, this is a challenge insofar as it dramatically increases uncertainty concerning investment decisions, and their rates of return in the future. At any rate, the certainty that there will always be a market for oil, be it for commercial or political reasons, is gradually declining. Given this uncertainty, longer-term strategic planning for oil and natural gas is becoming more and more complicated.

■ All states in the Middle East are facing challenges regarding the security of energy supplies. Rapidly growing energy demand − due to growing populations, economic activity, and over-consumption as a result of subsidies − is exerting great pressure on the Middle East's energy systems. The challenge in this context is twofold. On one hand, Middle Eastern countries will need to ensure access to energy, either by broadening their own production capabilities or through imports. On the other hand, energy infrastructure (power grids, pipelines, etc.) will need to be sufficiently expanded.

■ Generally, the trend in the Middle East in recent years has been an increased use of natural gas to meet domestic energy demand. While this makes sense from both commercial and environmental points

of view (the domestic use of natural gas frees up oil for exports and natural gas is more environment-friendly), access to natural gas varies greatly from country to country. On the whole, the region possesses vast reserves of natural gas, but oil-rich states are not necessarily natural gas-rich and vice versa. Moreover, some states in the region, e.g. Jordan or Turkey, do not have access to any large hydrocarbon reserves at all. Due to political reservations, gas-short countries in the region (e.g. Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, or the UAE) prefer to import natural gas by ship (as liquefied natural gas (LNG)) rather than using the abundant reserves of their neighbors Iran and Qatar. Put differently, geopolitical tensions prevent the emergence of an intra-regional gas market in the Middle East.

■ Energy developments affecting the Middle East will also be increasingly shaped within the region. The integration of the various countries' energy sectors with broader political and economic developments increases. Historically, for the oil- and natural gas-exporting countries of the region the main link between energy industry and the rest of the country was such that the revenue from oil exports was used domestically.[11] As a consequence, energy developments affecting the Middle East had little to do with what was going on inside the region. To very large extents, (budgetary) considerations regarding the global supply and demand-balance were shaping energy decision-making.

■ With both populations and economic activity on the rise, meeting domestic demand has also become a central concern for Middle Eastern energy policy. In the Persian Gulf countries, this challenging situation is further reinforced by the fact that economic diversification strategies are centered around petrochemical and energy-intensive industries.

While the extent to which the various countries can successfully implement their reform agendas remains highly questionable, the

domestic use of energy is set to increase. The circumstances which increasingly shape the energy developments inside the region also add substantial complexity. Issues surrounding integration with the region's broader political and economic landscape, comprising profound political and economic crises will find their way into energy decision-making processes in one way or another. If the Middle East's economic history is to be taken as a guide, these processes will come at the expense of commercially sound and long-term oriented outcomes.

The Growing Challenges of Climate Change

Parallel to changes in the realm of energy, the Middle East will also face dramatic climate change-related challenges. Although the global energy system is gradually transitioning from high to lower carbon, the pace of this change is too slow to avoid harsh climate change-related effects for the region. Negative consequences of climate change will dramatically affect the Middle East and in many cases, they will hit the region much harder than other parts of the world. Some of these consequences will be:

■ More intense and longer periods of heat: Across the region, temperatures will increase substantially, and the hot season of the year will be lengthier. In some places, e.g. in the Persian Gulf, temperatures are expected to reach up to 50°C and to not fall below 30°C at night during the hot season.

■ Less but more intense rainfalls: There will be less rain in the Middle East, a region already confronted with water scarcity. At the same time, rainfalls will be shorter and more extreme, putting immense pressure on soil to absorb the deluges.

■ Falling groundwater levels: As a result of both over-use and less rain, groundwater levels in the region are expected to decrease.

■ Droughts: As a result of higher temperatures and less rainfall, the region will face more droughts.

■ Soil degradation: Historically, vast stretches of land in the Middle East were not arable. Nevertheless, in order to meet the food demand of rapidly growing populations, agricultural activity was encouraged in these areas, which has contributed significantly to soil degradation.

■ Dust and sandstorms: Due to soil degradation and aridity, dust and sandstorms will occur more frequently, adding stress on societies.

■ Rising sea levels: This is a substantial danger especially for cities located at, or near coast lines, including the mega cities of Abu Dhabi, Doha, Dubai, Istanbul, Jeddah, Kuwait City, Manama, and Muscat.[12]

Meanwhile, the Middle East is not only affected by, but also patently contributes to climate change. In relative terms, carbon dioxide emissions by Middle Eastern countries have grown at a faster rate over the past decade than in any other region.[13] This is closely linked to the region's energy production and consumption, where poor energy efficiency persists and the potential for renewables – especially solar photovoltaic – remains untapped. On the one hand, considering the need to generate revenues (in the case of the region's oil and natural gas exporters) and the need to meet rising domestic energy demands, it would be highly unrealistic to expect the region to reverse oil and natural gas production patterns – i.e. to cut output. On the other hand, in light of considerations regarding political and economic stability, as discussed above, it does not seem likely to expect governments to introduce policies aimed at improving energy intensity (in the form of cutting subsidies).

Therefore, the region's complicated political and economic situation is likely to prevent it from fully embracing measures which would potentially mitigate climate change. This will likely result in the effects

of climate change troubling the daily lives and economic activities of the region's people more and more.

For states, and people in the broader Middle East, the consequences of climate change will be huge. At a very general level, life will be (even) more difficult and costly. For instance, ensuring access to water will become more challenging. Extreme weather phenomena will complicate both normal life and economic activity. As such, economic diversification activities of (not only) the oil and gas-rich countries of the region will be hampered. As for agriculture, the prospects for (however limited) development are further diminished, with severe negative effects on agricultural productivity and food security. Some analysts even expect parts of the region, in the Persian Gulf, to become "uninhabitable" by the end of the century unless drastic action is taken.[14]

By and large, climate change will put tremendous stress on an already extremely volatile region. As climate change increases and its effects are felt harder in the Middle East, social, economic, and ultimately also (geo-)political pressures will intensify. Crucially in this context, climate considerations are not (yet) a decisive factor in the policies of Middle Eastern countries. In fact, the magnitude of the challenges ahead tends to be underestimated by Middle Eastern decision-makers.

Energy and Security: implications and the limits of reform

Each of the above discussed challenges puts further strain on the Middle East's already precariously volatile security situation. Meanwhile, the leeway for reforms to address the various challenges is limited as reforms tend to cause painful socio-political distortions in the short-term.

Competition

In the long-run, competition from other fossil fuels producers as well as alternative energy carriers will threaten the incomes of the Middle East's oil- and natural gas-exporting countries. Despite various attempts at economic diversification, revenue from hydrocarbon exports continues to be of central relevance to the government budgets of most of the Middle East's oil exporters.

The experiences of the recent past reveal a dilemma. In 2014, led by the Middle East's largest producer Saudi Arabia, traditional oil exporting countries flooded the market in an attempt to force unconventional producers out of business by bringing down prices. Oil prices did in fact collapse. But despite being forced to somewhat scale down output, most unconventional competitors managed to remain in business. The governments of oil exporting countries in the Middle East, however, experienced severe stress. At levels of around $30 per barrel, oil prices were substantially below fiscal breakeven points. Public budgets were running deficits as a result and governments were forced to resort to rapidly depleting savings.[15] In November 2016, as budgetary pressure mounted, OPEC (led by Saudi Arabia) and a group of non-OPEC oil exporters (led by Russia) agreed production cuts to limit global oil supply. The group succeeded in lifting oil prices somewhat (to as high as $85 per barrel for Brent in October 2018). In doing so, however, competition from unconventional producers picked up again. Similarly, the rise in oil prices also encouraged production from other energy carriers, albeit more expensive at a higher cost. Meanwhile, oil prices remained below the fiscal breakeven points of most Middle Eastern oil production countries.

Middle Eastern oil exporters continue to wield significant influence in global energy – as reflected by the oil price rise in response to the

production cuts by these countries. At the same time, however, the episode also shows that the traditional producers proved unable to reverse the longer-term trajectory. Competition from unconventional hydrocarbon producers as well as alternative energy carriers will therefore continue to threaten, and likely erode the long-term income-base and economic models of the Middle East's oil exporting countries. As such, pressure on the economic systems of the region's oil exporters will grow, giving rise to uncertainty over their longer-term stability.

Energy Supply Security

The dramatically rising energy demand in the Middle East is putting severe pressure on the countries of the region. Any failure to meet domestic energy demand will bring further instability to societies which are already fragile. Blackouts and other temporary suspensions of energy supply do not only have negative economic consequences. They also have the potential to escalate social and political tensions.[16]

Across the Middle East, heavy energy consumption is triggered by heavy subsidization. Political regimes, ranging from monarchies to often de facto authoritarian republics, seek to calm populations by offering energy and other goods at massively discounted prices. This results in extremely inefficient consumption patterns, -triggering over-consumption, with energy intensity in the Middle East being among the world's worst.

Reforms, however, are problematic. Throughout the region, attempts at eliminating subsidies have sparked public protests in countries such as Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. As long as effective social policy-schemes are lacking, subsidy reforms are unlikely to be successful. This at least is the case in the region's more populous countries. However, there are some positive experiences with subsidy

reforms in states with smaller populations, for example the UAE.[17] By and large, however, experience suggests subsidy reforms in the Middle East tend to increase instability in an already troubled region – at least in the short-term.

Without reforms, though, energy supply security risks are threatening the longer-term stability of the Middle East. If current consumption growth patterns are not effectively slowed, access to energy might not be ensured in the future – which very likely would constitute a recipe for chaos.

Growing integration of energy developments with the politics and economics of the region

As a result of growing domestic demand in the Middle East, energy developments are increasingly entangled in the broader politics and economics of the region. These are characterized by multiple crises featuring violent conflicts, the questioned legitimacy of ruling regimes, economic stagnation and unemployment, as well as inadequate socio-political arrangements.

As such, the political and economic complexities of the region limit room for long-term government-led energy planning. Domestically, energy policy is likely to be driven by rather short-term considerations regarding political stability.[18] At regional levels, in many cases, cross-border conflicts and political tensions are preventing otherwise commercially sound solutions being implemented.[19]

In the worst case, as discussed above, this may threaten energy supply security. At any rate, it seems very likely that the region's complex political and economic situation will lead to economically sub-optimal outcomes in the realm of energy. In economic terms, this will lead to welfare losses in a region that is already underperforming economically, and which is confronted with tremendous economic challenges.

There are differences when it comes to the region's two most utilized energy supplies, oil and natural gas. Oil is still the number one energy supply for exports while Middle Eastern countries are generally seeking to promote the utilization of natural gas domestically.[20] As such, natural gas is more integrated within the region's internal politics and economics than oil. Still, both are affected as oil might not be replaced with natural gas in the countries' domestic energy mixes as quickly as is desired.

Additionally, it is unclear to what extent adaptation measures can be introduced amid the tremendous challenges climate change-poses. Middle Eastern countries tend to face barriers that are closely tied to the social fabric of the overall volatile situation in the region.

In any case, climate change-adaptation measures require substantial spending. This will divert funds away from investments into economically productive endeavors. As the region suffers already from a lack of (not only foreign) investments, the costs of climate change-adaptation measures will therefore very likely reduce economic growth (relative to a scenario without climate change). In short, climate change will hamper economic growth in the Middle East. Generally, wealthier (i.e. oil or natural gas exporting) countries should be able to afford the introduction of measures such as increased air conditioning, the advancement of public transportation schemes to reduce air polluting traffic, or the introduction of water management systems. Poorer states, though, will likely be less able to afford spending on such measures. Overall, efforts at economic diversification and development will be slowed as a result of the costs of climate change-mitigation measures (at least relative to a scenario where funds used for climate change mitigations would be used for investments into economically productive endeavors).

Outlook: short- versus long-term instability?

Energy developments, both at the international and regional levels, have the potential to massively exacerbate tensions in the Middle East. In all this, the overall tension seems to be between short- and long-term stability considerations. In the short-term, reforms would in many cases trigger public opposition and thus likely add instability to an already troubled region. Failure to initiate reforms, however, would make matters dramatically more complicated in the long run with problems intensifying and causing greater instability in the future.

There is a somewhat vicious circle: Volatile politics are making it difficult for the region's countries to address energy challenges. These energy challenges, however, have the potential to substantially increase instability in an already troubled region. At any rate, while possibly overshadowed by the vast number of political crises and conflicts throughout the region, a strong link exists between energy and security in the Middle East.

Notes

1- "Unconventional" refers to oil and natural gas deposits that cannot be exploited with conventional drilling methods. Instead, a combination of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) and horizontal drilling technologies are applied.

2- From 6.9 in 2007 to 13 million barrels per day in 2017.

3- IRENA (2018), p. 34.

4- From 171 to 487 million tonnes of oil equivalent. Unless referenced otherwise, all energy data in this report are from BP (2018).

5- Energy intensity measures the amount of energy needed for the production of each unit of GDP in an economy. As such, it allows to assess and compare energy efficiency levels across time and place.

6- IEA (2017).

7- Ellinas (2018).

8- See. e.g. IEA (2018).

9- Middle Eastern energy demand is driven by a combination of growing population, economic activity (in many cases energy-intensive industrialization policies), and massive over-consumption as a result of subsidies.

10- IEA (2018).

11- As discussed by the broader literature on the renter state.

12- See e.g. Pal and Eltahir (2015) or World Bank (2016).

13- In relative terms, Middle Eastern Carbon Dioxide Emissions rose by 38% between 2007 and 2017, ahead of with Asia (29%). See BP (2018).

14- MIT News (26 October 2015).

15- At the time, in the case of Saudi Arabia, the International Monetary Fund expected the country to possible run out of money within five years. See Bloomberg (21 October 2015).

16- For example, in the case of Egypt, both under Presidents Mohammad Morsi and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, blackouts and fuel shortages led to public protests, which played no small part in ending the reign of the former. See Guardian (20 August 2014).

17- El-Katiri (2018).

18- As the above discussed example of subsidy reform illustrates.

19- E.g. in the Persian Gulf, where Qatar and Saudi Arabia do not work towards natural gas trade, despite vast reserves being available in the former country while latter's needs are growing. Similarly, in the 2000s, complex politics prevented a natural gas export project between Iran and the United Arab Emirates to materialize.

20- With Qatar, the region's leading natural gas exporter, being the exception to this rule.

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Conclusion

This book comes at a crucial time for the MENA region; devastated by civil conflicts, social disintegration and climate change, entire communities and populations are facing an uncertain future. Over the last seventeen years the region has gone through three cataclysmic events which caused the collapse of the legacy of regional order which emerged towards the end of the Cold War. The first of these events was the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the irrevocable change of the regional balance of power. Second were the 9/11 attacks and the resulting direct US-led intervention in the region. Third was the Arab Spring and the catastrophic regional and international response to the popular uprisings. At the time of writing this book, the MENA region is riddled with rivalries and regular foreign interferences whilst witnessing a historically low level of intra-regional dialogue and cooperation.

At the same time, there is a consensus around the necessity to develop an inclusive regional security architecture to collectively face these issues. Such architecture can provide mechanisms to avoid conflicts but could also help establish an atmosphere for collaboration, cooperation, and common policies. This book attempts to offer a better understanding of the current and future trajectories and dynamics of the region, while identifying recommendations to overcome the chaos that currently reigns in the MENA region.

This book summarizes the deliberation of thirty-three experts on issues which influence security developments in the MENA region. These issues are: The decomposition of the modern nation-state; non-state actors; energy and climate change; regionalism and regionalization; and finally, global powers' interaction with the region. This book and its findings are the culmination of a series of workshops and seminars which engaged a large host of international and regional experts under the main theme of Regional Security Architecture in

the MENA. Hereafter is a description of the main findings presented in this book.

First: The Crisis of the Modern Nation-state

The MENA region took shape in the aftermath of the First World War and the establishment of new territorial states in the area was imposed through a top-to-bottom process with weak popular participation. The emerging political orders lacked legitimacy and consequently suffered acute instability from their inception. To impose authority, republicans and monarchs alike, embraced an extreme form of state centralization to goad their population into submission. For a long time, entire ethnic and religious communities felt estranged, persecuted and unconcerned by weak social contracts adopted by their states. Nonetheless, the ruling elites were able to maintain their authority through command of resources, ideologies and violence, and also extra-regional support and tutelage. Following the end of the Cold War, direct foreign military interventions, economic deficiencies and younger demographics, the weakest states ended up crumbling under popular pressures and propelled the region into a vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence.

Second: The Emergence of Non-State Actors

Non-state actors are not a new phenomenon, in many cases, their existence preceded the establishment of modern nation-states in the region. The Arab Spring questioned the legitimacy of many Arab regimes, and by 2013 many had lost their ability to govern and to impose their authority, this gave rise to many armed non-state actors. By their very nature, these organizations are socio-political actors which operate outside the status quo. They challenged political boundaries, crossed borders to fight in other states, occupied territories, established new forms of governance, and most importantly they chal-

lenged states in all their functions without exception. Needless to say, non-state actors differ from one to another in many aspects: the nature of their demands, the source of their grievances, their ideology, command of resources and their relationship with local communities. Despite these differences, they all followed a clear trend; coming to prominence when a state grew weaker or failed to deliver security and services. These organizations are increasingly influential in shaping the region's politics, and in many cases, they simply replace the state.

Third: Regionalism and Regionalization

Despite past efforts and attempts, the MENA region remains an exception to the global trend of regionalism. In general, regionalism focuses on formal state-led power and usually involves a certain level of institutionalization. Infested with rivalries and competition, regional institutions such as the Arab League, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Arab Maghreb Union or even the exclusive Gulf Cooperation Council, have all failed to embrace a common vision and to cement their common interests into collaborative mechanisms. In contrast, the term 'regionalization' implies a societal engagement in political, social and economic interaction. In the latter case, non-governmental organizations, non-state actors and communities are much more adept vehicles for regional integration, and this is exactly the type of invisible regional cooperation taking place in the MENA region. Despite states looming large, people still succeed in bypassing them and collaborating on informal levels in terms of the flow of goods and even people.

Fourth: Global Powers' Interaction with the MENA Region

Traditional non-regional actors such as the USA, the EU, and Russia have established a strong foothold in the region, but a new set of global actors, including China and India, are inviting themselves

into its politics and economy. MENA regional stability is a key concern not only for the West, but also for these emerging powers. A potential security breakdown in the region could send ripples across the globe. The MENA oil states have been meeting the West's energy needs for nearly a century now but have recently witnessed a shift eastward with the growing demands of China and India. Nonetheless, this change has not yet resulted in an institutional shift towards the East and Washington remains the major decisive policy maker in the region. Within the context of promoting stability, global powers could play a positive role in appeasing grievances and de-escalating regional tensions. More than ever, a drive for decisive de-escalation and stabilization is needed. Nonetheless, global actors have shown more interest in preserving the status quo rather than focusing on transforming socio-political structures in the region.

Fifth: Energy and Climate Change

Energy has shaped the politics of the MENA region in many ways; it has impacted the social, economic and political development of the region, and also defined the region's relationship with the rest of the world. Today, the region is facing multiple challenges related to energy developments including growing domestic energy demands, shifts in consumption habits, as well as changing global markets. These changes have the potential to alter the course of the MENA region and further burden its fragile regional order. Similarly; climate change, population growth, urbanization and economic growth are straining water and food reserves across the region. To face these challenges, states should urgently establish new policies to diversify their economic portfolios and embrace renewable energy while managing global competition over energy sources. Meanwhile, the leeway for reforms to address the various challenges is limited, and wherever reforms are possible, they often come with painful socio-political

distortions. Indeed, the MENA region is stuck in another vicious cycle. Volatile politics are making it difficult for the region's countries to address energy challenges, challenges which are themselves continuously growing and increasing.

Recommendations

1. The solution to the MENA states' crisis starts by establishing inclusive and pluralist governance structures respectful of local communities' considerations and aspirations. The dominating state-centric paradigm in dealing with domestic politics has proven inadequate and ultimately incapable of producing lasting stability and sustainable security arrangements. By recognizing the multiple identities, roles, and behaviors of communities and non-state actors, a broader understanding of their development could be reached. Different strategies and concepts should be adopted to interact with each specific case. Instead of violence and military confrontation, a framework of de-escalation, reconciliation, integration and reasonable devolution of authority should be initiated. Such solutions could positively engage communities as well as contain authoritarian regimes without resorting to violence. Additionally, adopting decentralization is not only an efficient governance structure, but it could also appease grievances and guarantee a better repartition of responsibility among concerned actors. Meanwhile, maintaining a credible and capable center is a necessity to ensure a more prosperous and sustainable devolution of authority.

2. The only chance for the region to prosper is regionalism, because of its untapped potential in terms of intra-regional cooperation and integration. This could be encouraged through a common industrial policy, better connectivity and regional investment in technology, skills and resources; but not only. In order to enhance the efficiency

of regionalism, a comprehensive move towards inclusivity should be embraced. Such a shift should be staged on multiple levels, starting by adopting inclusive national constitutions and then lifting all ethnic and religious restrictions on states' membership to regional institutions. Additionally, the financial capacities should be enhanced by increasing the members states contributions to guarantee their independence and enforcement capabilities. Moreover, MENA regional institutions should positively engage with other regions and form good neighborhood policies. Potential extra-regional partners include the African Union, ASEAN and the EU. Another important area for collaboration is data sharing. Within this context cooperation should not only be envisaged in terms of counter-terrorism efforts, but also in finance, as well as food and water security management. Such collaboration could create a productive environment for regional economic integration, collective disaster management, and strategic regional planning.

3. Additionally, global powers can encourage regional actors to abandon their current zero-sum calculations. This could essentially be achieved by addressing their regional partners' existential threat perceptions. Moving forward, their efforts should focus on institution building and human security. Promoting security sector reform could restore public confidence in state institutions. Similarly, global powers should also work with regional partners to address the consequences of climate change and the desertification of large parts of the region, including the conflict potential this could create linked to food insecurity and water resource scarcity.

4. A number of policy options should be considered to address the diverse energy insecurities and concerns in the region. A starting point is improving energy and water efficiency in the most affected countries. Renewable energy systems need to diffuse more quickly and be

adopted on a larger scale. Moreover, global powers need to assist and engage the region in the transfer of technology and sustainable development of their capacity to manage and maintain new technologies. Additionally, the cause and effect relationship between energy, security and economy should be carefully considered. Reforms and development in any of these sectors should take into account the possible impact on other sectors. Finally, there is a limit to what cooperation with extra-regional actors could achieve in terms of energy security. Eventually, governments need to engage their people and non-governmental organizations in finding and implementing creative and sustainable solutions to these problems.

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