

## The Middle East: Pre-regional region

الشرق الأوسط: منطقة ما قبل الإقليمية



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Received: 02../02/2020

Accepted: 14/05/2020

Published: 28/05/2021

### Abstract:

The Middle East region lacks any regional arrangement as it has become a periphery of the Western-dominated world order. The current combination of external factors, mainly represented in the penetration of the advanced countries of the regional system of the Middle East by several means - according to the new realist theory - and internal political practices lead to the disintegration of the regional system in this region. These two-way flows create and set the stage for regional turmoil, and the formation of unfamiliar regional structures, which makes these dynamics far from achieving balance and producing lasting practices.

**Keywords:** regional system; region; Middle East; regional and global dynamics.

### ملخص:

تفتقد منطقة الشرق الأوسط لأي ترتيبات إقليمية إذ تحولت إلى محيط للنظام العالمي الذي يهيمن عليه الغرب. فالتركيبية الحالية للعوامل الخارجية و المتمثلة أساساً في اختراق دول المركز المتقدمة للنظام الإقليمي للشرق الأوسط بوسائل عدة - على رأي النظرية الواقعية الجديدة- والممارسات السياسية الداخلية تقود إلى تفكك النظام الإقليمي في هذه المنطقة. إن هذه التدفقات ذات الاتجاهين تنشأ وتهيئ المسرح للاضطراب الإقليمي، و تشكيل هياكل إقليمية غير مألوفة، مما يجعل من هذه الديناميكيات بعيدة كل البعد عن تحقيق التوازن وإنتاج ممارسات دائمة.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** النظام الإقليمي؛ منطقة الشرق الأوسط؛ الديناميات الإقليمية والعالمية

## INTRODUCTION

The regional system in the Middle East faces new challenges, the inability of systems to meet the needs of new generations, the difficulties they will face in trying to maintain their current lifestyle, let alone improve living standards, will undoubtedly raise questions about the legitimacy of these systems. The dynamics of instability Porous in the form of new sub-regions.

With regard to policy at the regional level, a large number of different actors - including States, international forces, international and regional organizations, non-governmental actors and others - play effective roles. Moreover, these actors cannot act as they please. There are structural and contextual factors that may restrict or facilitate the activities of some actors. I.e. that, politics is the result of the exchange between actors as well as their interactions with structural and contextual factors. What the Middle East is witnessing now is the attempt to reform existing States. In all cases (Syria, Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain), civil wars include various groups fighting to reestablish the political system according to their views and interests.

Therefore, The Middle East is thus characterized by the non-production of a regional force, but this does not mean that the concept of regional power is not useful in analyzing the regional affairs of the Middle East. Instead, the application of this concept deepens the view of the actual structures and characteristics of regional affairs of the Middle East. Unlike the old regional system, which was primarily designed by foreign powers (here, I refer to France and Britain, in particular to the Treaty of Sykes-Picot), unlike the system that was designed in the absence of influential regional powers, In the Middle East to take into account these new regional dynamics and geopolitical realities. **Here we can ask the following problem :**

- **To what extent can the Middle East be considered under these regional and global dynamics a regional system?**

- To answer the problem we will address the following axes:

- **First: Theoretical Concept of the Middle Eastern Regional System.**
- **Second: Regional and Global Dynamics of the Middle East Regional System.**

### **1. Theoretical Concept of the Middle Eastern Regional System :**

#### **1.1 Regional system :**

There is a wide range of partly overlapping of key concepts, such as 'region', 'regional (sub-)system', 'regionalism', 'regionalization', or 'regional integration'<sup>1</sup>, Indeed, current regionalization may be seen as a new political landscape in the making, characterized by an expanding cast of actors (state and non-state) operating in the regional arena and across several interrelated dimensions: security, development, trade, environment, identity and so on<sup>2</sup>. "Regional" just means anything less than global. Only the subglobal limits of power projection among some states define a regional security complex, Those states no longer need to be contiguous (or have much shared history) to generate security inter dependence, some states, which are not geographically close However, it may constitute a regional security complex<sup>3</sup>.

Over the last decade regionalism has become somewhat of an academic growth industry in a number of social science specialisations : European studies, comparative politics, international economics, international geography, international relations (IR) and international political economy (IPE), which means that regionalism means different things to different people, for this, the study of regionalism contains a significant number of different theoretical: from a revival of neofunctionalism to a variety of constructivist, critical and ‘new regionalism’ approaches, and with neorealism, neoliberal institutionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism in between<sup>4</sup>.

In the 1950s, the concept of ‘regional system’ (and its variants) was suggested. Binder for example, used the term ‘subordinate international system’ to capture the position of the Middle East in the global system of international relations<sup>5</sup>, The regionalism approach focuses on the extent to which states share a common political and/or economic project. Whereas regionalism focuses on “formal, state-led projects of region-making that often involve a certain degree of institutionalisation,” or other forms of regional cooperation and coordination, regionalisation emphasizes “the growth of societal integration within a region and the often undirected processes of social and economic interaction.” In contrast to regionalism, where states are the main actors pushing for more or less institutionalisation, non-state actors are often important agents for change when it comes to regionalisation<sup>6</sup>.

In addition, one distinction is between regional cooperation and regional integration. Regional cooperation can be defined as an open-ended process, whereby individual states (or possibly other actors) within a given geographical area act together for mutual benefit in certain fields, such as infrastructure, water and energy, notwithstanding conflicting interests in other fields of activity. Regional integration refers to a deeper process, whereby the previously autonomous units are merged into a whole<sup>7</sup>, Regional integration involves a security dimension, which is critical to the dynamics of the integration process, according to Buzan, a regional security complex is “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national security cannot realistically be considered apart from another”. Members of a regional security community are integrated to such an extent that there is a “real assurance that the members of the community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way”<sup>8</sup>.

By security regionalism, we refer to attempts by the states and other relevant actors in a particular geographical area -a region in the making- to transform a security complex with conflict-generating interstate relations towards a security community with cooperative relations. Thus, a higher level of regionness implies a lower degree of conflict, whereas decreased regionness leads to an increase in security problems. The new regionalism may also provide solutions to development problems. By development regionalism, we refer to concerted efforts of formal and informal actors within a geographical area to increase the economic development of the region as a whole and to improve its position in the world economy. Development regionalism is a relatively new phenomenon, Regional cooperation for development would reduce the level of conflict and the peace dividend facilitates further development cooperation. Regional peace thus becomes a comparative advantage in an integrating but turbulent world economy, a factor usually disregarded by economists. Security and development form one integrated complex, and are two fundamental imperatives for regionalism and increasing regionness. Thus, political will and political action will play their part in breaking the vicious circle of uneven globalization, regional conflict,

underdevelopment and human insecurity<sup>9</sup>.

One prominent scholar of the recent debate, Björn Hettne, stresses that regionalism needs to be understood both from an exogenous perspective and an endogenous<sup>10</sup>. Since the late 1990s, research has placed greater emphasis on “soft”, de facto or informal regionalization, acknowledging the fact that a range of non-state actors has begun to operate at the regional level, within as well as beyond state-led institutional frameworks. For instance, business interests and multinationals are not only operative in the global sphere, but they also tend to create regionalized patterns of economic activity<sup>11</sup>.

## 1.2 Define region:

“Regionalization” refers to the process of region formation. It implies a focus on the process by which regions come into existence and are consolidated, when regional actors active at the regional level, they bring regionalization, so-called region-building, this may be through regionalism or without it, hence, regionalism may not always have much practical significance for the reality of regionalization<sup>12</sup>.

The concept of ‘region’ derives from the Latin word ‘regio’, which means direction, later in history the concept of region denoted border or a delimited space often a province. Historically the concept of region has evolved primarily as a space between the national and the local within a particular state. These types of regions are here referred to as micro-regions. The concept of region can also refer to macro-regions (so-called world regions), which are larger territorial (as distinct from non-territorial) units or sub-systems, between the state level and the global system level, The macro-region has been the most common object of analysis in international studies, while micro-regions have more commonly been considered in the realm of the study of domestic politics and economics, Most scholars engaged in the contemporary debate agree that there are no natural or ‘scientific’ regions, and that definitions of a region vary according to the particular problem or question under investigation. This problem about how to define a region may pose certain challenges for comparative analysis, but many scholars solve the problem by concentrating on regional organizations and regional economic frameworks<sup>13</sup>.

A series of other scholars in the 1960s and 1970s tried to define regions ‘scientifically’. identified the following characteristics of a region: geographic proximity, common bonds (historical, social, cultural, ethnic and linguistic), a sense of identity, and international interactions; whereas Russett emphasized geographical proximity, social and cultural homogeneity, political attitudes or external behavior, political institutions, and economic interdependence. Katzenstein criticizes the ambiguities in the early work, stresses the dynamic and non-deterministic character of geography, and emphasizes the ‘porous’ character of regions. He defines a region as “a set of countries markedly interdependent over a wide range of different dimensions. . . [Which is] often, but not always, indicated by a flow of socio-economic transactions and communications and high political salience that differentiates a group of countries from others”<sup>14</sup>.

Given that regions necessarily involve a geographical dimension, the main task of identifying regions implies making judgements about the degree to which a particular area in various respects constitutes a distinct entity, which can be distinguished as a territorial subsystem (in contrast with non-territorial subsystems) from the rest of the international system, i.e. its degree of what we call regionness. It is important to conceive regional organisation as a second order phenomenon,

compared to processes that underlie regionalisation in a particular geographical area, which should be seen as ‘region in the making’. It should be noted that there are no ‘natural’ or ‘given’ regions, and what is referred to as a region with regard to economic relations may not always be a relevant delimitation seen from, for instance, a political perspective. It is therefore fruitful to maintain eclectic and open-minded definitions of regions. There are thus many varieties of regions, with different degrees of regionness<sup>15</sup>.

There are three generalised levels or stages of regionness, which can be said to define a particular region in terms of regional coherence. In the ‘pre-regional zone’ stage, the potential region constitutes a geographical and social unit, delimited by more or less natural physical barriers and marked by ecological characteristics, i.e. the region being a conflict formation or a ‘security complex’, We can therefore talk of a ‘primitive’ region. The second level - which is the stage where the crucial regionalisation process takes place-, in any of the cultural, economic, political or military fields, or in several of them at the same time. The more organised region could be called the ‘formal region’<sup>16</sup>.

The third level of regionness, i.e. the outcome of the regionalisation process, is the region as acting subject with a distinct identity, institutionalised actor capability, legitimacy, and structure of decision-making, in relation with a more or less responsive regional civil society, transcending the old state borders. In security terms the reference is to ‘security community’, and the ultimate outcome could be a ‘region-state’, which in terms of scope and cultural heterogeneity can be compared to the classical empires, but in terms of political order constitutes a voluntary evolution of a group of formerly sovereign national, political units into a supranational security and development community, where sovereignty is pooled for the best of all. Moreover, authority, power and decision-making are not centralised but layered and decentralised to the local, microregional, national and supranational levels. This is basically the idea of the EU. Since regionalisms are political and social projects, devised by human actors in order to transform or alter existing structures, they may, just like nation-state projects, fail<sup>17</sup>.

### **1.3 The concept of Middle East:**

There is indeed an open war on how to define the Middle East and, implicit in that war, are deep differences on the very parameters for definition. Naturally, each of the players tends to define it in a way that fits his interests. So, one has an infinity of accumulating, overlapping, competing Middle Easts vying for approval<sup>18</sup>.

The Middle East is often perceived as being an exceptional region. This exceptionality is not least due to its extraordinary global strategic importance. No other region in the world harbors as much of the single-most important natural resource of modern times -liquid hydrocarbons- as the Middle East does, no other region is situated on the borderlines of three different continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe), and no other region is the cradle of all Abrahamic religions<sup>19</sup>. What I call the ‘Middle East’ perspective is usually associated with the United States and its regional allies. It derives from a ‘western’ conception of security which could be summed up as the unhindered flow of oil at reasonable prices, the cessation of the Arab–Israeli conflict, the prevention of the emergence of any regional hegemon while holding Islamism in check, and the maintenance of ‘friendly’ regimes that are sensitive to these concerns. This was and still is a topdown conception of



security that privileged the security of states and military stability. It is top-down because threats to security have been defined largely from the perspective of external powers rather than regional states or peoples. In the eyes of British and US defence planners, Communist infiltration and Soviet intervention constituted the greatest threat to security in the ‘Middle East’ during the Cold War. The way to enhance regional security, they argued, was for regional states to enter into alliances with the West<sup>20</sup>.

Most social scientists working on the Middle East would agree that it is a region composed of the Arab states plus Iran, Israel, and Turkey. Yet, it turns out to be a rather demanding task to present intersubjectively comprehensible arguments in favor of this definition. When definitions of regions are based on commonalities, the Middle East appears as a rather complicated case, since it covers areas of three different continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe, which is why “objective” geographic factors are not easily applicable. There are some criteria<sup>21</sup> beyond geography that, if applied, produce more promising results such as a shared history, language, and religion. However, none of the criteria is truly selective<sup>22</sup>.

The Middle East region has its internal politics revolve around ethnic, ideological and territorial disputes, and competition for Arab leadership; the security situation is further threatened by complex military dynamics, involving formal armies, non-state actors, as well as external forces, and foreign direct as well as covert interference driven by powerful economic interests<sup>23</sup>.

## **2. Regional and Global Dynamics of the Middle East Regional System:**

Regional and Global Dynamics are the phenomena, which have emerged as a result of interaction between historical legacy, geographical position, socio-political situation and external factors in the region, have strong implications on regional politics. The interaction between these factors and local-cultural values unleashed some ‘radical’ movements. Additionally, failure of the ruling governments to cope with social<sup>24</sup>, economic and political challenges, and the exclusion of people from politics paved the way for empowerment of radical movements. Therefore, these radical movements have transformed into regional dynamics, which are effective in the whole Middle East. Arab nationalism and political Islam are the principal regional dynamics in the Middle East. In addition, the Palestine question as one of the main regional dynamics because it has significant effects on the regional politics<sup>25</sup>.

The Middle East is a highly dynamic and unstructured regional system in which power relations are fluid and order is in short supply. The region’s dynamism not only has exacerbated the subsystem’s fragmentation into sub-regions but also has afforded opportunities for the better-endowed small Arab states to play in the greater game of regional power politics. Yet, if one takes the long view, it is clear that only a handful of states have directly impacted the region’s power relations, and today only four of these countries – Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel – meet the minimum requirements of middle power<sup>26</sup>.

As a new regional dynamic, emerged The Arab uprisings, named as the ‘Arab Spring,’ at the end of 2010<sup>27</sup>, and democratization has become a new political dynamic in the region. The mood of optimism with regard to the Arab Spring, however, has faded away in a short time for two principal reasons. First, President Mohamed Morsi was overthrown by a military coup on July 3, 2013, led by General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who rebuilt a new authoritarian regime in Egypt. Second, the lasting

civil war in Syria turned into a regional and sectarian conflict. Regional and extra-regional great-power supports given to fighting parties has led the civil war prolong in Syria, where political attempts to resolve the conflict have remained inconclusive. Moreover, Syria has become a center for extremist movements. Additionally, the failure to provide stability in Libya and Yemen after the removal of Qaddafi and Saleh governments, moreover, the rise of extremist movements in these countries have dissolved the positive atmosphere of Arab Spring<sup>28</sup>.

As of the summer of 2015, indeed, the disintegration appears to be accelerating, with unprecedented levels of population flight. , the state-building project in the Middle East and North Africa has been, as it was in Europe, protracted and difficult, involving domestic, regional and international contest and conflict. Comforting easy proposals, such as the provision of military assistance to entrenched local elites, is, on the basis of past experience, unlikely to lead to lasting solutions. Whether the region is still capable of generating the strength necessary to rebuild its state institutions, and provide the minimum of security necessary for everyday life<sup>29</sup>. The biggest challenges facing the Arab world in the coming five years would be to re-establish political order, which requires a monopolization of coercion in the state, and the maintaining of the freedom of various social groups and movements, which would require the emergence of legitimate and representative institutions<sup>30</sup>.

Historically, the Middle East is interpreted with the balance of power system. That is, the region is conceptualized within the balance of power theory. The region is constructed with the concepts like realpolitik, geopolitics , geostrategic , security , war and terror<sup>31</sup> , if we deal with the fact that there is no regional power in the Middle East in a productive way ; we must identify those features of the Middle East, There appear to be four major features that set the Middle East apart from an ideal-type region shaped by a regional power: high power dispersion; preponderance of competitive rather than cooperative behavior and hard-power rather than soft-power use; the command of only low global-power capabilities and the lack of usage of resources for regional development by regional actors; and the distinct role of the United States as a quasi-regional power. There are several Middle Eastern states that have more or less outspoken ambitions to act as a regional power, such as: Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. These states have significantly higher power capabilities than other states of the Middle East such as Tunisia, Lebanon, or Kuwait, and therefore qualify as potential regional powers. Yet, none of them enjoys sufficient material and ideational resources to actually prevail against the others, at least against all of the other potential regional powers at the same time<sup>32</sup>.

In contrast, international powers aim to preserve their influence and seek to contain problems in the region. Indeed, a number of issues such as the refugee and radicalism-terrorism problems have already poured beyond the regional space and escalated into the realm of international security. In reality, both regional and global actors muddle through a chaotic environment without coherent and consistent policies, which is unsurprising given how the new geopolitics has unfolded in the region<sup>33</sup>.

Legitimacy is to be bought internally, if stability is to be maintained in the years to come. In addition, this entails that these countries meet the economic demands of the masses, or concede politically, in the shape of a more transparent political process. That being said, one should take into account the wider regional strategic scene and the clashing interests of those who support the Arab

uprisings and those who support the status quo. An agreement or understanding between Saudi Arabia and Iran will mitigate much of the conflict in the region and will affect the strategies chosen by regimes and oppositions. In addition, what aggravates the situation is the external interference<sup>34</sup>. National stability, if restored, can provide the positive catalyst for regional cooperation. However, for regional cooperation to work, Arab and non-Arab states will have to compromise and agree to work together. Of particular importance in this regard is the Arab-Iran-Turkey triangle: Iran and Turkey have to cooperate with the Arab states (Egypt, Saudi Arabia and others) in the broader interest of the region. It is unlikely that such a "triangle of stability" can emerge before 2020. Therefore, while a security umbrella may not form before 2025, if the regional powers work cooperatively and, better still, collectively, then the MENA region will for the first time be able to contemplate the virtues of subsystem-wide security structures<sup>35</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

Enter the term Middle East to refer to a geographical area in the literature of international relations, for a political purpose based on the basis of the view of colonial Europe in sharing its influence. As the term Middle East emerged in British politics and employed to serve the strategic interests of the major international powers, The Middle East region is considered a global geostrategic force, in which the great powers competed for it being directly related to international stability.

Through this study, we have reached the following results:

- The Middle East is at the lowest level of regional organization or formation. It can be defined as a "Pre-regional region in its primitive form." and according to geopolitical thinking: the confusing and turbulent regional stage enables policymakers to formulate the geopolitical realities of domestic consumption to justify foreign policy maneuvers.

- The need to find mechanisms to resolve and address the attrition conflicts in the region, because of the employment of the countries of the Middle East against each other. While America possesses all the mechanisms and means to strengthen the Zionist entity and portray it as the ally and friend of the Arab countries, and emerged the concept of the Middle East only to include this entity And to his advantage.

- attempt achieve a regional balance by achieving the internal balance of each state, and fortifying the local situation to counter the provocative and exploitative hegemony of the major foreign powers ; with the priority of agreement on the most problematic issue in the region, namely the Arab-Israeli conflict.

- The Middle Eastern countries should realize that the major foreign powers will not achieve them any reforms, whether political or economic, nor security protection, It must therefore manage its own internal reforms and to ally locally first.



## Marginalization

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