Regional Security in the Middle East

Sectors, Variables and Issues

BETTINA KOCH & YANNIS A. STIVACHTIS *Eds*.

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EDITED BY

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Abstract

This book employs the comprehensive approach to security to identify and analyse security dynamics in the Middle East. To this end, it is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the identification of threats operating in the political, societal, economic and environmental sectors. It argues that due to security interdependence these security sectors are inextricably connected to the extent that threats originating in one sector have the potential of causing – through a spillover process – the emergence of security threats in other sectors. The second part investigates the impact of a set of factors, such as demography, geography, the environment, available resources, migration patterns as well as science and technology on Middle Eastern security dynamics. It is suggested that all these factors will have a significant impact on Middle East security in the very near future. The third part provides a thorough examination of salient political, economic and security issues in the Middle East by focusing on topics such as the role and effectiveness of regional human rights organizations, the causes of religious radicalisation, the use of religion to justify political conflicts, the role and strategy of regional violent non-state actors, and how the Arab Spring has challenged institutional structures and relationships in the Middle East.

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Introduction

Regional Security in the Middle East

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As a term, *Middle East*, albeit still contested in its meaning, did not gain much currency until after the Second World War. Especially during the Cold War, the terminology was popularised in US contexts (Adelson 2012, 47–50). Here, we use the neologism *Middle East* as referring to the geographical area situated at the junction of Europe, Asia, and Africa and of the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, reflecting contemporary politological conventions without denying the term's contestations. As such, the region occupies a unique strategic position. Hence, we can easily understand why the region has attracted the strategic attention and involvement of great powers and empires throughout history. The Middle East is also the birthplace and spiritual centre of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Specifically, the Middle East contains the holiest places of Islam as well as the highest institutions of Islamic learning, while the Holy Land of Palestine is associated with the aspirations of Jews and Christians. It is also the birthplace of civilisation in the Northern hemisphere (Jamieson 2016).

Moreover, with the beginning of the twentieth century and the discovery of oil and natural gas "the fate of the region" changed dramatically (Grigoriadis 2014, 124) because in the Middle East we can find the greatest single reserve of oil that stipulated other powers' desires. The region's significant stocks of crude oil added to its geographical, strategic and economic importance. Particularly 'Saudi Arabia was no longer the regional backwater that it had been until the 1940s', but became one of the leading regional powers in the region. With the ongoing tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, particularly after 1979, 'the Persian Gulf became an epicenter of global instability' (Steinberg 2014, 116; Qadir and Rehman 2016). Mass production of oil began around 1945, with Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) possessing large quantities of oil. Thus, with ongoing tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia in mind, it is worth noting that the oil reserves of Saudi Arabia and Iran are some of the highest in the world and

the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is dominated by Middle Eastern countries. It is not, therefore, surprising that the importance of the Middle East transcends its geographical limits and that the region has been a major theatre of global politics.

Defining Security

The answer to what makes something a security problem has been a subject of a long academic debate which grew out of dissatisfaction with the narrowing of the field of security studies imposed by the military logic of the Cold War. Thus, it has been argued that concerns about military security traditionally masked underlying issues of political, economic, societal, and environmental threats (Buzan 1991 and 1991a; Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998). Although military threats remain important for security thinking and frontier disputes maintain or are still perceived as an ongoing (military) security threat (Joffé 1996), other types of threats have risen in importance. Increasingly, Middle East scholars have argued for a shift in the perception of security away from military aspects to other issues in the region (Chalk 2004). Unsurprisingly, the continuous emphasis on the military aspect of security comes primarily from scholars related to the military sector itself (see Feldman and Toukan 1997; Cordesman 2004; Terrill 2015) and, at least partly, reflects the traditional interests of hegemonic powers in the region (Zulfqar 2018). Thus, reflecting the recent trend in scholarship, this volume does not treat military security as a singular issue, but as a problem that should be discussed in as wider context. For instance, as Blanton (1999) has argued, an increase in military imports often goes hand in hand with an increase in human rights violations and, thus, a decrease in personal security. Thus, for the purposes of this volume, Middle East security is defined in the broader sense as the presence of threats that pose an existential threat to states, governments, communities, individual groups, and the region as a whole.

In other words, security operates both at the domestic and regional levels. Because the dynamics of national security are highly relational and interdependent between states (Buzan 1991a, 34), individual national securities can only be fully understood when considered in relation to each other. Yet, power dynamics within individual states are also of relevance here, whether they concern authoritarianism, rentier economics, and protectionism (Dauderstädt 2006) favouring some groups, while causing security concerns to others. Moreover, although migration is mostly discussed in the European context (Held 2016), it is essentially an even greater challenge, security issues included, for the Middle East. Consequently, even though the traditional understanding of security suggests a focus on the military sector, the concept cannot be properly understood without bringing in actors and

dynamics from the political, societal, economic, and environmental sectors (Buzan 1991, 363). According to Buzan, the concept of security binds together these levels and sectors so closely that it demands to be treated in an integrative perspective (Buzan 1991, 364).

What is important to note is that the operation of the forces of interdependence causes threats operating in one sector to spill over and affect other sectors. For example, a threat operating in the economic sector may generate threats operating in the military and societal sectors. In this sense, economic decline or the unequal distribution of economic benefits may affect internal stability, state (government)-society relations, as well as reduce a state's capacity to acquire weapons systems for its defence. Similarly, threats stemming from the domestic environment of the state may affect regional security. The Syrian Civil War is a case in point of a crisis that has a long history leading up to the events that sparked the civil war: After 'Hafez al-Assad had abandoned socialism for a limited crony capitalist liberalisation in the 1990s […] his son accelerated the process', limiting economic opportunities to the elites, while stripping off farm subsidies for diesel and fertilisers. Together with the 2006–2010 drought which caused the internal migration of over 300,000 (Sunni) peasants to the urban centres, and the destabilisation of the social strata in these centres (Philips 2015, 366–7).

In the military sector, the referent object of security (what it is to be secured) is mainly the state and threats usually come from the state's external environment. Military action usually threatens all the components of the state. It can, for instance, repress the idea of the state, damage its physical base, destroy its various institutions, and leave a defeated society at the mercy of the conqueror's power. One example may be seen in Lebanon's dependence on Syria during and after Lebanon's civil war (1975–1990). During the war, Syria's Hafez al-Assad established 'a web of client relationships with multiple political actors and militia' (Philips 2016, 13) that essentially turned into a de facto hegemony in Lebanon (Scheller 2013, 51). This is one reason for which military threats have traditionally been accorded the highest priority in national security concerns. Due to the existence of several conflicts in the Middle East, military security features prominently among governmental priorities.

In the political sector, a state may be threatened both internally and externally. Internally, threats may result from a political struggle over the state's ideology (e.g. secularism, Islamism, pan-Arabism, democracy, and authoritarianism), which may lead to governmental actions that would threaten individual citizens or groups. All of these elements may be identified in the Arab Spring uprising in Egypt that first ousted Mubarak, brought the

Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood under Morsi to power through democratic election, and eventual military coup under el-Sisi (Arafa 2014). Resistance to the government, efforts to overthrow it, or movements aimed at autonomy or independence all threaten state stability and enhance state insecurity. The Arab Spring has demonstrated the centrality of political security since social uprising was, among other things, a response to years of state oppression. Externally, political threats are aimed at the organisational stability of the state but may jeopardise the stability of the entire region (Mason 2016, 77). Their purpose may be to pressure the government on a particular issue, or to overthrow the government, or to encourage secessionism, as it is visible in the Kurds' call for an independent state, or to disrupt the political functions of the state in order to weaken it prior to military attack. The idea of the state – particularly its national identity, organising ideology, and institutions – are the usual targets of political threats. Since the state is essentially a political entity, political threats may be as much feared as military ones.

Political threats stem from the great diversity of ideas and traditions. Because contradictions in ideologies are basic, states of one persuasion may well feel threatened by the ideas represented by others. Threats to national identity, for instance, may involve attempts to heighten the separate ethno-cultural identities of groups within the target-state. Empirically, conflicts classified as 'ethnic' have significantly increased since the end of the Cold War (Landis and Albert 2012, 2). Their purposes could range from increasing the difficulty of a government in a neighbouring state to deal with specific issues that encourage secessionism. Thus, an external threat can be transformed into an internal one. Moreover, political threats may be intentional or may arise structurally from the impact of foreign alternatives on the legitimacy of the state. Such threats may come into existence when the organising principles of two states contradict each other in a context where the states cannot ignore each other's existence as may be visible in the Palestine-Israel conflict or in the anti-Jewish rhetoric by Khomeini and his successors (Koch 2015, 193) or in the ongoing tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In other words, where the achievements of one state automatically erodes the political stature of another, this often leads to more intentional forms of political threats. Yet, when political threats destabilise the state, the resulting domestic upheaval may spread beyond state borders and affect neighbouring countries and regions as a whole.

In the societal sector, the referent object of security is collective identities that can function independently of the state, such as religions and nations. In relations between states, significant external threats on the societal level are often part of a larger package of military and political threats. Therefore, societal threats can be difficult to disentangle from political or military ones. At lower levels of intensity, even the interplay of ideas and communication may

produce politically significant societal and cultural threats; for example, Hassan al-Bana's rhetoric and the birth of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood were examples of the reaction of Islamic fundamentalists to the penetration of Western ideas (Moussalli 1993). Language, religion and local cultural tradition all play their part in the idea of the state, and may need to be defended or protected against cultural imports. If the local culture is weak, even the unintended side-effects of casual contact could prove disruptive and politically charged (Holsti 1982).

Threats in the societal sector may arise from the internal or external environment of the state, while an internal threat may be transformed into an external one and *vice versa*. Moreover, if societal security is about the sustainability of traditional patterns of language, culture and religious and ethnic identity and custom, then threats to these values come much more frequently from within states than outside them. The state-nation building process often aims at suppressing, or at least, homogenising sub-state social identities. As a result, internal societal threats may precipitate conflict between states if the latter wish to protect groups of people with whom they have close affinities and who find themselves in a state that suppresses their rights (see Belge and Karakoç 2015).

In the economic sector, the referent objects of security are more difficult to pin down and consequently, are the most difficult ones to handle within the framework of national security (Knorr 1975; Knorr and Trager 1977). The main problem with the idea of economic security is that the normal condition of actors in a market economy is one of risk, competition and uncertainty. Therefore, within the market system a significant number of economic threats which cannot reasonably be conceived as threats to national security exist. However, when the consequences of economic threat reach beyond the strictly economic sector into military and political spheres, three somewhat clearer national security issues can emerge involving linkages between economic capability on the one hand, and military capability, power, and socio-political stability on the other (Buzan 1991, 126). Economic pressure, however, also threatens the state's accountability and, thus, in the long run, may cause state weakness and insecurity (Richards 1995).

A state's military capability rests both on the supply of key strategic materials and the possession of an industrial base capable of supporting the armed forces. When strategic materials must be obtained from abroad, a threat to the security of the supply can be seen as a national security issue, particularly if the political climate changes as recently seen in the international response to the assassination of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey. Similarly, an economic decline of basic industries raises

questions about the ability of the state to support independent military production (Buzan and Sen 1990). For example, the desire of several Middle Eastern states to maintain or acquire production capability in key military-related industries has inserted a national security requirement into the management of the national economy. On the other hand, the pursuit of military research and development have prevented some Middle Eastern states from investing in their civil economy.

Economic threats may also enhance domestic instability, especially when states pursue economic strategies based on maximisation of wealth through excessive trade. Where complex patterns of interdependence exist, many states will be vulnerable to disruptions in the flows of trade and finance (Keohane and Nye 1977, chapters 1 and 2). The link between economic and political stability generates a set of questions about development, which can easily be seen as a national security issue. For example, some Middle Eastern states that are not efficient producers find themselves locked into a cycle of poverty and underdevelopment from which there is no obvious escape. A special threat to stability can also be seen in youth unemployment which can bring economic and social problems as well as stability concerns (Fehling et.al. 2015). Hence, the governments of those states find themselves having to choose between meeting their debt payments at the expense of lowering already very low living standards. Moreover, conscious external actions by other states resulting in material loss, strain on various institutions of the state, and even substantial damage to the health and longevity of the population constitute threats to national security. Finally, economic threats raise concerns about the overall power of the state within the international system. If the economy declines, then the state's power also declines (Kennedy 1988; Schlesinger 1970; Schultz 1973).

In the environmental sector, the range of possible referent objects of security is large, but the basic concerns are how human species and the rest of the biosphere are related, and whether this relationship can be sustained without risking a collapse of the achieved levels of civilisation and/or the disruption of the planet's biological legacy (Choucri 1993). Environmental threats to national security can damage the physical base of the state, sometimes to a sufficient extent as to threaten its idea and institutions. For instance, climate change has led to the rise of environmental threats in the Middle East, such as pollution, water distribution, and deforestation, linking activities within one state to effects in another. Moreover, climate change not only has a significant impact on Middle Eastern economies (economic security) but has also created the need of access to natural resources (river and lake waters). Access to water sources may thus become a cause of conflict between neighbouring states. Indeed, some others see already a 'hidden' water conflict in the region (Zeitoun 2012; Mukhar 2006).

The Relevance of Human Security

Since the individual human being is the constituting unit of any society ranging from local to global, as well as the most basic referent object of security, 'human security' becomes an essential tool for understanding security dynamics in any state or region. The basic idea behind the concept of 'human security' is the belief that threats are not isolated to a state but are placing everyone in a region or the world as a whole in some form of risk. This is not to say that human security implies that all threats are equal regardless of space and time. It rather means that some issues may originate in a particular country but eventually they may have a significant impact upon a whole region. For example, a political or humanitarian crisis in a Middle Eastern state has the potential of creating a humanitarian situation that could affect other regional states. The humanitarian crisis caused by the civil war in Syria is illustrative. Moreover, the risks of abject poverty not only threaten individuals in some Middle Eastern states, they can also destabilise governments. The existence of an unstable government can quickly lead to violence, putting a greater portion of a nation's population at serious risk, while the consequences of domestic violence may spill over to neighbouring states thereby affecting regional security.

Human security scholars have argued that national, regional, and global security are all menaced by underdevelopment (Duffield 2007, 111). However, they challenge the assumption that economic growth constitutes the main indicator of development. Instead, they suggest that sustainable development can serve as a foundation for domestic, regional and global stability. This belief is based on the observation that disease epidemics, terrorism, and political violence tend to emerge from states that do not have adequate resources to provide proper material benefits or opportunities for their populations. Thus, human security also depends on the level of equality in a state. As Dauderstädt (2006, 12) notes, 'rich elites compare the costs of democratisation with the costs of oppression, which will increase with the strength of the opposition'.

Thus, there are several areas of life to which human security applies and which are relevant to the Middle East. Personal security constitutes the most basic understanding of security as all people are at risk from physical violence, while some groups, such as women and children are at greater risk. All people in all places deserve protection from violence perpetrated by their state, other states, and in some cases even by their own groups. To the regional and global concerns associated with ethnic violence, one has to add concerns related to drug and human trafficking, or infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS that threaten mainly the most vulnerable part of society (Gökengin et.al. 2016).

Protection from various sources of violence is also extended to social groups such as families, communities, or organisations. Political security is required so that people can be active participants in their societies or governments. Human rights are needed so that people can express themselves without fear of repression or governmental control of ideas and information. Yet, since the Arab Spring uprisings, observers of the Middle East have witnessed an opposite trend. As Ayanian and Tausch (2016) in their study on Egyptian activists in the 2013 post el-Sisi coup uprising show, increased oppression by the military-led regime impacted risk perception and therefore collective action. Simultaneously, one can also observe, although that is by no means a problem restricted to the Middle Eastern region, more oppressive state-action against critical journalism and a free press more generally (Frykberg 2014). Nonetheless, the concept of political security has been folded into other categories to make it more action-oriented. For example, instead of simply stating that citizens should be able to participate in a democracy, human security now emphasises increasing the capacity for citizens to participate. A comprehensive strategy for capacity building includes respecting human rights, increasing economic opportunities, and securing basic education (UNDP 1994, 17).

Economic security is based upon the assumption that the ability to save or access resources is an important part of human life (UN Commission 2003, 73). The most basic understanding of economic security is that of people having access to regular work and consequently a reliable income that would allow them to meet their daily needs. Economic security is also viewed in terms of preservation of economic freedom in periods of crisis, and thus the expectation that global economic shocks will not decrease freedom (UN Commission 2003, 74). In the event that work is unavailable, economic security requires the existence of some kind of 'publicly financed safety net', such as social security and protection against unemployment (UNDP 1994, 4).

Food security implies that all people should have access to food. In turn, this requires the presence of conditions that would allow people to access food but also the existence of an infrastructure that would allow food to reach people. Yet, the question is not only access to food but, more important, *access* to *quality* food. Food security is based upon the logic that better nutrition increases the capacity of people to do things, especially to earn income and produce valuable goods and services. In turn, people can then use the money earned to buy even more food, and be even more productive. This points to the importance and centrality of economic security (UNDP 1994, 6).

Health security implies access to health services and the ability to afford at least a minimum level of treatment. Health is defined as 'not just the absence of disease, but as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being' (UN Commission 2003, 16, see also Hwalla et.al. 2016). Health security is of particular importance due to its impact on economic security. Thus poor population health poses serious threats to developing countries.

Environmental security is based upon the assumption that people require healthy land and resources to lead a stable life. Environmental security is more than just the protection from or government assistance for dealing with the results of natural disasters. It is also protection from and prevention of human-made environmental degradation. For example in the Middle East there is increasing difficulty getting access to clean water, while the life of communities is affected by the combined threat of deforestation and overgrazing that has accelerated desertification (Floyd and Matthew 2012).

From National to Regional Security

To understand the linkage between national and regional security, this volume will adopt Barry Buzan's Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) that was first sketched in the first edition of *People, States and Fear* (1983, 105–15). Updates to the theory were presented in Buzan (1991a, chapter 5), while a revised version of RSCT was introduced by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde in 1998 and Buzan and Wæver in 2003.

RSCT provides a theoretical justification for constructing world regions based on the degree of 'enmity' and 'amity' existing among states. 'Amity' refers to inter-state relationships ranging from genuine friendship to expectation of protection or support. 'Enmity', on the other hand, refers to inter-state relationships conditioned by suspicion and fear. Patterns of amity and enmity arise from a variety of issues ranging from border disputes and ideological alignments to longstanding historical links whether positive or negative (Buzan 1991, 190). Enmity can be particularly durable when it acquires a historical character between peoples, as it has between the Arabs and the Israelis or the Iranians and the Iraqis. To obtain a more comprehensive picture of regional security, to the patterns of amity/enmity one should add power relations among states. However, as factors the degree of enmity/amity between states are distinct from the power relations between them.

The term 'security complex' is employed by Buzan to label the formations resulting from patterns of amity and enmity among states. A security complex is defined as 'a group of states whose primary security concerns link together closely enough that their national securities cannot realistically be considered

apart from one another' (Buzan 1991, 190). Thus, the term 'security complex' indicates both the character of the attribute that defines the set (security), and the notion of intense interdependence that distinguishes any particular set from its neighbours. Security complexes emphasise the interdependence of rivalry, as well as that of shared interests.

The idea of security complexes is an empirical phenomenon with historical and geopolitical roots. Specifically, ethno-cultural thinking, as well as religious and racial ties underlie much traditional historical analysis. Such ties constitute a significant factor in identifying security complexes since shared cultural characteristics among a group of states would cause them both to pay more attention to each other in general, and to legitimise mutual interventions in each other's security affairs in particular. This is particularly clear in the Middle East where the idea of an Arab nation and the trans-national political force of Islam combine to create a potent regional political realm. Therefore, it is not difficult to see how ethnicity (Arab) and religion (Islam) have facilitated and legitimised security interdependence among a large group of states in the Middle East. Yet, Arab nationalism and Islam weaken the identity of the local states, legitimise an unusually high degree of security inter-penetration and stimulate a marked propensity to establish regional organisations (the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab Cooperation Council, and the Maghreb Group). They also play a major part in defining the main nodes of conflict in the region centred on two non-Arab states embedded within it (Israel and Iran), one of which is not Islamic while the other is the representative of Islam's principal schism.

Security complexes are also generated by the interaction of anarchy and geography in the sense that anarchy confronts all states with the power-security dilemma, while security interdependence is powerfully mediated by the effects of geography. Because threats operate more potently over short distances, security interactions with states in close proximity tend to have first priority.

The principal factor defining a complex is usually a high level of threat and fear, which is felt mutually among two or more states. The Arab-Israeli and the Iranian-Israeli cases clearly show the extent to which neighbouring local dynamics are conditioned by the security rhetoric of the states towards each other, by their military deployments, and by the record of their conflicts. On the other hand, the relationship between Egypt and Jordan indicates that a high level of trust and friendship can also serve as a binding force. This is because security interdependence can be positive as well as negative.

Another way in which security complexes can be identified is with reference to the role of economic factors. The latter play a role in determining both the power of states within their local security complexes and their domestic stability and cohesion as actors. They may also play an important role in motivating the patterns of external interest in the local complex as in the case of the United States and the oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf. Yet, they can affect the prospects for regional integration, which can influence and determine how a given security complex evolves.

Defining and Delimiting the Middle East as a Region

If we apply the definition of 'security complex', then we can define the Middle East as a region composed of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely such that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another. Within the Middle East security complex, which Turkey and Afghanistan help to insulate from the European and South Asia security complexes respectively, one can currently identify three sub-complexes.

The first and defining core sub-complex in the Middle East is the one centred in the Levant between Israel and its Arab neighbours and which has given rise to many regional wars. This sub-complex is the result and the reflection of the local struggle between Israel and the Palestinians, which set up and sustained a much wider hostility between Israel, on the one hand, and its immediate neighbours, as well as the wider Arab world, on the other. To a lesser extent, this struggle has been shadowed by a conflict between Israel and the wider Islamic world. However, a case can be made that the Levant sub-complex also includes the Maghreb states, which Buzan and Wæver have identified as constituting a separate albeit a very weak sub-complex centred on the shifting and uneasy set of relations among Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. According to Buzan and Wæver (2003, 193), the main regional security problem in the Maghreb has been the Moroccan annexation of Western Sahara in 1975, which led to tensions with Libya and Algeria, which backed the Polisario Movement against Morocco.

The argument that the Maghreb countries are currently part of the Levant sub-complex is advanced for two reasons: first, today the Western Sahara issue is not strong enough to provide the basis of a wide Maghreb sub-complex which cannot account for the place of Tunisia; and second, and most important, the Maghreb countries together with those of the Levant sub-complex have many things in common. For example, the Maghreb states have had a considerable involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, they are members of the Arab League, partners in the European Union's

Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and members of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

The second sub-complex in the Middle East is the one centred on the triangular rivalry among Iran, Iraq and the Gulf Arab states led by Saudi Arabia. To this core rivalry, one may add the peripheral rivalry between Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Scholars have suggested (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 155; Clapham 1996, 128; Tibi 1993, 52) that the Horn of Africa sub-complex should be located within the African security complex. However, due to increasing patterns of security interdependence, a strong case can be made that today this sub-complex constitutes a third Middle East sub-complex with Sudan and Somalia as its principals and where Saudi-Arabia, Egypt, and the Gulf States have taken a significant interest.

Book Structure

The volume is divided into three parts and eleven chapters. The first part provides a sectoral approach to Middle East security. In Chapter 1, Yannis Stivachtis argues that one of the major causes of domestic and regional instability in the Middle East has been the existence of several weak states defined as those entities with a relatively low degree of socio-political cohesion. Utilising the cases of Iraq and the Arab Spring, Stivachtis demonstrates the relevance of the concept of 'weak' state to Middle East security. To this end, he merges the sociology and political science literature pertaining to state-society relations with the international relations and security studies literature focusing on the distinction between weak/strong states and weak/strong powers as a way to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Middle Eastern states' domestic security problematique. He argues that the principal distinguishing feature of weak states is their concern with domestically generated threats to the security of the government. He concludes that weak states are problematic for international order because their internal politics are often violent, their domestic insecurity often spills over to disrupt the security of neighbouring states, and they can easily attract competitive outside intervention.

In Chapter 2, Hassan Ahmadian scrutinises societal (in)security's effect on radicalism in the Middle East. He suggests that societal security remains unmet by many Middle Eastern states that are lagging behind huge developments sweeping the region. This, in turn, creates a dichotomy distancing states from their societies in terms of their *we-ness* and the means to protect it. As such, states are concerned with sovereignty and regime

survival, while on the other hand, societies are concerned with surviving the way they are. Ahmadian also investigates how societal insecurity has helped radical and terrorist organisations to flourish within Arab states. He concludes that collectively perceived threats along with state inability to function properly in resolving internal and external challenges, creates collective frameworks to address perceived challenges, one of which has been radical and terrorist organisations.

In Chapter 3, Johannes Grow examines specific instances of economic security and economic integration in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. He argues that the MENA region is beset by an arid and dry climate, increasing food and water insecurity, and a lack of critical infrastructure. These problems have been further exacerbated by continued dependence on the export of hydrocarbons, increasing inequality, and high youth unemployment. He suggests that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) remains the most successful attempt of economic integration in the Middle East but he points out that the GCC suffers from sub-regional specific transboundary challenges that prevent further and deeper economic integration. He concludes that while some of the GCC states have attempted to overcome some of the challenges, both economic security and deeper economic integration remain out of reach for now.

In Chapter 4, Adriana Seagle provides an overview of the major environmental problems in the Middle East illustrating the role regional governments play in both causing and trying to solve environmental problems. Water scarcity as a security issue and water distribution as an inter-state/conflict are examined and the main findings illustrate that although technology may create dependency, investing in education, research, and know-how solutions would enhance societal awareness of the environment and improve cooperation among states. Seagle also argues that land degradation, pollution, and food security lead to health deterioration and contribute to high levels of mortality. Thus, she suggests that more research on desert storms and the link between pollution and death rates is needed to advance knowledge and inform health and environmental policies. She concludes that a set of issues including high growth rates, poor management strategies of water conservation, over-pumping and overconsumption, lack of critical research, lack of regulations on the use of water from aquifers, and practices of resource capture with modern dams will not only contribute to further environmental damage but also to high levels of population dislocation, conflict, and war.

Part II investigates some factors that have a significant effect on Middle East security, such as geography, natural resources, technology, migration and

demography. In Chapter 5, Stefanie Georgakis Abbott and Yannis Stivachtis investigate the impact of demographic factors, including refugee and migration flows, on Middle East security. They argue that the discussion within the broader security perspective focuses on three areas: first, the impact of demographic growth on the security of political, societal, economic and natural environments; second, the population structure and its relevance to the economic performance of states; and third, voluntary or forced migration of large populations within and among states. They conclude that population growth in the Middle East will have significant security implications for the regional states and the region as a whole. Thus, addressing the impact of current population patterns on Middle Eastern communities, societies and states, as well as managing regional and transnational patterns of conflict and migration in the region, is imperative for achieving both domestic security and regional stability. They add that particular attention should be paid to the impact of migration because national governments and local populations are loath to accept large numbers of people in great need, who are ethnically different, and may pose threats to social stability. Most prefer fewer foreigners crossing their borders given economic uncertainties, record government deficits, high unemployment, growing anti-immigrant sentiment and concerns about national and cultural identity.

In Chapter 6, Dina Rashed focuses on economic wealth, demography, and geographic location as three resources that helped shape the Arab uprising in 2010. She argues that the chaotic transitions from the *status quo* brought about or intensified two significant changes: the mushrooming of non-state political armies and the reconfiguration of regional and international alliances. Finally, the limits of these resources as well as states' inefficiencies in exploiting their assets at different moments are discussed with some concluding remarks on the region's future.

In Chapter 7, Yannis Stivachtis investigates the impact of science and technology on national and regional security in the Middle East. He argues that the technological dependence of Arab countries has enhanced their vulnerability to outside interference and has reduced the degree of their internal integration and socio-political cohesion. National integration depends on economic exchanges within society and thus dependent technology policies reduce such exchanges. Instead, economic exchanges in the Middle East take place with foreign countries without involving the national population. Stivachtis points out that the Middle Eastern countries possess significant human, strategic, and natural resources, which, if efficiently managed and put to effective use, could induce a rapid economic change. However, those resources cannot be put to any useful socioeconomic use because of the underdeveloped state of Middle Eastern national and regional institutions. He argues that a positive response to global technological

challenges would require the adoption of a successful program of technology transfer by Middle Eastern states in order to narrow or close the technology gap. Technology transfer, however, involves changes in a country's political culture, the legal system, the economy, social organisation, and management. Stivachtis suggests that in order to promote technological advances, Middle Eastern governments should invest in quality education for youth, continuous skills training for workers and managers, and should ensure that knowledge is shared as widely as possible across society.

Part III examines a set of issues with direct effect on Middle East security. In Chapter 8, Bettina Koch explores conflicts in the Middle East region, with particular emphasis on the Syria crisis and the Israel-Palestine conflict. She argues that although both conflicts are laden with religious languages, neither of them could be initially called a 'religious' conflict, though, over time, in both conflicts religious language was increasingly used and eventually changed the conflicts' 'nature'. In both instances, Koch notes, one encounters the use of 'religious radicalisation' employed as a tool to achieve other goals. Yet, solving the 'religious conflicts' will not necessarily solve the conflicts *per se* – unless the conflicts' extra-religious root causes (territory, injustice, and oppression) are solved too.

In Chapter 9, Christopher Dallas Feeney explores the origins and primary motivations of a select set of groups as a means to better understand who the Middle Eastern Violent Non-State Actors (VNSAs) are and why they fight. According to Dallas Feeney, VNSA groups, such as ISIS, Al Qaeda, and their affiliates have emerged over the last fifteen years to join longstanding resistance groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah in a widening political and military conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced tens of millions of citizens with global repercussions.

He argues that VNSAs compete with regional states for control of territory, valuable natural resources, and the legitimate authority to govern. VNSAs use all forms of violence – terror, guerrilla war, conventional war and punishment strategies - to seize power and territory from rivals and incumbent governments in order to implement their political and social vision for that society.

In Chapter 10, Akis Kalaitzidis explores the institutional relationships that have been challenged during the Arab Spring. Drawing on the works of North, Pierson, Ruth and David Collier, he argues that revolutionary movements are rarely spontaneous and despite the claim that social revolutions tend to re-draw political but most importantly the social map of the country they occur in, the outcomes of said social revolts depend on pre-revolutionary institutional

structures and cultural affinities. In addition to the study of the critical junctures that led to and defined the Arab Spring while in progress, Kalaitzidis investigates the relationship of elites to non-elites during the turbulent times and the exogenous factors that limit the policy options the Arab Spring countries faced.

In Chapter 11, Catherine Baylin Duryea examines human rights organisations in the Middle East. She argues that since the late 1970s, the locus of human rights has shifted to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that used international law to call for better treatment of prisoners, rights for women, and political freedoms. Though human rights NGOs did not usually build large social bases of support, rights increasingly became the language of popular protest and were one of several ways people articulated grievances before and during the Arab uprisings of 2011. Since then, Baylin Duryea argues, there has been little progress in changing state action across the Middle East to comply with international human rights law. There is little enforcement at the regional level and repression of domestic rights NGOs is widespread. The prospects for human rights NGOs are bleak. She concludes that as the legitimacy of human rights declines around the world, even domestic calls for respect for human rights are less resonant. Nevertheless, activists in every Middle East country continue to advance their platform of social change through governmental reform, public education, international pressure, and domestic advocacy.

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Part I

A SECTORAL APPROACH TO MIDDLE EAST SECURITY

1

Political (In)Security in the Middle East

YANNIS A. STIVACHTIS

It has been argued (Holsti 1996 & 1991) that war in the post-Cold War era has different sources and takes on significantly different characteristics than previous wars. It has also become a common belief that the majority of contemporary wars are less a problem of the relations between states than a problem within states (Melander 1999). Although military considerations remain at the core of states' security policies, it has been recognised that threats of non-military nature coming from the internal environment of the state could have a significant impact on the security of the state. Yet, domestic strife may lead to regional and international upheaval and invite foreign political and military intervention. The recent Arab uprisings have demonstrated that one of the main sources of regional instability in the Middle East stems from regional states' domestic environments, while the Syrian conflict clearly shows how civil wars may lead to regional and international instability and invite foreign intervention.

Civil war, nevertheless, is not chronic in all states. It has been suggested (Buzan 1991) that the socio-political cohesion of states is the primary cause of domestic insecurity and that states that are weak in terms of their socio-political cohesion are the primary locale of present and future wars. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate Buzan's thesis by focusing on state-society relations in the Middle East. In doing so, the chapter is divided into four sections.

The first section draws on the state-society literature to provide the basis for understanding the nature of domestic insecurity facing Middle Eastern states. The second section focuses on the weak/strong state/power concept as a way to enrich our understanding of the Middle East's domestic security

problematique. Finally, the last two sections focus on the cases of Iraq and the Arab Spring to demonstrate the relevance of the concept of 'weak' state to Middle East security.

The State-Society Relationship

The state-society literature emphasises the domestic realm of the state. This literature distinguishes between state and society and attempts to understand how they interact (Halliday 1988; Migdal 1988). In other words, state and society are viewed as separate entities while the state is understood mainly in politico-institutional terms. In this view, the state is equated with government and hence state security coincides with the security of the regime. Such identification has important ramifications for international relations. For example, according to the state-society approach, there was a difference between the security of the territory of Iraq and its citizens (society), and that of the security of Saddam Hussein and his regime. Hence, national security differs from state/regime security.

The state-society relationship can take three forms: first, state and society are both strong; second, the state is weak but the society is strong; and third, the state is strong but the society is weak. Because strong states which also have strong societies rarely, if ever, face insecurity due to their socio-political cohesion, this paper will focus on the latter two forms of state-society relationship.

Weak States and Strong Societies

Discussing conflict and underdevelopment in the Third World, Joe Migdal (1988, 19) defines the state as:

> an organisation, composed of numerous agencies led and coordinated by the state's leadership that has the ability or authority to make and implement the binding rules for all the people as well as the parameters of rule making for other social organisations in a given territory, using force if necessary to have its way.

According to Migdal, levels of state/social control are reflected in three indicators: compliance, participation, and legitimation.

The state's struggle for social control is characterised by conflict between state leaders (who seek to mobilise people and resources and impose a

single set of rules) and other social organisations applying different rules in parts of the society. The distribution of social control in society that emerges from this conflict (between societies and states) is the main determinant of whether states become strong or weak.

Strong states are able to guide the rules of society without threatening opponents. Here, the 'rightness of a state's having high capabilities to extract, penetrate, regulate and appropriate' the rules of society is unchallenged (Migdal 1988, 20). In other words, a strong state possesses the legitimate authority that provides the official rules that people within the borders must follow. Weak states, on the other hand, are unable to mobilise the population for political purposes and there is often a fragmentation of social control (Migdal 1988, 228). Thus, weak states often employ coercion and various 'dirty tricks' to gain control. Midgal's point is that the stronger the state, the stronger will be its institutional penetration.

For Migdal, the main problem in the Third World is that the state is weak and the regimes are confronted by 'the rulers' dilemma', namely state leaders can only achieve political mobilisation when they have proffered viable strategies of survival to the populace. This requires an elaborate set of institutions. However, by creating strong state agencies, state leaders risk creating powerful sub-organisations, which may become potential power centres they cannot control. Lack of or fragmented social control, the 'rulers' dilemma', and the difficulties of political mobilisation are all conditions that, according to Migdal, weaken the state. Therefore, the political prescription is to make the state stronger.

Strong States and Weak Societies

In contrast to Migdal's thesis, it has been argued (Muslu 2013) that the lack of democracy in the Middle East should be attributed to the existence of strong states and weak societies, rather than the other way around. In other words, it is due to the existence of a strong and centralised state and the simultaneous lack of or weak presence of an autonomous and independent civil society that is the most significant limiting factor to democracy in the Middle East (Abootalebi 1998). According to Fatih Muslu (2013, 3) state control over its citizens' behaviours via control of jobs, benefits, and modernisation processes has made democratic, political activism difficult to occur in the Middle East. Establishing a relationship of dependency by controlling socio-economic structure and creating an economic class highly dependent on the state for employment, financing and protection is one of the key factors perpetuating state power in the Middle East (Sivan 1997). This tendency, in conjunction with the clientelistic nature of Middle Eastern political systems reinforces

authoritarian values (Ciftci 2010, 1145). Hence, in the absence of autonomous counter mechanisms in place to balance their power, Middle Eastern states have been too powerful in relation to their societies. As Eva Bellin (2004) argues, the primary factor contributing to the robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East can be determined by the strength of the state and its capacity to maintain a monopoly on the means of coercion.

According to Muslu (2013, 10), the distribution of economic capabilities is the main determinant of social and political life in the Middle East. In fact, states are in control of every domain ranging from the economic to the cultural field. Even the rich classes lack independence from the control of the central state. Against strong and centralised bureaucracies, there is no aristocracy or urbanised bourgeoisie class (Muslu 2013, 9). In Middle Eastern societies, oil revenues, the presence of strong and expanded militaries, the increasing number of state bureaucrats, weak political oppositions, and foreign military and financial support have increased state capabilities and strength over society (Abootalebi 1998, 8). The disproportionate growth in state capabilities has expanded the state's sphere of influence.

Middle Eastern societies have most certainly witnessed transformative developments but these developments were initiated by populist regimes, which launched intensive industrialisation and modernisation processes and aimed to reinforce their control and legitimacy by instituting and expanding bureaucracy (Ayubi 1990). This massive state-led capitalism penetrated into all segments of society and most urban classes and organisations became materially tied to the state and its patronage (Muslu 2013, 11). Existing social and economic classes have been demolished via successive land reforms, with the development of a new urban class who owes their economic status and prestige to the state (Sullivan 1992, 27–28; Kamrawa and Mora 1998, 895–6). While these ongoing economic and political developments in the region have enhanced the urban classes, tribal and other traditional social organisations have lost their social and political importance (Kienle 2011, 146). In most Middle Eastern countries, civil society organisations have had to deal with the various political and economic restrictions that have diminished their profound impact.

The problem with the above analysis is that strength is understood in terms of the state's capacity to control its society and minimise or even eliminate societal expression. This implies that if resistance breaks out, then the state has not been so strong after all. Thus, the Arab Spring demonstrated the inability of the Middle Eastern state to manage its society and its weakness in terms of its socio-political cohesion. In other words, the more oppressive the state has been, the more anger created among its populace. Therefore, it was

a matter of time before this anger would come out in the form of rebellion and resistance.

Weak/Strong States Versus Weak/Strong Powers

Strength as a state neither depends on, nor correlates with power. Hence, a distinction should be drawn between 'weak' or 'strong' states, on the one hand, and 'weak' or 'strong' powers, on the other. The notion of a 'weak' or 'strong' state refers to a country's degree of socio-political cohesion (Buzan 1991, 97), while the notion of 'weak' or 'strong' power refers to the traditional distinction among states in respect of their military and economic capabilities (Handel 1981; Morgenthau 1973; Knorr 1975). Whether a state is weak or strong in terms of its socio-political cohesion has thus little to do with whether it is as weak or strong as a power. Of course, strong states can also be strong powers, such as Israel. On the other hand, strong states can be weak powers, like Egypt, while weak states can be quite strong powers, like Turkey and Iran. As the case of the Soviet Union indicates, even major powers could have serious weaknesses as states. Thus, they are obliged to maintain extensive internal security establishments. The main difference between weak and strong states is the low/high degree of legitimacy facing their governments.

Although no single indicator adequately defines the difference between weak and strong states, there are certain conditions which are expected to be found in weak ones (Buzan 1991, p. 100). First, weak states usually experience high levels of political violence or they are confronted with an ever-existing potential for violence. Second, they are characterised by a significant degree of police control over their citizens. Third, they face major political conflict over which ideology will be used to organise the state (e.g. secularism vs. Islamism or nationalism vs. pan-Arabism). Fourth, weak states lack coherent national identity, or they experience the presence of contending national identities within their territories (e.g. the Kurdish factor in Turkey and Iraq). Fifth, weak states lack a clear and observed hierarchy of political authority. Finally, they experience a high degree of state control over the media.

Within international anarchy, security issues are conditioned not only by the structure of the international system and the interaction of units (Waltz 1979; Jarvis 1989, 281) but also by the domestic characteristics of states (Buzan 1991, 37). In this way, the international and domestic realms of the state are not only of equal importance but, most importantly, they are interrelated. Consequently, security analysis requires a comprehensive definition of the state that binds territory, government, and society together and which links

the internal and systemic perspectives mentioned above. Indeed, a third body of thought has attempted to do so by placing state and system into a mutually constitutive relationship (Buzan, Little and Jones 1993). In this way, the state is understood in terms of its territorial, political, and societal nexus and its security is analysed with reference to its three basic components: its idea, its physical base, and its institutional expression (Buzan 1991, 69–96).

The Idea of the State

By employing the idea of the state, one accepts the fact that the state exists primarily on the socio-political rather than on the physical plane. If the essence of the state resides in the idea of it held in the minds of its citizens, then, that idea itself becomes a major object of national security.

The idea of the state, however, might take different forms, and might even be quite different among those who share a common loyalty to a particular state. This notion raises significant security problems. A state without a binding idea among its citizens might be so disadvantaged as to be unable to sustain its territorial integrity. Discussing the idea of the state, one should focus on its two main sources: the nation and organising ideologies (Buzan 1991, 69–82).

The State-Nation Relationship

The importance of nation to the idea of the state is highlighted by the concept of national security itself, which implies that the object of security is the nation. This raises questions about the link between state and nation (Seton-Watson 1977; Gellner 1983). If the territories of nation and state coincide, then nation would define much of the relationship between state and society. However, this is very rarely the case. One is, therefore, obliged to conclude that the relationship between state and nation is a complex one.

According to Barry Buzan (1991, 72–78), the complex relationship between state and nation can be expressed through four models. The first is the *nation-state* model, which implies that the nation precedes the state and plays a significant role in giving rise to it. The purpose of the state is to protect and express the nation, and ensure the bond between them. The nation, on the other hand, provides the state with a strong identity in the international environment and a strong base of domestic legitimacy enabling it to resist domestic upheavals. Egypt offers a good example of a nation-state.

The second model is the *state-nation*. This model implies that after coming into existence the state plays a significant role in creating the nation. The

United States (US) provides a good example of a state-nation. The purpose of the state is to generate uniform cultural and political elements that in the long-term would produce a national entity that would identify with the state. This may require the absorption of various ethnicities or religions (melting pot) in order to create a single new national one. So long as state-nations fail to solve their nationality problem, they remain vulnerable to instability and internal conflict in ways not normally experienced by states in harmony with their nations.

The third model is the *part nation-state*. This implies that a nation, like the Palestinians or the Kurds, is divided among two or more states. The idea of the unified nation-state frequently exercises a strong hold on part nation-states, which, thereby, represent a severe source of insecurity both to themselves and to other states. This case offers the maximum level of contradiction to the idea of national security, for it is precisely the nation that makes the idea of the state insecure.

The fourth model is the *multination-state*. It comprises those states that contain two or more nations within their boundaries. Two sub-types exist within this model: *federative states* and *imperial states*. Federative states, like Canada or Switzerland, reject the nation-state as the ideal type. Consequently, separate nations are allowed or even encouraged to pursue their own identities, and attempts are made to structure the state in such a way that no one nationality comes to dominate the whole state structure. Federative states have no natural unifying principle and, consequently, are more vulnerable to separatism and political interference than nation-states. However, there is a belief that political, social, economic, and cultural freedom and development would make this type of state preferable to its citizens than any other alternative.

Imperial states are those in which one of the nations within the state dominates the state structures to its own advantage. The dominant nation may seek to suppress the other nationalities by various means with a view of transforming itself into a nation-state. Turkey offers a good example of this type of state. It may also seek simply to retain its dominance, using the machinery of the state to enforce its position, without trying to eliminate or absorb other groups. The case of Iraq is illustrative of this type of state. In addition, it may adopt a more subtle approach of cultivating a pervasive non-nationalist ideology, such as Islam, which appears to transcend the national issue while in fact perpetuating the *status quo*.

Imperial states are vulnerable to threats aimed at their national division and their stability depends on the ability of the dominant nation to retain control. If

their ability is weakened either by internal developments or by external intervention, the state structure stands at risk of complete collapse. Political threats are, thus, a key element in the national security problem of imperial states.

The above analysis makes it clear that national security in regard to the state-nation link can be read in several different ways and that, consequently, different states will experience very different kinds of insecurity and security in relation to the nationality question. Some states will derive great strength from their link to the nation, whereas for others the tensions between state and nation will define their weakest and most vulnerable point.

Organising Ideologies

Organising ideologies purport to address the bases of relationships between government and society and define the conditions for both harmony and conflict in domestic politics. If these ideas themselves are weak, or 'if they are weakly held within society; or if strongly held, but opposed, ideas compete within society: then the state stands on fragile political foundations' (Buzan 1991, 79). A variety of political, economic, religious and social ideologies can serve as an idea of the state. The importance of ideology as an organising principle of the state is highlighted by the conflict between secularism and Islamism in Turkey, between autocracy and democracy throughout the Middle East, between pan-Arabism and nationalism, and between moderate and radical Islamism.

Here a note of caution is required regarding the role of religion as an organising ideology as we need to be aware of the propensity to oversimplify its role in domestic and international affairs. Iran's international assertiveness is as much due to Iranian-Persian nationalism as it is to the dictates of Shi'ite clerics. The international policies that Iran's clerics adopt are rarely driven by theological precepts or religious doctrine, but rather political power calcul-ations and a desire to preserve the quasi-theocratic *status quo*. Similarly, in Iraq, conflict between Sunnis and Shi'ites rarely stems from differences over religious doctrine and practice, but rather from historical and contemporary competition for state power. Sunni and Shi'ite identities are as much ethnic as religious.

Meanwhile, the Kurds, whether in Iraq or Turkey, are ethnically based. Most Kurds are also Sunni Muslims. This is not to suggest that religious identity is synonymous with ethnic identity, as in many circumstances religious identity implies explicitly religious behaviour and belief. However, in many cases the lines between ethnic and religious identities become so blurred that parsing

them to assign blame for violence is difficult if not impossible. In both Somalia and Afghanistan, one source of the conflicts there is over which brand of Islam will prevail. But in both cases clan and ethnic differences define the composition of the forces in conflict as much as religious differences do.

Both the idea of the nation and organising ideologies point out that where the idea of the state is weak, a lapse in institutional strength might invite domestic upheavals which may, in turn, threaten the existence of state.

The Physical Base of the State

The physical base of the state refers to its population and territory, including all of the natural resources and wealth contained within its borders (Buzan, 1991, 90-96). The concrete character of the physical base makes threats against it considerably easy to be determined. However, a quite different threat to population can arise from human migrations whether voluntary or forced. This threat works primarily on the societal level, especially when the incoming population is of a different cultural, linguistic or ethnic group.

The Institutions of the State

According to Buzan (1991, 82), to understand the relevance of the institutions of state to security, one needs to ask the question: how does a state in which the 'idea of state' is weak or non-existent react to potential and actual domestic upheavals? This question raises the image of a maximal state in which an elite commands the machinery of government, particularly the armed forces and the police, and uses it to run the state in its own interests. In this case, the coherence of the state would be preserved by the use of the state's coercive powers against its citizens.

The institutions of the state can be threatened by force (rebellion or revolution) or by political action based on ideas that have different institutional implications. When institutions are threatened by force, the natural reaction is defence. The use of armed or police forces may sustain the state institutions but without significant popular mass support, they would be precariously positioned. When institutions are threatened by opposing political ideas, the danger is that their legitimacy will be eroded.

The State-Nation-Religion Nexus and Political (In)Security: The Case of Iraq

Iraq is one of the most religiously and ethnically diverse societies in the

Middle East. Roughly, two-thirds of Iraq's people are Arabs, about one-fourth are Kurds, and the remainder consists of small minority groups. Iraq's Arab population is divided between Sunni Muslims and Shi'ites. About three-fifths of the Iraqi population are Shi'ite and about two-fifths are Sunni. Fault lines between communities deepened in the twentieth century as a succession of authoritarian regimes ruled by exploiting tribal, sectarian, and ethnic divisions (Robertson 2016; Polk 2006).

It is estimated that the Kurds are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East and they constitute a separate and distinctive cultural group possessing a strong tribal structure. There are important Kurdish minorities in Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria. Iraq's Kurds are concentrated in the relatively inaccessible mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan, which is roughly contiguous with Kurdish regions in those other countries; a fact that raises the possibility of a unified Kurdistan and simultaneously creates territorial threats to the countries where the Kurds are based.

The Kurds were thwarted in their ambitions for statehood after WWI and the Iraqi Kurds have since resisted inclusion in the state of Iraq. At various times, the Kurds have been in undisputed control of large tracts of territory. Attempts to reach a compromise with the Kurds in their demands for autonomy, however, have ended in failure, owing partly to government pressure and partly to the inability of Kurdish factional groups to maintain a united front against successive Iraqi governments. From 1961 to 1975, aided by military support from Iran, they were intermittently in open rebellion against the Iraqi government, as they were during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, and again, supported largely by the United States, throughout the 1990s (Tripp 2007, 192–239). As a result, the Saddam Hussein regime consistently tried to extend its control into Kurdish areas through threats, coercion, violence, and, at times, the forced internal transfer of larger numbers of Kurds (Tripp 2007, 192–193). Kurdish rebellions in the last quarter of the twentieth century resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Kurds – both combatants and non-combatants – and on various occasions forced hundreds of thousands of Kurds to flee to neighbouring Iran and Turkey (Tripp 2007, 203).

As it was mentioned previously, Iraq's Arab population is divided between Sunni Muslims and the more numerous Shi'ites. These groups, however, are for the most part ethnically and linguistically homogenous, and both value family relations strongly. Many Arabs, in fact, identify more strongly with their family or tribe than with national or confessional affiliations, a significant factor contributing to ongoing difficulties in maintaining a strong central government.

Although Shi'ites constitute the majority of the population, Iraq's Sunni rulers have given preferential treatment to influential Sunni tribal networks, and Sunnis have dominated the military officer corps and civil service. Shi'ites remained politically and economically marginalised from the inception of the Iraqi state in 1920 until the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 (Tripp 2007 194–196). Since the transition to elective government, Shi'ite factions have wielded significant political power.

Iran's Islamic revolution in 1979 installed a regime that was clearly anti-Iraqi and had close ties with Syria. Given Iraq's large and for the most part disfranchised Shi'ite population, Baghdad perceived relations between Syria and Iran as an unprecedented threat. When Khomeini came to power in February 1979, his example inspired many Shi'ites in Iraq to engage in greater political activism. Mass pro-Khomeini demonstrations and guerrilla activity became regular occurrences in Iraq. The regime cracked down on the Shi'ite movement with great ferocity, and hundreds were executed, some 10,000 were imprisoned, and tens of thousands were driven across the border into Iran.

During the Iran-Iraq War, in the northeastern provinces Iranian forces, in cooperation with Iraqi Kurds, threatened the area from Kirkuk to the Turkish border and penetrated into the Iraqi town of Halabjah. They met with stiff resistance in the north, however. Using chemical weapons, Iraqi forces inflicted heavy casualties on Kurdish civilians in and around Halabjah in March 1988 (Tripp 2007, 206). Meanwhile, Saddam's control of society was strengthened by his continued domination of the country's internal security services.

The defeat of Iraq in the 1990-1991 Gulf War encouraged the Shi'ite and Kurdish populations to rebel against the regime. In response, the government forces killed many people and caused extensive damage. The attempt by Iraqi forces to reconquer Kurdistan forced more than a million Kurds to flee to Turkey and Iran. Many died from hunger and disease. Only with Western intervention did the Kurdish refugees feel they could return to their homes in northern Iraq. In April 1991, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France established a 'safe haven' in Iraqi Kurdistan, in which Iraqi forces were barred from operating. Nevertheless, the Iraqi military launched a successful attack against the Kurdish city of Arbil in 1996 and engaged in a consistent policy of ethnic cleansing in areas directly under its control – particularly in and around the oil-rich city of Kirkuk – that was inhabited predominantly by Kurds (Tripp 2007, 234–239).

Only after the end of the 1990-1991 Gulf War did the Shi'ites rise up against

Saddam Hussein's regime. However, their rebellion was put down with great brutality. Shi'ite leaders were killed and imprisoned, madrasahs were closed, and public religious ceremonies were banned. The US-led coalition did not establish a safe haven for the Shi'ites in southern Iraq, and the regime subsequently put immense resources into excavating several large canals to drain the country's southern marshes, which had been the traditional stronghold of the Shi'ite.

Following the 2003 US military intervention in Iraq, attempts were made to hand over control of the government to Iraqis (Marr and Al-Marashi 2017, 205–239; Dawisha 2011, 242–276). On January 30, 2005, despite the ongoing violence, general elections were successfully held for Iraq's new 275-member Transitional National Assembly. A draft constitution approved by a national referendum in October 2005 called for a new legislature. Sunni Arabs voted overwhelmingly against the new constitution, fearing that it would make them a perpetual minority. In a general election on December 15, the Shi'ite United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) gained the most seats but not enough to call a government. After four months of political wrangling, the Shi'ite leader Nuri al-Maliki formed a coalition government that included both Arabs and Kurds but which was largely perceived as being pro-Shi'a.

In November 2010, after an eight-month political stalemate, Iraq's major political parties entered a power-sharing agreement that paved the way for a national unity government (Marr and Al-Marashi 2017, 240-285; Dawisha 2011, 242–276). However, the power-sharing agreement soon proved unworkable; factional struggles over oil revenues and the control of government institutions continued. In February 2011, the Arab spring reached Iraq. On February 25, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in Iraq to protest the country's high unemployment rate, corruption, and insufficient public services. Iraqi police responded aggressively, attempting to disperse protesters with water cannons and in some cases live fire. The protests caused several provincial governors to step down from their posts. In the aftermath of the demonstrations, Al-Maliki announced new initiatives to meet protesters' demands, including measures to ensure greater government accountability and fight corruption.

Iraq's factional stalemate persisted, hindering reconstruction efforts and threatening to push the country back into sectarian conflict. The aggravation of sectarian tensions in 2013 translated into increased violence (Marr and Al-Marashi 2017, 287–311). Radical Sunni militants in western Iraq benefited from the presence of similar Sunni groups fighting in the Syrian Civil War, and weapons and fighters flowed back and forth across the Iraq-Syria border. In April 2013, al-Qaeda in Iraq and some radical elements of the Syrian

opposition began operating jointly under the name Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL; also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria [ISIS]). By late 2013, ISIL had begun to pose a serious challenge to the Iraqi government's control in western and northern areas of the country.

The ISIL/ISIS crisis eroded support for Maliki, whose sectarian approach to governing was seen as a major factor in the alienation of Sunnis. The nomination in early August of Haider al-Abadi to form a new cabinet seemed to signal that Al-Maliki's efforts to retain power were doomed. Indeed, al-Abadi was installed as prime minister on September 8, 2014, and was able to form an inclusive administration. Efforts by Iraqi forces to expel ISIL from Iraq, with the support of a US-led coalition, continued under al-Abadi, with the group finally being pushed out of most of the country by the end of 2017.

Meanwhile, in September 2017, Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) officials held a nonbinding referendum on independence in the area under KRG control. The referendum was overwhelmingly approved with more than 92% of the vote. The referendum, however, found very little international support, many countries having urged the KRG not to proceed with it in order to avoid further exacerbating the already unstable nature of the region.

The Iraqi central government was strongly opposed to the referendum. Within weeks of the vote, the government sent troops to the areas outside the KRG's borders that were claimed by both the central government and the KRG, resulting in clashes between the two sides. Iraqi forces quickly retook Kirkurk, as well as other disputed areas outside the Kurdish autonomous region. Tensions between the two sides were reduced somewhat in March 2018 by the progress of ongoing negotiations.

The State-Society Relationship and Political (In)Security: The Case of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring refers to the outbreak of protests in the Middle East that ultimately resulted in regime changes in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. The participants in these grassroots movements sought increased social freedoms and greater participation in the political process (Brownlee, Masoud and Reynolds 2015; Lynch 2017). Not all of the movements, however, could be deemed successful. In fact, in many Middle East countries the revolts of the Arab Spring resulted in increased instability and oppression (Bayat 2017; Fisk and Cockburn 2017). In some cases, these protests morphed into full-scale civil wars, as seen in countries such as Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

The series of large-scale political and social movements associated with the Arab Spring began in December 2010 when a Tunisian street vendor – Mohammed Bouazizi – set himself on fire to protest the arbitrary seizing of his vegetable stand by police over failure to obtain a permit. Bouazizi's sacrificial act served as a catalyst for the so-called Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia (Zartman 2015, 50-79; Fisk and Cockburn 2017). As a result, massive protests broke out in Tunis, the country's capital, and quickly spread throughout the country. The Tunisian government attempted to end the unrest by using violence against street demonstrations and by offering political and economic concessions. However, protests soon overwhelmed the country's security forces prompting authoritarian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who had ruled the country with an iron fist for more than 20 years, to abdicate his position and flee to Saudi Arabia. The country's first democratic parliamentary elections were held in October 2011 when Tunisians chose members of a council tasked with drafting a new constitution. A democratically chosen president and prime minister took office in December 2011. In addition, political prisoners were released and the political police was dissolved. In 2013 new protests began against the interim Islamist-led government, which led to the adoption of a new constitution. On October 2014, parliamentary elections took place; an event that signified the end of the political transition with Tunisia becoming a unicameral parliamentary republic.

The successful uprising in Tunisia inspired activists in other countries in the region to protest similar authoritarian governments in their own nations. Specifically, massive protests broke out in Egypt in late January 2011. The Egyptian government tried and failed to control protests by offering concessions while cracking down violently against protesters. After several days of massive demonstrations and clashes between protesters and security forces in Cairo and around the country, a turning point came at the end of the month when the Egyptian army announced that it would refuse to use force against protesters calling for the removal of President Hosni Mubarak (Fisk and Cockburn 2017). Having lost the support of the military, Mubarak left office on 11 February ceding power to a council of senior military officers.

In the period of euphoria that followed, the new military administration enjoyed high public approval, since the military had played a decisive role in ending the Mubarak regime. However, optimism was dampened when the new administration appeared hesitant to begin a full transfer of power to an elected government and when military and security forces resumed the use of violence against protesters (Danahar 2015, 54; Zartman 2015, 80). Confrontations between protesters and security forces became frequent occurrences. In spite of a multiday outbreak of violence in late November 2011, parliamentary elections proceeded as scheduled and the newly elected People's Assembly held its inaugural session in late January 2012.

Following the controversial election of Mohamed Morsi in 2012, a coup led by Defence Minister Abdel Fattah el-Sisi installed the latter as president and he has remained in office since 2014. In response to a subsequent insurgency in Sinai, Egyptian armed forces launched anti-terror military operations in the peninsula. Nevertheless, violence and attacks by insurgents have increased since the ouster of Morsi.

Encouraged by protesters' rapid successes in Tunisia and Egypt, protest movements took hold in Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria. In these countries, however, outpourings of popular discontent led to protracted bloody struggles between opposition groups and ruling regimes.

In Yemen, where the first protests appeared in late January 2011, President Ali Adb Allah Salih's regime was weakened when a number of the country's most powerful tribal and military leaders aligned themselves with the pro-democracy protesters calling for him to step down (Zartman 2015, 116–144; Fisk and Cockburn 2017). When negotiations to remove Salih from power failed, loyalist and opposition fighters clashed in Sanaa, the country's capital. Salih left Yemen in June to receive medical treatment after he was injured in a bomb attack, raising hopes among the opposition that a transition would begin. Salih returned to the country unexpectedly four months later, however, adding to the uncertainty and confusion about Yemen's political future.

In 2011, Prime Minister Mujawar and members of the Yemeni Parliament from the ruling party resigned. Political chaos led to the occupation of several Yemeni regions by al-Qaeda and Houthi rebels. In response, Saleh sacked the military leaders and restructured the Yemeni military forces. In November 2011, after the approval of his immunity from prosecution by Yemeni legislators, Saleh signed an internationally mediated agreement calling for a phased transfer of power to Vice President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. However, al-Hadi was ousted by Houthi rebels and a violent civil war broke out as a result. The conflict has devolved into tribal warfare causing significant damage to the country's infrastructure.

Mass protests demanding political and economic reforms erupted in Bahrain in mid-February 2011, led by Bahraini human rights activists and members of Bahrain's marginalised Shi'ite majority (Zartman 2015, 209–248; Fisk and Cockburn 2017). In response, King Hamad offered economic concessions, released political prisoners and entered into negotiations with Shi'a representatives. However, the protests continued and the King requested the intervention of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). As a result, protests were violently suppressed by Bahraini security forces, aided by a force of about 1,500 soldiers from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). By the

end of March, the protest movement had been stifled. In the aftermath of the protests, dozens of accused protest leaders were convicted of anti-government activity and imprisoned, hundreds of Shi'ite workers suspected of supporting the protests were fired, and dozens of Shi'ite mosques were demolished by the government. In November 2011, an independent investigation into the uprising, commissioned by the Bahraini government, concluded that the government had used excessive force and torture against protesters. As a result, the Head of the National Security Apparatus removed from his post while the government vowed to act on the recommendations for reform included in the report. To this end, a Committee to implement the recommendations was formed. Today, officially, the country has a constitutional monarchy form of government, but personal freedoms remain limited.

In Libya, protests against the authoritarian regime of Colonel Muammar Qaddafi erupted in mid-February 2011 and they quickly escalated into a violent civil war (Danahar 2015, 325–368; Fisk and Cockburn 2017). When the rebel forces appeared to be on the verge of defeat in March, an international coalition led by NATO launched a campaign of air strikes targeting Qaddafi's forces. Qaddafi was forced from power in August 2011 after rebel forces took control of Tripoli. After evading capture for several weeks, Qaddafi was captured, tortured, and eventually executed by opposition fighters in Surt in October 2011.

The challenges of governing Libya in the post-Qaddafi era became apparent soon after the internationally recognised provisional government, known as the Transitional National Council (TNC), took power. The TNC struggled to restart the Libyan economy, establish functional institutions of government, and exert control over the many autonomous regional and tribal militias that had participated in the rebellion against Qaddafi. Thus, since Qaddafi's downfall, Libya has remained in a state of civil war, and two opposing governments effectively rule separate regions of the country. Libya's civilian population has suffered significantly during the years of political upheaval, with violence in the streets and access to food, resources and healthcare services severely limited. This has contributed, in part, to the ongoing worldwide refugee crisis, which has seen thousands flee Libya, most often by boat across the Mediterranean Sea, with hopes of new opportunities in Europe.

In Syria protests calling for the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad broke out in southern Syria in mid-March 2011 and spread through the country (Danahar 2015, 369–420; Fisk and Cockburn 2017; Lynch 2017, 105–130; Zartman 2015, 291–331). The initial response of the Syrian

government was to release some political prisoners, end the Emergency Law, and dismiss the Provincial Governors. This followed by the resignation of the government, as well as the resignation of members of the Syrian Parliament. Nevertheless the protests continued. The Assad regime responded with a brutal crackdown against protesters, drawing condemnation from international leaders and human rights groups. As a result, the Syrian army experienced a large number of defections, which led first to clashes between soldiers and defectors and eventually to the formation of the Free Syrian Army and a full-scale civil war.

A leadership council for the Syrian opposition formed in Istanbul in August, and opposition militias began to launch attacks on government forces. In spite of the upheaval, Assad's hold on power appeared strong, as he was able to retain the support of critical military units composed largely of members of Syria's 'Alawite' minority, to which Assad also belonged.

Meanwhile, divisions in the international community made it unlikely that international military intervention, which had proved decisive in Libya, would be possible in Syria. Russia and China vetoed UN Security Council resolutions meant to pressure the Assad regime in October 2011 and February 2012 and vowed to oppose any measure that would lead to foreign intervention in Syria or Assad's removal from power. The arrival of a delegation of peace monitors from the Arab League in December 2011 did little to reduce violence. The monitoring mission was suspended several weeks later over concerns for the safety of the monitors.

The Syrian Civil War has lasted for several years, forcing many to leave the country to seek refuge in Turkey, Greece and throughout Western Europe. For a time, the militant group ISIS had declared a caliphate in north-eastern Syria. The group executed thousands of people, and many others fled the region in fear of their lives. Yet, although ISIS has largely been defeated in Syria, the oppressive regime of Bashar al Assad remains in power in the country largely due to the military assistance it has received from Russia.

Lastly, the effects of the Arab Spring movement were felt elsewhere throughout the Middle East and North Africa as many of the countries in the region experienced at least minor pro-democracy protests. In Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, and Oman rulers offered a variety of concessions, ranging from the dismissal of unpopular officials to constitutional changes, in order to head off the spread of protest movements in their countries.

Specifically, in Algeria the 19-year old state of emergency was lifted (Zartman 2015, 145–181). In Jordan, King Abdullah II dismissed Prime Minister Rifai

and his cabinet on February 2011 while on October 2011, King Abdullah dismissed Prime Minister Bakhit and his cabinet after complaints of slow progress on promised reforms. In April 2012, as the protests continued, Prime Minister Al-Khasawneh resigned, and the King appointed Fayez al-Tarawneh as the new Prime Minister of Jordan. In October 2012, King Abdullah dissolved the parliament for new early elections and appointed Abdullah Ensour as the new Prime Minister of Jordan.

In Oman, Sultan Qaboos offered economic concessions, dismissed his ministers and granted law-making powers to the country's elected legislature. In Kuwait, protests led to the resignation of Prime Minister Nasser Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah and the dissolution of the Parliament, while in Morocco political concessions were offered by King Mohammed VI, including a referendum on constitutional reforms, respect and observance of civil rights, and a commitment to end corruption (Zartman 2015, 182–208). In Saudi Arabia, economic concessions were offered by King Abdullah and male-only municipal elections were held on 29 September 2011 (Lynch 2017, 225–240). Later, King Abdullah announced his approval for women to vote and be elected in the 2015 municipal elections, as well as to be nominated to the Shura Council. He also committed himself to the expansion of women's rights in Saudi Arabia; a process that was undertaken by Mohammad bin Salman after his ascension to the position of Crown Prince.

Conclusion

Due to their low degree of socio-political cohesion, weak states face great insecurity at the regime level. This is not only crucial to their own security, but also to that of the regions within which they are located. International anarchy is a decentralised system of order and, therefore, depends for its stability on the stability of its component units (states). Weak states are problematic for international order because their internal politics are often violent, and their domestic insecurity often spills over to disrupt the security of neighbouring states. Moreover, weak states can easily attract competitive outside intervention, as well as serve as targets to opportunistic aggressors.

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2

Societal (In)Security in the Middle East: Radicalism as a Reaction?

HASSAN AHMADIAN

Ever since the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, Arab societies have remained vulnerable to cross-border identities. Arab collective identity has been exploited by Arab states to strengthen their regional reach and might. Without this foundation, Abdul Nasser, for instance, would not have been able to embolden Egypt's regional position.

Once a useful tool at the disposal of Arab rulers, this same collective identity turned problematic in other periods. Because of his pursuit of Arab nationalism, Nasser was forced to take action in Yemen and at Egypt's borders with Israel, which brought about devastating repercussions that lead to the decline of Arab nationalism (see Ajami 1987). The same goes for Saudi Arabia's pursuit of Salafism as a tool in its foreign policy, which backfired through Al-Qaeda's 'internal Jihad' campaign (see Ahmadian 2012). Therefore, cross-border identities are now a challenging variable for Arab states.

Besides cross-border identities, identity crises in Arab states have also emanated from ethnic and sectarian realities. The Kurdish issue, Muslim-Christian conflicts, and Shiite-Sunni rifts in the modern Arab history, are examples of conflicting identities leading to national catastrophes. Although identity is not the only determining factor in conflicts, it is surely an analytical category that is very useful for understanding some of them (Panic 2009, 37).

As much as those conflicting identities and loyalties in Arab states are of a

historical nature dating back to the formation of the new Middle East, they have been emboldened by the functional inefficiencies of Arab states. From the inability, and at times unwillingness, of states to function properly in the economic, political, social, and security spheres arose cross-border ethnic and religious identities as a means to protect Arab societies' mere *we-ness*.

Within such an equation, societal security remains unmet by states that are lagging behind huge developments sweeping the region. The question this chapter tries to answer is how has societal insecurity helped radical and terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS flourish within Arab states? The hypothetical answer is that collectively perceived threats along with states' inability to function properly in resolving internal and external challenges, creates collective frameworks to address perceived challenges, one of which has been radical and terrorist organisations.

The chapter is divided into four parts. The first part deals with the concept of societal security and its applicability in the Arab region. The second part dives into historical and functional aspects of societal insecurity in Arab states. The third part explains how societal insecurity widened the state-society gap. And the final part addresses the radical organisation's exploit of societal insecurity to function as protectors of Arab and Islamic identity, the holy lands of Islam and the very existence of Arabs and Muslims. The chapter concludes with a review of the main assumptions and findings.

An Applicable Concept?

Securitisation theory has unleashed a wide range of debates on the effects of new dimensions of security on states and societies. Societal security is one of the theory's main offshoots. The concept was designed to address the limitations of existing conceptual tools in analysing contemporary developments (Bilgin 2003, 211). It is concerned with the ability of societies to reproduce their traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and customs within acceptable conditions for evolution (Buzan 1991, 433). Therefore, its design was meant to highlight the role that ''identity'' plays in security relations (Williams 2003, 518).

Another factor that will contribute to its appeal and influence is its focus on societal identity as the core value vulnerable to threats and in need of security (McSweeney 1996, 82). Societal security suggests that identity groups are concerned with survival through preserving ethno-national identity, whilst states seek to maintain their sovereignty (Saleh 2010, 239). Accordingly, a nation can only be mobilised for national security in peacetime if the majority of the people identify the state and its enemies as the highest expression of

their own personal security and fear (McSweeney 1999, 21). Therefore, unlike Roe's argument that the maintenance of territorial integrity is invariably as important for societal identity as it is for state sovereignty (Roe 2005, 157), in some cases societal security is not achieved by sticking to the state's territorial integrity.

Societal security was a byproduct of Europe's post-Cold War challenges. Barry Buzan puts it within the centre-periphery dichotomy, stressing immigration and clashes of rival civilisations as sources of societal insecurity in the centre. 'The immigration issue does not exist in isolation. It occurs alongside, and mingled in with, the clash of rival civilisational identities between the West and the societies of the periphery' (Buzan 1991, 448). This begs the question whether the concept is applicable in a Middle East faced with drastically different challenges.

The answer resides within the main assumption Wæver and Buzan provide us with: dichotomised identities of states vs. societies. As the general definition of Wæver goes, 'a state that loses its sovereignty does not survive as a state; a society that loses its identity fears that it will no longer be able to live as itself' (Wæver 1995, 67). The main challenge here is the differentiation of state security from that of the society. Criticising the concept, Williams argues that, according to societal security, the state cannot represent and protect the society and its 'we-ness'. As such, the state and societal security can come into conflict as 'societal' elements challenge the state's right to decide (Williams 2003, 520).

Despite critics' arguments against the identity-based dichotomy (see McSweeney 1999; also Williams 2003), societal security is useful in providing analytical means to address challenges of radicalism and terrorism in the Middle East. There are two main – historical and functional – reasons for that.

Historically, the creation of Arab states post-World War I created unmatched state-society identities. Despite the Arab nationalist rhetoric accompanying the revolt against the Ottoman Empire (see Sorby Jr. 2006), Arab elites accepted new borderlines drawn by the Sykes-Picot Accord. Being the leaders of new states within those borderlines, Arab elites started consolidating their power, asserting the newly founded states' identities into their societies. Previously, Arab societies' identities were attached to the subnational (tribal and geographical) and transnational (Islamic and ethnic) *we*.

The main advocates of the new states' identities turned out to be the same elites who used to challenge Ottoman rule based on the transnational ethnic

identity. This had two main outcomes: first, it deprived elites of much needed legitimacy during nation-building processes; and second, it paved the way for the middle class to move against the ruling elites. Thereafter, the sequence of coups in Arab nations brought militaries to the forefront to lead the political scene (see Cook 2007).

Therefore, when the starting enthusiasm faded away, Arab people came to realise the semblance of the old and new elites and their attempts to consolidate power and impose the state's prioritised identity on their society. Those facts brought up a new form of activism that went beyond the state and challenged it. The failure of Pan Arabism in its two main forms (Nasserism and Ba'athism) created a vacuum soon to be filled with radical orientations.

A short reading of the modern Middle East brings up an image of a dichotomised identity: elites trying to consolidate power through coercion and the imposition of the state's fragile identity on the one hand and a vibrant society with a multifaceted identity on the other. Because of that dichotomy, sometimes even increases in a state's security can lead to increases in the insecurity of certain societal groups (Saleh 2010, 239). The continued failure of elites to improve their society's sense of *we-ness* rendered societies fertile ground for alternative, sometimes challenging, narrations of identity. Radical readings narrated the modern Middle East history as irrelevant to its true identity, thereby widening the state-society identity gap.

Functionally, preoccupied with consolidating their power, state elites were less worried about the functionality of the state's apparatuses. If developing economies, political opening and providing security are the main objectives a state is expected to deliver, Arab states were only functional in terms of providing security. States with better fortune found adequate rent to meet their societies' economic needs. Still the majority were not that fortunate. Therefore, with nationalism's appeal fading away, 'bread uprisings' started or loomed ahead during the 1970s and 1980s.

The Arab Spring brought these dysfunctionalities into daylight. The 'dignity revolutions' were not about Arab or Islamic unity, but rather a defiance to states' dysfunctionalities (see Salih 2012; Aissa 2012; Douglas et. al. 2014). Those uprisings did not fuel radical orientations per se, still their consequences provided radicals with the environment to flourish. This happened on two main levels.

The first was related to the security vacuum the Arab Spring brought up within which a Salafi-Jihadist revival became possible. The second was regional rivalries that divided regional actors into those in favour of vs. those opposing

the status quo. Conflicting regional agendas weakened states' institutions and created an ideal disequilibrium for Jihadists across the region.

In general, the state-society dichotomy resisted ruling elites' attempts to fill the gap and their dysfunctionalities widened it. Bread revolutions and the Arab Spring came to illustrate that dichotomy's evolution.

The Dichotomy Challenge

Societal security theorists hold that 'nation' and 'state' do not mean the same thing in a majority of countries and that 'national security' is becoming an increasingly irrelevant framework (Bilgin 2003, 211). The duality combines state security, which is concerned with sovereignty, and societal security, which is concerned with identity (Wæver and Buzan 1993, 25). That duality has long existed in the Arab region where parts of the society do not see the state as representing their aspirations as nations. Identity-based analysis brings up the challenges of nation-building as the equation from which the duality stems.

The division of Arab lands into new states left Arab elites with little means to create a sense of nationhood. With some exceptions of where a historical sense of nationhood existed, as in Egypt. New nationalities came about as a result of great power agreements dividing their spheres of influence in the Middle East. Thereupon, the borders of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and later Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE were drawn. Even the borders of Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen (both northern and southern) were affected by those agreements.

The Arab Revolt headed by Sharif Husayn of Hijaz at the advent of World War I, aimed at creating an Arab Kingdom across the region, was a mere indication of the way Arabs were perceiving one another. Later on, the Arab Revolt came to be appropriated as the single most important milestone in the coming of age of Arab nationalism (Kayal 1997, 105).

While state elites, once being the driving force against the Ottoman Empire to seek an Arab state, turned out to be the vanguards of the new states, Arab intellectuals went unsatisfied with the new reality. With the institution of the Caliphate replaced by the secular state of Turkey, Islamist intellectuals and activists started their struggle to fill the vacuum. The Muslim Brotherhood, established in 1928 in Egypt, was the first indication of defiant Islamist elites. Nine decades later ISIS claimed that it has achieved what no other Islamist movement did: a filling of the void left by the abolition of the caliphate and the creation of a Muslim renaissance (Zelin 2015, 160).

Still, Arab nationalists were more successful in their struggle against state elites. Through military coups, they took over in many countries paving the way for an Arab unity, as it was perceived in the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless, driven by rivalries rather than ideology, Arab nationalists replaced the old elites to guard the status quo. The failure of Arab nationalism, felt widely after the 1967 war (see Ajami 1987), was the beginning of an Islamist revival from the 1970s onward.

Decades of 'division' according to Pan Arab and Islamist rhetoric, rendered Arabs a fundamental fact: Arab states are to survive. The separate challenges facing each Arab state and their unique developments bolstered that 'division'. Dissatisfaction with the state's inability to fulfil 'Arab unity' was replaced by criticisms of government inefficiencies and their inability to deliver in the economic and political spheres. Besides healthy debates surrounding those issues, government inefficiencies provided their rival worldviews with the social environments needed to flourish. Many Arab states could not perform their main functions acceptably, which alienated societies from their states.

In general, state elites played a key role in the dichotomy upon which alternative worldviews flourished. Their role can be categorised in the following five categories:

1. *Representation*: the Arab region remains one of the least developed in terms of political openness and democratic governance. Six years after the start of the Arab Spring, only one out of 22 Arab states is categorised as free (Freedom House 2017);
2. *Oppression*: most Arab regimes survived for decades by carrying a big stick. Cases like Khalid Saeed's death under torture in Egypt and Mohammad Bu Azizi's self-immolation played a symbolic role in the 2011 uprisings. Oppression raised the popularity of alternative discourses, thereby Salafi-Jihadism gained attraction;
3. *Economic development*: except for Arab states enjoying windfalls of oil and gas revenues, others remain underdeveloped and unable to fulfil their economic obligations. Economic grievances have had a delegitimising role depriving ruling elites of their social bases;
4. *Regional rivalries*: rivalries in general and the use of ideology as a tool in regional rivalries in particular have had a crucial effect on the Middle East. Just like Egypt's Abdul Nasser's encouragement of Pan Arabism during the 1950s and 1960s, capitalising on Salafi movements in regional rivalries emboldened their regional reach and popularity;
5. *Independence*: for most Arabs, their governments lack the much needed independence to face national and regional challenges. This perception

rendered states unable to mobilise societies to back a national agenda. The sense of being underrepresented by dependent governments has always been a part of Arab public debate.

Those factors have helped embolden the state-society dichotomy. Insecurities stemming from the state's inability to deliver drove parts of their societies to radical narrations of the alternative that, once established, could lead to societal security. The Arab Spring came as a result of those deeply rooted grievances.

While at first it was all about peaceful change to more efficient and representative governance, Arab uprisings created the needed environment for radical forces to take the lead. Those forces thrive amidst chaos, they seek it out, and they have become adept at surviving under immense pressure (Lister 2015, 277). ISIS could not have expanded without the breakdown of state institutions and the deepening communal rift, which has been wearing down the social fabric of Arab countries in the Fertile Crescent for decades (Gerges 2016, 202). That is not to say that the Arab Spring was the only variable in the extremist's revival.[1]

The 'We' Under Threat

The status quo after independence failed to enhance Arab societies' sense of security. Nevertheless, Arab societies accepted Arab 'separation' and state-centred identities became the main source of reference to one's identity in the Arab region. Yet this did not eradicate societal insecurity. Although a Syrian became Syrian first – at least when dealing with citizens from abroad – this did not mean that a Syrian felt less threatened in terms of his/her identity.

With the transition from a collective identity to a state-centred one, the states' failure to fulfil perceived historical unity gave room to internal debates and criticisms against states' conduct of their obligations. And with that, Arab citizens started criticising their governments mainly based on their dysfunctionalities. That did not mean the demise of historical debates of Pan Arab or Islamist rhetoric. In fact, parts of those nostalgic debates where used to delegitimise governments, likening dissatisfaction with ruling elites' dysfunctionalities with their inability to act independently and collectively on issues like the Palestinian one. The linkage between the two was never clear, still the effect was felt vividly during the Palestinian Intifada (uprising). Therefore, that was part of a deeply rooted criticism about the state's independent character in the international arena. As such, Arab governments' foreign policies and international alliances were seen by parts of their

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[1]   The US occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq played a key role in the revival.

societies as under-representing the perceived collective Arab and Muslim *we*. The declarations of Jihad announced by Al-Qaeda in 1996 and 1998 stressed the presence of foreign troops on the 'holy lands' of Islam as a mere indication of treason to Islam by Saudi rulers (See Ahmadian 2012).

Al-Qaeda was not the only defiant party. Pan Arab debates have also criticised Arab foreign policies. Arab states' perceived *dependent* foreign policies were yet another means of alienation. In other words, the critics were unintentionally emphasising the identity dichotomy of state vs. society on the one hand and revealing to their fellow citizens the perceived reality that Arab states are not protecting the Arab/Muslim identity on the other.

A short reading of Arab scholars' writings on their states' foreign policies toward the Palestinian issue for instance is a revealing indicator of a core reality: Arab and Islamic parcels of their identities remain robust and play a role in mobilising Arab societies during change-times. Hence, collectively perceived threats, and the notion of Arab regimes' inaction toward them, help mobilise parts of Arab societies against their states.

In defending against perceived threats, societal identity is (re)constructed and thus also strengthened (Roe 1999, 195). As such, collectively perceived threats create collective frameworks to react. They definitely would not rally all Arabs, but could still provide a connecting framework for those who want to do something about it. If ISIS's use of social networks to recruit and rally Arab populations against their governments is any indicator, a digital world has made it easier to connect and organise against a perceived threat.

One of the main forms of action against collectively perceived threats has occurred within radical movements such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The connection between government misconduct and the collective responses in which citizens from around the globe are drawn to organisations like ISIS remains ambiguous to some extent. Still there are three points made by critics that could help clarify the linkage. The first is that Arab elites are under Western, particularly American, influence. Accordingly, they represent Western interests rather than those of their own societies. In Salafi-Jihadist rhetoric, ruling elites are puppets protected by foreign powers preserving their interests within the status quo. Therefore, there is a mutually constructed trade of interests between Arab rulers and Western nations.

Second, Arab secular rulers are far from representing the Muslim *umma*. According to this rhetoric, they are imposed on Muslim nations and as such cannot protect something they do not believe in, that is, the Islamic identity of their nations.

Third, most recently, some Arab states have been criticised for alienating parts of their societies. Iraqi and Syrian governments are criticised as being biased against their Sunni communities. The Bahraini government is under criticism for alienating its Shiite community. Some of the criticisms are politically motivated, still, widened sectarian gaps helped strengthen the state-society dichotomy. As a result, Baghdadi has hijacked sectarian uprisings on either side of the Syria–Iraq border to create his caliphate (Hosken 2015, 22).

A comparison of ISIS recruits from Arab nations provides a clearer image. Arab states with adequate oil/gas revenues to meet the economic needs of their tiny populations are less affected by Jihadists' recruitment tactics than their counterparts lacking a similar revenue. As a report by the Soufan Group suggests (The Soufan Group 2015, 6), Tunisians, Saudis, and Jordanians continue to outnumber other national contingents, although a reverse flow to North Africa may alter the balance within the Arab group. There are the ideologically-motivated recruits among those estimates, still the second category of recruits, the economically-motivated ones, are a main part of the figures.

While the number of Tunisian recruits (6,000) was the highest as of December 2015, the number of recruits from Kuwait (70), Qatar (10) and UAE (15) remained way lower. Recruits from those wealthy Arab states are mostly, like their colleagues from Western countries, ideologically-motivated, while on the other hand, recruitment in countries such as Tunisia (6,000), Jordan (2,000), Saudi Arabia (2,500) and Morocco (1,200) is affected by the economic and social conditions of the people.

In Search of Protection

Perceived threats against Arab collective identity and perceived inability of states to counter them led Arab activists and opposition figures to act beyond state authority. The irony is that for most of them, Arab governments illustrated the internal threat aiding and abetting the external one against their identity and very existence. It was in such an environment that radicalism flourished across the region and resonated in frustrated societies. Radical figures like Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri, capitalised on a protectionist rhetoric, asserting themselves as the guardians of Muslim people, lands, and religion. In Daniel Byman's words, Al-Qaeda plays on a form of religious nationalism (Byman 2015, 103). To get a clearer image of its protectionist rhetoric, later to develop at the hands of ISIS's ideologues, it is worthwhile to analyse Al-Qaeda's declarations of Jihad.

In his first detailed unilateral fatwa issued on August 1996, Bin Laden states that 'the Muslim people had suffered from aggression, iniquity, and injustice imposed by the Zionist-Crusaders alliance and their collaborators'. He concludes that it is not acceptable anymore to remain silent and inactive. He calls Muslims to take part in destroying, fighting and killing the enemy – namely Israelis and Americans who occupy Muslim lands and impose their will upon that of the Muslims – until it is completely defeated.

In a second multilateral fatwa issued on February 1998, (Al-Quds Al-Arabi 1998) Bin Laden joined five other radical leaders to declare war on the 'Crusader-Zionist alliance'. In this short fatwa, Al-Qaeda brought up three arguments on the necessity of Jihad against the United States and its allies:

1. The United States has been occupying the lands of Islam's holiest of places, namely the Arabian Peninsula, and imposing its will on its rulers and humiliating its people;
2. The Crusader-Zionist alliance has destroyed Iraq rendering it a weak state and killing more than a million of its innocent people;
3. Besides economic and religious goals, US wars are aimed at serving the Jewish petty state and diverting attention from its occupation of Bait al-Maqdes (Jerusalem) and the killing of Muslims there.

The killing of Americans and their allies, the fatwa concludes, is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible.

The theme of both and many other Jihadi fatwas has been the suffering and humiliation of Muslims as a result of occupation and the targeting of their holy places. Al-Qaeda's propaganda ranged from encouraging Muslims to fight oppressors in Afghanistan to portraying the United States as bent on brutally dominating the Muslim world and local allied regimes as apostates (Byman 2015, 102). Therefore, the inability of Arab governments to protect Muslims and their lands against occupation is another aspect of the same theme. In fact, Al-Qaeda portrays Arab rulers as collaborators with the 'enemy'. In general, Al-Qaeda's declarations of Jihad are based on four pillars:

1. The United States and its allies are occupants of Islamic lands and should not be mistaken otherwise;
2. Through occupation and imposition of their will on Muslims, the United States and its allies are posing an imperative threat against Muslim beliefs and true identity;
3. Muslim rulers that are collaborators are unable to fulfil their duties in protecting Muslims and their holy lands;
4. Muslims have to take up arms themselves to fight the crusaders and

Zionists in defence of their holy lands and beliefs.

Reading Al-Qaeda's rhetoric in accordance with societal security theory, one can say that Muslim societies faced grave dangers targeting their lands and the very underpinnings of their beliefs (their identity as true Muslims). Still their rulers collaborated with those posing the threat instead of facing them and hence distanced their will (and identity as Muslims) from the will of their own societies. As a result of this dichotomy and because a society that loses its identity fears that it will no longer be able to live as itself (Wæver 1995, 67), Muslim societies are to shoulder the burden of protecting themselves and their identity through Jihad against the United States, its allies and collaborators.

Al-Qaeda's updated version, ISIS, added new dimensions to Al-Qaeda's rhetoric. Instead of the *Muslim we* that was to be protected by Muslim societies according to Al-Qaeda's rhetoric, ISIS narrowed the 'we' into *Sunni Muslims* perceived to be under threat. Accordingly, the source of threat has changed: Shiites first, then Western countries and those who collaborate with them. From its very beginnings in Iraq, ISIS's predecessor organisations were deeply sectarian, and six years after Zarqawi's death (2006), ISIS's operational strategy and modus operandi was very much still dominated by sectarian anti-Shia motivations (Lister 2015, 265).

The Islamic State of Iraq and its successor, ISIS, have consistently focused on the Shia and the 'near enemy' (the Iraqi and Syrian regimes, and all secular, pro-Western regimes in the Muslim world) (Gerges 2014, 340), as well as the issue of collective Takfir (disavowing others as unbelievers) of Shiites (Abu Hanieh and Abu Rumman 2015, 36–37). The far enemy, the United States and its allies, remained a second priority. As such, some argue that by scoring victories against the Iraqi government and supposed apostates like the Shi'a and 'Alawi, the Islamic State has emerged as a champion of the Sunni Muslim community (Byman 2015, 213).

According to ISIS rhetoric, Shiite politicians and elites are legitimate targets for working with the occupiers of Iraq. Zarqawi articulated a strategy of deliberately targeting the Iraqi Shi'ite community with the intention of stoking civil war (Bunzel 2015, 14). In addition, he justified killing innocents as collateral damage. Abu Abdullah Al-Muhajir, a religious figure who provided Zarqawi's organisation with a doctrinal framework, exploited the concept of *Tatarrus* (Barricading) to justify in detail the killing of innocent Muslims as collateral damage of Jihad (see Al-Muhajir ND, 192–219).

An important question remains: why do people, mainly young Muslims, listen

to Jihadists' calls and join their cause. Their recruits can be divided into two main categories: first, those who join the 'Jihad' for ideological reasons. They perceive their acts as fulfilling a religious duty and as such, they are targets of Jihadists' religious propaganda.

The second category is composed of those who seek to get rid of their limited options and gloomy future at home. To them, terrorist organisations are seen as an alternative to their current rigid situation. Therefore, whether it is corruption and venal politics in Pakistan or military dictatorship in places like Algeria and Egypt, jihadists are able to channel anger at the illegitimacy (and often incompetence and stagnation) of the regimes they oppose (Byman 2015, 213). ISIS, for instance, offers an alternative, promising wives, luxury items, and financial stability. There is an incentive of a monthly salary, food, and shelter that are basic needs individuals need to survive. These individuals tend to have fewer prospects and ISIS is able to provide for them (Tse 2016, 17).

While the first category explains the state-society dichotomy in ideological terms, the second category provides an added variable to comprehend how and why state inefficiency, as well as inability and unwillingness to deliver, is paying off in radical organisations' favour.

Additionally, the identity-based dichotomy creates yet another duality based on the gap of perceived threats. While states have their own set of threats and challenges, centred around sovereignty (Wæver 1995, 67) and regime survival, societies perceive some other issues to be threatening to their security. At times, the measures that one side takes to defend its societal security (strengthen its identity) are misperceived (or rightly perceived) by another as a threat to its own identity (Roe 2002, 73). Accordingly, an identity-based security dilemma between states and societies deems itself self-constructing.

Conclusion

Societal insecurity, stemming from historical and functional realities has emboldened the identity-based gap of states vs. societies in the Arab region. The division of the Ottoman Empire into new states without much attention to identity lines, created a historical identity challenge in those states. On the other hand, Arab ruling elites' efforts to enforce state-centred identities failed to prevent the challenge of conflicting identities. Later on, their functional inefficiencies emboldened the identity dichotomy.

As a result of threats perceived by Arab societies against their collective

identity as well as separate challenges facing each state, the state-society gap continues to challenge state identities. Collectively perceived threats create and strengthen collective frameworks intended to address those threats. And among other frameworks come radical and terrorist organisations.

In the mutual construction process, radical organisations' rhetoric and practice strengthen the state-society gap. As such, those organisations' recruitment tactics, an obvious challenge to Arab states, have worked well. The main theme of Al-Qaeda's rhetoric was to confront the external threat of the United States and Israel. Later on, Al-Qaeda in Iraq and then ISIS included and prioritised the 'internal threat' against Sunni Muslims.

Nevertheless, despite their popularity among certain circles of radicalised Arab citizens, the rates of their recruits are more telling on the role of Arab state's dysfunctionalities in their success. The poorer states with more economic and societal challenges provided Al-Qaeda and ISIS with the most Arab recruits. While the role of ideology is important, a good share of ideologically-motivated recruits came as a result of Arab states inefficiencies and inability to deliver economic and political security.

In general, there are four main conclusions to draw from this chapter: first, societal insecurity in the Arab region came as a result of both historical and functional realities, including the formation of Arab states based on the Sykes-Picot accord and the inefficiencies and dysfunctionalities of Arab governments. Second, societal insecurity and the identity gap among Arab states and societies create an additional gap in terms of threats perceived by states and those perceived by societies. Third, collectively perceived threats have created collective frameworks for reaction and attracted parts of Arab societies to act within those frameworks; one of which has been radical and terrorist organisations. Fourth, there is a mutual construction process between terrorist organisations' rhetoric and actions and the gap alienating Arab societies from their own states. Terrorist organisations' rhetoric and actions strengthen the gap on the one hand and the widened gap in turn emboldens these organisations on the other.

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3

Economic (In)security and Economic Integration in the Middle East

JOHANNES GROW

The Middle East as a region has been marked by colonial and neo-imperial foreign intervention, inter-state conflict, and sectarian violence. Historians and political scientists have demonstrated the importance of the region in terms of its resources and its strategic geopolitical significance for former German, French, and British imperial powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as the United States in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Vitalis 2002; Mitchell 2013). The events following September 11, 2001, the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the 2011 Arab Spring, the civil war in Syria, and the rise of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have continued to shape both the international and domestic politics of the nation-states and the regional organisations that make up the Middle East. In addition to the conflicts wreaking havoc in the region, the water-food-energy nexus, social and political developments, and economic challenges have also severely impacted the Middle East.

This chapter will explore the challenges this region faces in terms of its economic (in)security. It will first provide an overview of the water, food, and energy challenges facing the region as a whole. It will then examine the region's attempts at economic integration with a specific focus on the Gulf states in the Arabian Peninsula. Economists James E. Rauch and Scott Kostyshak (2009) divide the Middle East and North Africa economies into three 'Arab worlds': the 'fuel-endowed countries' (including the Gulf countries, Iraq, Algeria, and Libya), the Arab Mediterranean (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Jordan), and sub-Saharan Africa (including Yemen). This chapter will focus primarily on the 'fuel-endowed countries' and those in the Gulf

Cooperation Council (GCC): the Gulf monarchies (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), Iraq, Iran and their attempts at economic integration. This chapter will focus on the GCC because in terms of regional economic integration the Gulf States have been the most successful. At the same time, the transboundary nature of the challenges facing the GCC are an excellent illustration of the lack of regional economic integration and economic insecurity in the Middle East.

As the name of the category would suggest, one of the primary sub-regional commonalities among these 'fuel-endowed' countries is the predominance of oil and natural gas exports in their national economies. Indeed, these nation-states, particularly the Gulf kingdoms produce about 20% of the world's oil and contain 30% of the world's oil reserves (Gause 2015). Similarities among these nation-states extend not only to their economic dependency on the export of hydrocarbons but also include similar security and development concerns (Murden 2009, 130). The latter sections of this chapter will thus address some of these common developments and security challenges: continuing reliance on hydrocarbons, increasing regional and national inequality, and a growing number of unemployed young adults. In conclusion, this essay will also link the economic insecurity in the region to regional security.

Regional Economic Overview

This chapter will first briefly address the transregional economy of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). As is well known, the economy of the MENA region is dominated by a reliance on the extraction and export of hydrocarbons. Due to the predominance of oil and gas in several of the economies, especially in the GCC, this region has experienced rapid economic growth. At the same time, this economic growth is dependent – particularly in the GCC countries – on a 'rentier economy'. This specific economic model is based on government subsidised food, medical services, and energy through the wealth gained by the export of oil and gas (Mckee *et al.* 2017, 20). Problematically, the continued reliance on the rentier-state model limits the creation of strong domestic industries. In addition, because the government is the primary actor that distributes the rents, the private sector has very little room to thrive (Mckee *et al.* 2017, 20). The main rentier states and in turn the states with the highest GDP in the MENA region are Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Bahrain, Libya, Algeria. The rest of the region is made up of both middle and low-income states, which lack the large hydrocarbon resources found in the 'fuel-endowed states' (Mckee *et al.* 2017).

The regional predominance of the rentier economic model thus also generates a regional inequality among MENA states. According to Alvaredo and Piketty (2014), this high inequality at the regional level can be traced back to high inequality per capita GNP. For example, some of the richest states in terms of GDP per capita belonging to the MENA region, such as Qatar, exist side-by-side with some of the lowest-income states, such as Yemen and Sudan (Alvaredo and Piketty 2014; Mckee *et al.* 2017, 21). As an illustration of regional inequality, recent research has pointed to the labour market as an illuminating example. Specifically, the movement of young professionals from states like Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to the GCC states in order to fill service jobs in medicine, engineering, education, and business (Mckee *et al.* 2017, 23). This movement of young people thus limits the potential economic growth of the origin states thereby increasing regional inequality among states. By extension, the movement of young professionals into the higher-paying jobs in the GCC is further exacerbated by the gap between the formal and informal job markets and the reliance on the public sector for job creation (Mckee *et al.* 2017, 24).

In addition to the above transregional economic challenges, the region also faces increasing insecurity in terms of food, water, and energy. Thus, to further home in on economic problems facing this region and the GCC group, this chapter will now specifically examine the 'water-food-energy security nexus' that challenges most of the states within this region.

The Water-Food-Energy Nexus in the Middle East

Before analysing economic (in)security in a specific sub-region in the Middle East, I will first address problems that plague the Middle East region as a whole: namely water, food, energy insecurity, and lack of crucial infrastructure. As food, water, and energy demands remain unmet due to an increasing population, economic growth, and urbanisation, conflict both within and between states become more likely. According to Sullivan (2013), this 'water-food-energy security nexus' could drastically affect both food and water security in the future (11). The reasons behind water, food, and energy insecurity are manifold; these problems range from the desert climate to the gross misuse of existing renewable fresh water resources. Climate change and conflict throughout the region also continues to threaten both food and water supplies (UNDP 2011).

An investigation into the land morphology of the region reveals that the region is one of the most arid in the world. Because of this arid desert climate, the region suffers from a lack of rainfall and high evaporation rates. The drier

climate impacts both the availability of renewable water resources as well as the production of agricultural products. According to a recent *UNESCO* report on 'Water for a Sustainable World', three countries in the Middle East – Iran, Turkey, and Iraq – contain renewable water resources above 1,000 cubic meters per capita. The renewable water resources in four additional countries – Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt, and Syria – exceed 500 cubic meters but remain below 1,000 cubic meters per person per year. The remaining countries in the MENA region fall below the 500 cubic meter cut-off (WWDR 2015). On top of inadequate renewable surface water resources and weak institutional oversight, a lack of water governance has resulted in increasing water insecurity throughout the region. Newer challenges such as decreasing water quality, water misuse, droughts and floods, climate change, and transboundary conflicts have all added further complexity to an already challenging water situation.

The water-food-energy nexus challenges in the GCC group provide an illuminating example. The Gulf monarchies have very little renewable surface and subsurface water resources. On average, in this sub-region the per capita renewable water resource supply amounts to 92 cubic meters per capita. Kuwait, for example, can only provide seven cubic meters of fresh water per year. Saudi Arabia contains about 874 cubic meters (Aidrous 2014). Yet, due to a surge in population growth and urbanisation, the consumption of fresh water in the Gulf States has spiked dramatically (Aidrous 2014). In response, governments have become reliant on the extraction of non-renewable fresh water from subsurface aquifers and the expensive desalination of sea water to meet demand. The GCC economies now make up almost 50% of the global desalination capacity (World Bank 2017).

While the World Bank does concede that desalination could potentially alleviate some future water shortfalls, it does come with a price (World Bank 2012). The desalination process requires a large energy input, which is largely dependent on fossil fuel consumption. The problem is that as the price of fossil fuels continues to fluctuate, desalination becomes more and more expensive as long as it requires fossil fuels to operate efficiently (World Bank 2012). In fact, a recent article reports that as the populations grow in the GCC states, water will become a more expensive geostrategic resource than oil. One ton of fresh water is already more expensive than a ton of oil (Aidrous 2014). Despite the expense, the price of water in this part of the world is heavily subsidised by the government and there is very little institutional oversight and control over its use. These two factors in turn contribute to the over-consumption and misuse of this scarce resource by wealthy citizens who build private pools, golf courses, and gardens in states like Kuwait. Yet, while government water subsidies primarily help the middle and wealthy classes, people living in poverty in the Gulf sub-region gain little benefit (UNDP 2011).

Droughts, for example, primarily affect those populations who live in rural areas beyond water and energy infrastructure and are thus dependent on wells, which can dry up (Sullivan 2013).

Food insecurity in the GCC states reflects a similar disproportionate distribution. It is a distribution that primarily benefits the wealthy and the middle classes but hurts poorer segments of the population. The MENA region is a large food importer in part due to the lack of arable land and declining water supply. While the region continues to see a population boom and thus an increase in demand for food, the local production of food cannot keep up (World Bank 2017). To ensure food security, governments have expanded the production of agricultural crops that consume a large amount of fresh water. Yet while the agricultural sector consumes a large percentage of available water throughout the Arabian Peninsula, in states like Saudi Arabia the agriculture sector only contributes five per cent of GDP but utilises 88% of fresh water resources (Aidrous 2014). The UNDP report argues that this water consumption is ultimately untenable. As the region becomes more dependent on desalination, the local production of food becomes unsustainable (UNDP 2011).

Thus, as water becomes scarcer and the price of hydrocarbons continues to fluctuate, water and food insecurity could possibly lead to further conflict in the region (UNDP 2011). A growing population and a concomitant increase in demand for both food and water will continue to put pressure on the Gulf economies. Conflict between states for dwindling resources also contributes to increasing economic insecurity (Sullivan 2013).

Finally, the lack of critical infrastructure for private and public investment throughout the region continues to stunt economic growth. The central governments in the GCC states have neglected to develop their respective rural and peripheral areas. The exclusion of these areas in general development programs has only continued to exacerbate inequality and poverty (Sika 2012, 11). Indeed, the UNDP (2011) report notes that programs focused on the construction of infrastructure (roads, rural clinics, affordable housing, water supply networks) are critical for sustained economic growth (100). Furthermore, important infrastructure like desalination plants and hydrocarbon production plants are vulnerable to conflict and war, which could potentially disrupt GCC economies. Keeping the above regional problems in mind, the rest of this chapter will now examine the economic (in)security of the GCC economies beginning with a short historical overview of Middle Eastern economic integration.

Economic Integration in the Middle East

Although the Middle East region does indeed share Islamic and pan-Arab transnational ideas that have been co-opted by political elites in an attempt to unify and integrate the region, the post-colonial Middle East nonetheless remains a heterogeneous region caught between Sunni and Shi'a, tribal Islam and the post-colonial nation-state, as well as territorial disputes, and the Israel-Palestine struggle (Ahmed 2013). In the twentieth century, political leaders like Egyptian Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser – under the banner of pan-Arabism and anti-imperialism – sought to promote a regional identity in response to European imperialism and colonialism. Yet, following the defeat of Nasser in the 1967 war against Israel, the Arab unity movement declined and left a fractured region made up of warring post-colonial Arab states (Hudson 1999, 19). As put forward by Cummings and Hinnebusch (2013), the clash between regional pan-Islamic or pan-Arabic supranational structures (e.g., Islamic empires) and the imposed European nation-state poses a fundamental challenge to the legitimacy of the political elite in post-colonial Arab states (125). In the present, regional cooperation in the MENA region is ostensibly based on non-intervention in each other's domestic affairs (Hudson 1999, 13).

As a result, in contrast to more economically integrated regions, like the European Union (EU), the 'Middle East is one of the least integrated areas in the world' (de Albuquerque 2016, 17). According to de Albuquerque (2016), this lack of formal economic integration is in part due to two factors: Arab state-driven nationalist economies and the fear of the political elite in smaller states that have concerns that countries like Egypt under Nasser or Saudi Arabia could potentially utilise regional organisations to dominate the region (18). Yet, that is not to argue that there have not been any attempts by the political elite in the Middle East to establish more formal economic arrangements – especially among the Gulf kingdoms.

In the 1970s and the 1980s, the political elite in the Middle East embarked on major economic liberalisation, privatisation, and deregulation projects in their respective states. In the past two decades, further trade liberalisation continued as more states in the Middle East joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Rauch and Kostyshak (2009) point out that between 1970 and 2006, the 'three Arab worlds', in comparison to countries in Latin America and Southern Europe, gained considerably in the three categories that make up the Human Development Index (HDI): life expectancy, educational attainment, and income. Between those decades, both the Arab Mediterranean and the fuel-endowed nation-states outpaced southern Europe in both life expectancy and income. For example, by 2006, life expectancy in

the fuel-endowed states was higher than in southern Europe (Rauch and Kostyshak 2009).

In addition to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), 23 states joined the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA), which encompasses a number of commodities. States have attempted to cooperate in smaller sub-regional organisations over the decades as well. Two sub-regional organisations include states that are in geographical proximity to each other and have historical economic ties: the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) – which includes Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Mauritania – and the Mashreq that includes five states: Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Libya. The oldest and most successful economic and trading bloc within the GAFTA is the Gulf Cooperation Council (Boughanmi, Al-Shammaki, and Antimiani 2016).

In May 1981, six Arab Gulf states decided to form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The six original member states – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates – established the GCC in response to the fall of the Shah in Iran, the resulting Islamic Revolution, and the Iran-Iraq war (Abdulla 1999, 151). While the six member states have achieved some agreement over security policies, especially in response to the 2011 Arab Spring, the exact nature and goals of the GCC remains rather ambiguous (Abdulla 1999, 160). The stated goals of the GCC, according to its charter, do not add more specificity: 'to effect coordination, integration, and interconnection between member states' (Charter of the GCC). Neither a strict security community, a political alliance, nor an economic integration venture, the GCC remains a loose collaboration among nation-states that share Islam as a religion, Arabic as a common language, a similar tribal heritage, and a common economic dependence on the export of oil and natural gas (Abdulla 1999, 160). The economic structure of the GCC has over the years undergone changes in an attempt to deepen the arrangement among its members. In 1983, the GCC established a free-trading zone that exempted local products and services from tariffs and taxes and, since the end of 2008, member states have also established a common market; in 2015, the GCC also put a customs union into effect (Karns et. al 2015, 232).

These economic measures have resulted in some success. According to an *Al Jazeera* report, in 2013 the combined economies of GCC member states had an aggregate GDP of $1.62 trillion, which made the sub-region the twelfth largest economy in the world (Abdulqader 2015). The GCC was also the fourth largest exporter in the world after China, the US, and Germany; these exports consisted primary of crude oil, natural gas, and other petrochemical products (Abdulqader 2015). That said, these economic accomplishments have been quickly overshadowed by a drop in world oil prices between 2014

and 2016, the civil war in Syria, the war in Yemen, and the conflict with the Islamic State. According to the World Bank, 2016 saw the growth of GCC economies slow to 1.6% as the problems of the oil sector affected other economic sectors (World Bank 2018). Indeed, the Middle East as a region has experienced a growth rate of less than three per cent in the last five years. This slower than expected growth rate may continue as the GCC economies face unstable global oil prices (World Bank 2018). Indeed, the long-term economic outlook for this region will continue to deteriorate if the Gulf oil-producers do not further diversify their economies (ISA 2018; Stevens 2016).

The GCC nonetheless remains the most successful attempt at regional integration in the MENA region. Other regional attempts beyond the GCC have largely failed. The EU – due to its proximity and historical connections to the MENA region – has also attempted to promote regional and economic integration in the Middle East through various policy measures with non-EU states. In 1995, the EU and the Mediterranean states (Algeria, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Israel, Syria, Jordan, Malta, Lebanon, Tunisia, Greek Cyprus, and Turkey) established the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), which sought to promote economic integration and stability between the EU and the MENA region. The failure of the EMP, in part due to the collapse of the 2000 Israeli-Palestinian peace process, cleared the way for former French President Sarkozy's proposed Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Envisioned as a continuation of the EMP, the UfM also floundered on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and therefore failed to further integrate the two regions (Yildiz 2012, 122).

In 2003–2004 (renewed in 2011) the EU launched the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The goals outlined by the ENP included promotion of the EU's normative agenda: the spread of democracy, human rights, and good governance in the MENA region (Del Sarto 2016, 218). Yet, even prior to the Arab Spring, Brussels worked with the authoritarian rulers in the MENA periphery in an effort to stabilise and secure the region (Del Sarto 2016, 225). Brussels' initial failure to respond to the Arab Spring in 2011 only further highlights the ineffective and paradoxical nature of the ENP.

Yet, despite the apparent successes of the GCC relative to other attempts at regional integration, the sub-regional institution remains divided by internal strife among its members. The proposed common currency, the Gulf Dinar, remains in limbo after the UAE rejected the common monetary project because of the plan to locate the central bank in the capital of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, instead of Abu Dhabi (Ulrichsen 2017). In another instance, the monarchies in the GCC, led by Saudi Arabia, in a response to the events of

the Arab Spring sought to establish thicker political and security ties with the monarchies in Morocco and Jordan in order to counter the protests and demonstrations that overthrew established dictators in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia. Sean Yom (2014) argues that the eight monarchies that exist in the Middle East represent an epistemic community ungirded by a 'pan-royal identity', which sees itself as under threat by these protests. In 2011, Saudi Arabia's then-King Abdullah led the initiative by proclaiming that the GCC needed a 'Gulf Union' with a regional integrated security and military policy. Yet, despite yet two more GCC summit sessions in Bahrain (2012) and Kuwait (2013), King Abdullah's envisioned integrated political union did not materialise (Ulrichsen 2017). While the GCC sub-region is not as economically or politically integrated as some other regions in the world, the nation-states within this sub-region face similar problems. The rest of this essay will examine two problematic areas: hydrocarbon dependence and the confluence of high inequality and increasing youth unemployment.

The Decline of Oil Wealth in the Middle East

One of the enduring economic problems in this sub-region is its economic dependence on the export of hydrocarbons. The Middle East contains half of the world's oil and gas reserves and thus has been and remains a crucial strategic and geopolitical region marked by foreign interventions, which have sought to control the production of oil (Tagliapetra 2017). Yet, as the global energy market turns toward renewable energy sources, oil reserves begin to dwindle, and low-carbon emission technologies gain popularity in response to climate change, the economies of the primary oil-exporting nation-states in the GCC face a steep challenge. This section will briefly go over the history of oil in the Middle East and then detail the current challenges facing the region due to its reliance on the export of oil.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Western European empires, and later the United States helped transform the MENA region into a key node in the global energy circuit. During the latter half of the twentieth century, and as British and French imperial power declined, the United States' power expanded throughout the Middle East, premised on partnerships between state power and Western oil companies (Vitalis 2002). The turning point in the production of crude oil was the end of the Second World War. The meeting between Franklin D. Roosevelt and the future founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 'Abd al-'Aziz Ibn Saud, onboard the USS *Quincy* in 1945 sealed the fateful relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia, thereby cementing the role of the United States in the Middle East (Jones 2012; Vitalis 2002).

From 1940 to the 1970s, Middle Eastern states followed the general economic global trend that stressed a developmentalist model, which emphasised what Tarik Yousef (2004, 92) terms the 'interventionist-redistributive model'. In this narrative, it was the state's responsibility to intervene in the national economy to address social and economic ills. Important for oil-exporting states in the Middle East in terms of this model were the increasing oil revenues, which allowed these states to sustain their welfare systems. According to Yousef (2004, 95), 'For major oil producers like Algeria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, oil revenues permitted the creation of vast welfare systems that served as mechanisms for the distribution of oil wealth to citizens'. The tremendous wealth generated by oil exports allowed, at least between 1950 and 1970, for 'unprecedented levels of economic growth' (Yousef 2004, 96). This growth was in part caused by government investment in infrastructure, education, health, and state-owned businesses. Yet, by 1980 a more competitive international economy, weak oil prices, and a reduction in the demand for migrant labour marked the roots of an economic crisis (Yousef 2004).

To raise oil prices, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela met in Baghdad and established The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). OPEC's importance would become clear following the 1973 October War in which Egypt launched a surprise attack on the Israeli military in order to capture the Sinai Peninsula. As a response to the US's support of Israel, Saudi Arabia and other oil-producers nationalised the oil production and pricing and enacted an embargo on oil export, thereby driving up the price (Jones 2012, 211). Yet, in the 1980s and 1990s the region underwent a period of economic trade liberalisation, privatisation, and deregulation under the supervision of international monetary institutions and structural adjustment policies in response to the 1980s debt crisis. While, as Hanieh notes (2016) there were some protests against some of these austerity measures, the neoliberal policies that were popular outside of this region were implemented by Middle Eastern governments throughout the region (Hanieh 2016).

In the following decades, further conflict among nation-states in the Middle East and foreign intervention damaged oil production infrastructure in the region. The 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, the 1990-1991 Gulf War, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and the subsequent Global War on Terror allowed regimes throughout the Middle East to both suppress dissent in the name of fighting terrorism and request more international resources to do so (Dahi 2011). More recently, lower oil prices in 2014 – from a high of $115 per barrel in 2013 to under $40 per barrel in 2014 – as well as the conflicts currently enveloping the region have led to slower growth in all of the major oil-exporting countries (Ghafar 2018). A recent World Bank report forecast that the GCC's economy will grow by 2.7% in 2020; furthermore, according to the

same report, Iran, the second largest economy in the region, will grow by 4.3% by 2020 (World Bank 2018).[1] Despite the more optimistic report on GDP growth in the region, the GCC's continued dependence on oil-exports remains a problem. As per a recent *International Strategic Analysis* report, the wealthiest oil and gas-exporting countries still account for 62% of the region's GDP (ISA 2018). Thus, because earlier attempts at diversifying their economies away from oil have failed, the volatility of the global oil-market nonetheless puts the GCC economies at risk.

In response to the decline in oil prices, several of the GCC member states released economic strategic plans that outline economic diversification strategies. Generally, these plans emphasise increased private investment in the economy, the generation of jobs, and the creation of more opportunities for education and innovation (Tagliapetra 2017, 16). The Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia and his group of advisors recently released an example of one of these plans named the 'Saudi Vision 2030'. This strategic plan focused on moving the Saudi Arabian economy away from its dependence on oil, improving the life of its citizens, and increasing the role of the private sector in the national economy. In actuality, the diversification of Saudi Arabia's economy is perhaps more difficult than perhaps suggested by the 2030 plan. As Ghafar (2018) points out, about 90% of Saudi Arabia's export earnings and 42% of its GDP are still dependent on oil and oil-related industries. Ghafar (2018) further argues that a weakness of the 2030 plan is its lack of consideration for the political costs of the plan on citizens. These political costs become more apparent as the food-water-energy nexus is disrupted. As demonstrated by the conflict in Syria, food and water insecurity can act as factors that can lead to civil war (Sullivan 2013).

Inequality and Youth Unemployment

Discontent with the ruling classes and authoritarian governments in the Middle East came to a head in 2011 as the Arab Spring uprisings overthrew authoritarian leaders in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. While the Arab Spring uprisings primarily involved the autocrats of the Arab Republics who undertook economic reforms under the auspices of the IMF and the World Bank, which boosted their economies but undermined their legitimacy, the GCC group was largely spared. Two of its poorest members, Bahrain and Oman, also experienced demonstrations that protested pervasive corruption, wealth inequality, and limited political rights (Feiler 2013, 112). This section will first examine how the Gulf kingdoms avoided the same fate as their

[1]   Note, the World Bank made this forecast before the US withdrawal of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on May 8, 2018. The reintroduction of sanctions by the Trump administration may lower the expected growth of Iran's economy.

neighbours. It will then examine the transregional economic problems, specifically youth unemployment and inequality, that continue to trouble the region.

According to Galip Daly (2017), the Gulf monarchies were able to withstand the Arab Spring by employing a three-pronged strategy: aid packages and development, crackdowns, and a counter-revolution. In other words, wealthy GCC members like Saudi Arabia increased their domestic social welfare packages in order to stave off uprisings. This first strategy is just a more extreme version of what a 2011 UN report on *Arab Development Challenges* terms 'rent-governance'. Or, put differently, the social contract between the political elite and the citizens in the Gulf monarchies is based on the exchange of certain political rights and freedoms for social welfare policies, low or no taxation, and healthcare (UNDP 2011). In this economic model, the state uses rent (oil in this case) to undergird the legitimacy of the ruling class through redistributive measures (Sika 2012, 10). In addition to this domestic policy, wealthy GCC members were also offered 'development packages' worth billions of dollars to non-GCC monarchies, Jordan and Morocco, so that these kingdoms could also prevent social unrest (Yom 2016). The second strategy consisted of cracking down on social media and political groups while concomitantly increasing welfare benefits. The last part of the strategy involved the monarchs in Saudi Arabia and UAE who attempted to launch a regional counter-revolution against the Arab Spring uprising.

Although the Gulf kingdoms did avoid the uprisings that toppled the autocrats in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, the decline of this sub-region's oil wealth may require this region to renew their social contract with their respective populations. The Gulf region faces several problems that may impact future policy decisions. The Middle East's extreme inequality in conjunction with a high-number of unemployed youth continues to hurt this region economically. According to 'The World Inequality Report 2018', the inequality in the Middle East is the highest in the world. The report claims that between 1990 and 2016 the top ten per cent in the region enjoyed 60-66% of the wealth in the region. Conversely, the bottom 50% only accumulates 10% of the regional wealth (Alvaredo *et al.* 2018, 131). This report demonstrates the contradictory nature of the GCC economies. While these economies are some of the richest in the world, their levels of poverty and inequality are some of the highest among their respective poor citizens.

The origin of this high inequality lies in the ownership of oil and those who can transform it into wealth (Alvaredo *et al.* 2018, 131). During the growth period in the 1970s, the GCC states never truly built a true developmentalist state. Instead, Dahi argues that 'such states are able to use public investment

to create an economy characterised by a 'set of assets based on knowledge, exploited by skilled labor' with "highly selective meritocratic recruitment'" (Dahi 2011, 3). In other words, the Gulf kingdoms, much like the other nation-states in the MENA region, rely on a 'rentier state model'. In the GCC countries, the economic systems are defined by 'high political control over the economy' with informal connections between rulers and the business elite (Sika 2012, 9). The Gulf monarchies rely on corporatist and client networks that provide stability and political control for the monarchies who in return provide socio-economic development for the rising business class (Sika 2012).

Yet, as the wealth from oil resources continues to decline, the current model of governance in the Persian Gulf states may change. As the 'Vision 2013' demonstrates, the policy makers and monarchs of Saudi Arabia look to guide the economy away from its dependence on oil. A *Chatham House* report notes that if indeed the redistributive policies employed by the monarchy are limited in the future, the ruling elite will need to reestablish its legitimacy. In that report, Kinninmont (2017) argues that this search for a new foundation for its legitimacy 'could mean greater consultation and public involvement in decision-making, or, perhaps more likely, emphasise the importance of royal rule as a bulwark against insecurity, terrorism, and chaos, while maintaining or intensifying an authoritarian mode of rule'. The uncertain economic future and the high inequality in the Persian Gulf also poses problems for the large number of youths in these countries.

Much like in the countries that were at the centre of the Arab Spring, the Gulf monarchies have a high rate of youth unemployment (Feiler 2013). Wary of the Arab Spring and the large number of youths who participated in the uprisings, the governments in this region are increasingly aware of this predicament. According to the *2016 UN Human Development Report*, youths between the ages of 15 and 29 comprise about 30% of the region's population, or about 105 million people. The report further notes that a rise in conflict, political instability, a lack of decent jobs, and a decline in wages is forcing youth to temporarily or permanently leave their countries of origin (UNDP 2016). Although the GCC countries have the lowest unemployment in the Middle East, the GCC members have high unemployment among their respective national youth (Sika 2012). For instance, the unemployment for people between the ages of 15 and 24 in Saudi Arabia is 30%. Problematically, the predominance of the oil sector has resulted in a weak private sector that does not have enough available jobs to absorb the increasing number of unemployed (Al-khatteeb 2015). Moreover, when youths do enter the job market they are marginalised by individuals who have connections to the political elite (Sika 2012).

Conclusion

Although strategic economic plans, like the 'Vision 2030', do acknowledge these problems, it remains to be seen whether the GCC states can actually address increasing inequality, unemployment, and a decline in oil wealth. While these problems do transcend national borders in the Persian Gulf region, the GCC remains ineffective at addressing these economic issues. Moreover, the 'water-food-energy security nexus' and its challenges remain integral for both economic and national/regional security throughout the region (Sullivan 2013). In sum, economic insecurity both nationally and sub-regionally in turn influences the security of the Middle East as a whole.

Most recently, tensions between members of the GCC group – Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates on one side versus Qatar on the other – threaten the unity of the regional organisation. Ulrichsen (2017) reports that the standoff between Qatar and its neighbours resulted from Qatari leaders' and the Qatar-based *Al Jazeera*'s support of both the Arab Spring uprisings in Syria, Yemen, and North Africa and of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist organisations. Qatar's support of the Arab Spring and organisations like the Muslim Brotherhood are problematic for Saudi Arabian policy makers who view Islamist organisations and Iran as regional security threats. In response to Qatar's support of 'terrorism', the Saudi-led coalition, which included Bahrain, Egypt, and the UAE, launched a land, air, and naval blockade of Qatar Ulrichsen (2017).

As the 'Qatar crisis' continues, possible economic and security unity continues to be questioned by the inability of the GCC to align the interest of its members. Geopolitical clashes among GCC states and its neighbours continue to be guided by national priorities rather than regional or transnational interests. Moreover, conflicts increase economic insecurity, which in turn make conflict both within and between states more likely.

That said, a common thread in terms of regional security in the GCC states does exist. The United States continues to play a vital role in the Persian Gulf region. In terms of regime security of the Gulf monarchies following the Arab Spring, Jones (2012) notes that the leaders of the closest allies of the US in the region – Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Bahrain – were more than willing to turn US purchased weapons on their own people. Indeed, the US's continued support of these regimes and military domination in the region represents just another factor that continues to undermine any attempt at regional and economic integration. Whether the economic and regional security situation of the GCC states will improve in the future remains to be seen.

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4

Environmental (In)Security in the Middle East

ADRIANA SEAGLE

Studying the environment in the Middle East is a cultural and linguistic provocation and an opportunity to reflect on the region's capacity to maintain economic growth and meet the security expectations of 500 million people. The Middle East deserves attention because of existential threats to water, land, food, and population. It has been argued that the environment is an object to be secured and a source of security risk informed by *who* and *what* (Barnett 2013, 191). Security is about access to resources and energy, relationships, and cooperation. As this chapter demonstrates, the availability of resources matters as much as the quality of relationships within a region to protect or degrade the environment.

The purpose of the chapter is to provide an overview of the major environmental problems in the Middle East illustrating the role regional governments play in both causing and trying to solve environmental problems. The first section of the chapter focuses on water scarcity as a security issue and a potential field for innovation, research, and technology. The next section is a discussion of water distribution as an inter-state/conflict problem, and the last section discusses land degradation, pollution, and food security as threats to health.

Water Scarcity: A Security Issue

Water is a trans-boundary security problem influenced by availability, use, and conservation. Israel, a semi-arid country, has viewed water scarcity as a security risk since 1948. Scarcity associated with water, land, and natural resources are linked to regional climate and human-made activities including lack of innovation, loss of traditional knowledge, poor understanding of the

environment and its destruction. In the Middle East, water scarcity is a problem for all states, a problem of context, culture, and sustainability. While Israel securitises water in the military and economic sectors pressing the population to value water via price increases and education, Iran subsidises water and appeases social conflict in the societal sector. Israel 'should have been a water basket case' because of dryland and population increase (Schuster 2017). Yet, Israel's preemptive action on social responsibility, and water management approaches proved successful. 'Complete separation of water consumption from Mother Nature', prevented water consumption on false appearances. Through a holistic water management approach securitised on state's survival, Israel taught society the importance of water conservation through state led projects and TV commercials i.e. 'not to be a pig in the shower', reused treated sewage for farming, finding and fixing leaks, engineering crops, discouraging gardening, making efficient toilets mandatory, and pricing water high to discourage waste (Schuster 2017). Some argue that Israel could afford to invest in water management because of wealth and power. Smith (2009) argues that, 'in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, Palestinians drill at 70 meters deep while Israeli at 300 to 400 meters, and while Israel claims this as a sustainability measure, Palestinians view it as resource capture' (Smith 2009, 1).

The realisation that water was a natural and human-made crisis helped Israel formulate a water saving plan, develop technology and organisational change to increase sustainability. By revisiting the traditional watering method, Israel reclaimed control over water. Investments in public and private research and technology perfected water desalinisation from the Mediterranean Sea and enhanced water and food security (Cohen 2017). Netafirm, responsible for irrigation technology claims that micro-irrigation saves water because the focus is on the plant not the soil (Schuster 2017). Technology is an opportunity for countries to use and manage water, reduce food prices, and use less fertiliser and pesticides. Israel leads in water management technology and food security and is willing to share knowledge and technology in water management. Israel has an economy that is less water dependent. Some suggest that the model cannot be replicated in Syria, Egypt, and Jordan because of their farming populations (Smith 2009, 1).

Iran has a reactionary approach to water security, risking the survival of the nation and the state. Iran subsidises water, masking a history of missed opportunities to diversify the agricultural sector, allowing pistachio farmers to exploit ground water with no environmental considerations. Experts note that, 'within the past 50 years, Iran has been using 70% of its ground water supply to support agriculture' (Darabi 2016). Geographical and climatic conditions pressured Iran to use 'more than 90% of its water in the agricultural sector'; however, a more proactive approach involving the population would have

prevented Iran from 'water bankruptcy'. having lost water completely in Lake Urmia and the Zayandeh River (Madani 2016). Lake Urmia however, left behind a 'tsunami of salt' ready to spread across borders by wind and damage as Darabi (2016) suggests, not only the agriculture of the neighbouring countries, but also the health of the population. The salt issue illustrates an interlinked crisis demanding immediate collective actions based on common shared interests from all power actors. Drought from water scarcity in Iran causes social tensions between farmers, who believe political officials are corrupted by bribes to divert water elsewhere, and other segments of the population who feel they must spend more money on water because of farmers (Dehghanpisheh 2018).

Pistachio farmers, the most impacted and displaced population, requires training and re-integration in the economic and social sectors. Iranian cities are expected to receive more of the displaced people and to deliver water, food and other goods and services to millions of new inhabitants. Technology plays a critical role in reaching and teaching about water scarcity, as half of the population is under 35 and technologically connected, which makes it easier for the government and NGOs to reach and teach. Hashtaging images of great social impact brings water scarcity awareness to the younger generation and strengthens social cohesion. However, despite technology, the population seems at the beginning of the learning curve, not reaching yet the 'conservation mindset', because of a decline in government legitimacy. Young Iranians continue to learn about water management through image association and group visits at places once iconic, vibrant, and full of water. The disappearance of the recreational sites at the lake or the river brings people into a state of nostalgia-indication that environmental destruction has an emotional impact.

How did Iran reach this stage? Public officials suggest that, 'these are the effects of international sanctions policies and their great pressure on the economy and the food security' (Darabi 2016). Pressure on rivers, lakes, and ground water left Iran in water and food ruin. The government is partnering with the UNDP in sustainability projects to retrain farmers and reinvent agriculture with new water conserving farming techniques, including rotation of cultures and transportation of water with better equipment that prevents water leakage. The strategies extend time to aquifers to replenish water naturally and prevent the formation of sink holes. Prioritising and subsidising the sprinkle irrigation system against the flooding technique helps farmers increase agricultural production, reduce water consumption, and costs for pesticides and fertilisers. 'Iranian leaders blame the water management policies of neighbouring countries, the presence of US forces in the region, climate change, and overlooking corruption, mismanagement and wrong government policies' (Majidyar 2018). Iran shares water with 12 neighbouring

countries and despite 'diplomacy and soft power' the potential for regional conflict is high (Majidyar 2018). Regional powers can guide Iran productively toward preserving the environment by pursuing regional cooperation versus confrontation. According to Iranians, 'political sympathy from Europe with Iran's nuclear deal is "not enough"; concrete economic steps should be considered' (China Daily 2018).

The latest developments indicate that oil prices are falling fast because of Saudi Arabia's intentions to meet the global oil demand (Petroff 2018). Conflict between Iran and its neighbours will begin from water scarcity and the decline in oil prices. The nuclear deal also has spillover effects on the environment, water and food security. Power hierarchies and the global power dynamic can influence regional tensions between friends and friends and between friends and foes. Within the current environment, new alliances are expected. Rouhani knows that dealing with the environment is no longer a problem of Iran, and the fact that Turkey is working on 22 dam projects could have destructive implications on the Euphrates and Tiger Rivers. Turkey and Afghanistan claim that consultation over projects is not a matter of regional cooperation. Afghanistan accused Iran of being rogue and supporting insurgent groups versus participating in helping Afghanistan thrive environmentally, socially, and economically. Iran however, ponders over how building 22 dams and 19 power plants will not threaten water in Iran. 'Turkey is building dams on the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, curtailing the flow of water and taking a high toll on Iran's environment' (Financial Tribune 2017).

Water Distribution and Potential for Interstate Conflict

Forecasts indicate that 'water will be the source of next wars' and Israel will win the fight against Palestinians over common water sources in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (Asser 2010). The relationship between Israel and Jordan will be affected by the appropriation of water from the Jordan River and the frictions from the Red-Dead project. Environmental threats emerge from geographical and climate conditions, as well as ignorance of know-how economic development, population size, industrial pollution, and habitat loss. Water shortage is a regional problem and conflict over water may arise from interdependency, overexploitation, pollution, gap between supply and demand, expanding populations, water management, conservation and recycling, as well as lack of trust and misunderstanding among parties.

Israel's water and power hegemony in the region cannot be denied; however, evidence shows Israel approaching water security with research, water management, and desalinisation technologies. In contrast, Jordan approached scarcity through rationing and criminalisation of water use for anything other

than drinking, personal and domestic use (Namrouqa 2017). Jordan opened its first desalinisation plant in 2017 and hopes to meet Aqaba's water security by 2035 (TJ 2017). The rationing approach, however, does not seem to build water consciousness. Whereas the Jordanian government calls it 'water rationing day', regular people call it 'water day', a day of water indulgence and household chores celebration (Nahhas 2015). Jordan is the second poorest water country in the region and attributes water shortages to drought and population growth. Existing disagreements over Lake Tiberias point to issues of water management, decision making, and technology. Although in the water security sector, mutual interests are clear, mutual gains are to be established.

As regional power, Israel feels that it has a say on 'how to use' water (Levitt, 2014). At this time, Syria is busy fighting its civil war, but historically, 'Syria has built more than 40 dams along the Jordan', and expectations are for farmers to turn on the taps for irrigating crops (Cooke 2017). On reneging previous deals and agreements, Jordanians feel that Israel uses water share agreements for political gains (Namrouqa, 2018). Palestinians claim asymmetric appropriation, suppression to developing technology, drilling, demand over water quantity and quality (Lazarou, 2016). They feel that their human dignity is attacked, and their health and hygiene are at risk. As mediator, the EU and other global actors are building a desalination plant in the Gaza Strip to provide drinking water to 75,000 people by 2020 (Lazarou, 2016). From the Israeli perspective, underdevelopment, lack of under-standing, and mistreatment of water by the Arab states, threatens Israel's survival (Borthwick 2010).

The Tigris, Euphrates, and Nile Rivers provide enough water for farming communities and electricity, but here the struggle over hydro-hegemony is visible. Conflict has potential to emerge from water allocation and disagreements over the technical construction of the Grand Renaissance Ethiopian Dam. As the African population is set to double by 2050, Egypt is predicted to experience water shortage by 2025. Egypt and Ethiopia claim historical and geographic rights over the Nile River, respectively. Lack of trust over the technical mega project is influencing regional stability. The other Nile member, Sudan sided with Ethiopia for cheaper electricity and flood regulation along the Nile. While for Ethiopia the dam means economic prosperity, for Egypt it is a potentially destructive factor for agriculture and economy. Ethiopians claim that, 'It's not about control of the flow, but an opportunity to develop' (Raphelson 2018). With the dam, Ethiopia hopes to provide electricity to 75 million Ethiopians. Experts on Nile politics forecast an immediate risk for Egypt to revolt 'if Egypt "loses" Sudan, the only country it has a water allocation agreement with, and the only Nile riparian country which can pose significant threats to waters flowing downstream due to its

high irrigation potential' (Raphelson 2018).

Conflicts produce obscured political shifts and distract states from securing economic opportunities. Egypt has been contemplating a dam on the Blue Nile for years; however, the Arab Spring created an opportunity for Ethiopia to start building. 'The irony is Egypt did in the 1960s exactly what Ethiopia is doing today, when it built the Aswan High Dam' (BBC 2018). An agreement between Ethiopia and Egypt will slow down tensions; however, both countries reached a stalemate over technical details (The New Arab 2018). If no consensus on common interests is reached, Egypt may take military action against Ethiopia. Also, increases in nationalist movements and heavy investments in military equipment are expected in all involved countries. The Nile case is an opportunity for international law to create new governance mechanisms to help solve water sharing disputes.

The Tigris and Euphrates illustrate a sovereignty problem of sharing water resources. Geographically, Turkey controls the Tigris-Euphrates River Basin and claims exclusive control. Iraq claims 'historical use of the Tigris and Euphrates water resources' (Wilson 2012). Potential for conflict can arise from decreasing water flow. Iraq critiques Turkey's dam and hydropower construction and decreased agricultural production. Turkey points to Iraq's poor water management practices (Wilson 2012). Since both Syria and Iraq experienced domestic conflicts their demand for water has been low. Potential for conflict may arise when Turkey threatens to regulate the water flow to Syria and Iraq, or when Turkey uses water as political leverage to obtain concessions. Turkey criticises Iraq and Syria's water management systems and experiences with cutting on/off water supplies. Increases in droughts will make Iraq vulnerable to food security and imports. Dam constructions will increase demand for new security technologies to protect against the vulnerability of future conflicts. Turkey blames decreased water flow on Iran and its dams assuring Iraq of 'sufficient quantities of water' (Al-Saleh 2018).

Iraq focuses on controlling the water message, assuring people that the water supply will last for drinking, electricity, and farming. Iraq reached a 'fair' agreement with Turkey over annual water; however, Iraq is confronted by an 'unfair and organised defamation campaign to spread panic among Iraqis' (Al-Saleh 2018). Despite promises, Turkey held back water behind the Ilisu dam earlier than promised (Aboulenein & Kucukgocmen 2018). Escalation in rhetoric is expected. Turkey's experiences with cutting off water and food supply in the Syrian-Afrin city while fighting in a military campaign against the Daesh groups. Water and food supply experiments test the risk for disease development and the spread of diseases from people drinking untreated water (Al Jazeera, 2018).

Desertification, Pollution, and Health Degradation

It has been argued that, in addition to water, land degradation and pollution threaten a region's economic and social development. Desertification or dryland degradation is prevalent for all states and is associated with overgrazing, intense cultivation, deforestation, deficient irrigation systems, and the blend between loss of traditional knowledge and lack of modern knowledge. Desertification can be natural, or caused by human-led factors influenced by climate change, the hydrological cycle, population growth, urbanisation, and food. Studies reveal that a mix of factors lead to droughts, erosion by wind and water, flash floods, and storms (Brauch 2006, 11). Land degradation is context specific and can be related to 'population growth, failure of resource management policies, and overgrazing' (NASA Land-Cover and Land-Use Change (LCLUC)). 'Almost half of Israel's agricultural land is at risk of soil erosion and when soil is washed away, only God and the sea can stop it' (Rinat 2016). Researchers find that soil erosion can arise from reasons involving heavy equipment use and grazing. In Israel, farmers are advised to either stop cultivating or cultivate only plants that enhance soil stability. Israel is committed to reversing desertification through afforestation, traditional knowledge to maintain soil fertility, 'making the most from the sun', and 'more crop per drop' (Kloosterman 2012).

Economic growth and human activity are linked to pollution and experts warn that the Middle East is running out of clean air. Some say that, 'no matter how the statistics are gathered or interpreted, the pollution picture is grim' (Cooke 2017). Air pollution threatens human health and the economy via 'death and disability' (Bajaj 2015). Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar have the highest pollution levels based on the levels of small particles of sand, dust, and chemicals in the air. The World Bank estimates the UAE to be the most polluted Middle Eastern country outpacing China and India on airborne pollutants. According to the World Bank, most Middle Eastern countries exceed threshold concentrations of particulate matter.

In the Gulf States, air pollution is considered 'the silent killer and the most toxic air on the planet' (Cooke 2017). According to a World Health Organisation (WHO) report, 'Not all air pollution originates from human activity', air quality is influenced by dust and sand storms, but the pollution in the Middle East is often a cocktail of 'high level viruses, chemicals, and even radioactive materials used by the region's military' (Cooke 2017). Because of pollution, there are high levels of health degradation. Like obesity, alcohol use, physical inactivity, air pollution is a 'threat to sustainable prosperity' costing countries billions of dollars in lost productivity and workforce (World Bank). Dust from desert storms has been associated with health deterioration

and death. Studies reveal that outdoor air pollution from desert storms kills millions of people every year. 'Egypt is the highest country with air-pollution-related deaths in the region at 35,322 deaths per year and Iraq and Saudi Arabia with 20,335 and 14,600 people, respectively' (Amer 2015).

The next problem is agricultural and involves release of ammonia from livestock and fertilisers linked to strokes and heart attacks. Pollution causes incidences of asthma in the adult population, as well as cancers, and heart and respiratory diseases. Although some air pollution results from geographical conditions and meteorological factors, most pollution is attributed to 'human hands'. Some suggest that the Arab Spring has contributed to the decline in air pollution because nitrogen dioxide has not been emitted at the same levels as when car engines and power plants worked at full capacity (Worland 2015). According to Cooke (2017), 'seawater desalinisation plants are not only power hungry, but also polluting', and Gulf countries are large oil producers. Among proposed solutions is investment in 'comprehensive networks of ground monitoring stations, considered to be the most accurate way of measuring levels of air pollution' (Cooke 2017).

Israel's increased salinisation concerns health practitioners who need more studies to confirm the link between myocardial infarction and desalinated water and magnesium supplements. As outlined by the 2017 report, 'the problem is not what is in the water, but what has been removed from water and how to best compensate, since studies point to an elevated mortality risk of myocardial infarction in areas with wide use of desalinated water' (Rinat 2017). Israel shows leadership and responsibility in protecting the environment by good water management practices and investment in research and technology. What is known in Israel about environmental exposure and health risk is that outdoor air pollution from dust storms and emissions from industry, transportation, and households influence a large spectrum of diseases. In response, Israel passed the Clean Air Law and has specific plans to reduce pollution in Haifa Bay. Although plans exist, challenges remain in areas of transboundary and transportation pollution. The 2017 health report notes that, 'despite reductions in emissions, there are still over 2,000 deaths attributable to air pollution in Israel every year and the cost associated with air pollution exceed $7 billion annually'. Proposals to create a nationwide database on the health implications of climate change are being considered.

In Iran, agricultural and energy policies negatively influence air and water pollution across the country, but especially in the ethnically diverse region of Ahwaz. It was not until recently that Iran acknowledged that dust storms originate also in Iran (Teheran 2015). Pollution is caused by abuse of the wetland for oil extraction and intense cultivations. 'Cane is not a crop native to

the region' and has been used by the Iranians with no concerns over the environment. 'Sugarcane is a crop for high water consumption, which often results in habitat loss and soil erosion' (Teheran 2015). People claim that Chinese oil companies exacerbated pollution 'with inferior technologies razing the land to find oil, hectare after hectare of the plant species around Horolazim wetland were burned and bulldozed' (Teheran 2015). Reports on water pollution indicate that the 'drinking water in Ahwaz city is so dirty and brown in color, residents joke that they don't drink water. They drink chocolate milkshake' (Assadi 2017).

Ahwaz is being presented as one of the most polluted cities in the region with pollution caused by intense oil exploitation, sand, dust and high levels of desertification. Intensive oil and sugar cane production polluted the environment to the extent that the Karoun River, the main source of drinking and irrigation water in the region, has been affected and the local marshes dried out affecting also fishing and air quality. 'Once the marshes dried out, large sandstorms regularly occurred, disrupting the lives of people at their homes and at work, and causing a major increase in cases of lung infections and cancer' (Assadi 2017). Ahwazi residents claim their water smells like sewage and have been demanding clean, drinkable water and better standards of living for quite some time though the government has resisted protestors (Amnesty International 2018). There are claims that the region has the lowest life expectancy rates in Iran, and levels of chronic respiratory diseases and cancers are above the national norms. Ahwazi residents claim government injustices target their ethnicity and this explains Iran's rerouting of the two main rivers from the region which has led to increased desertification and pollution (Hamid 2018).

The Jordan River is one of the most 'polluted promised land[s]' even 'too polluted for baptism' (Cooke 2017). Environmentally friendly organisations urged Israel's health and tourism ministries to stop baptisms due to health risk. 'Sadly, the lower Jordan River has long suffered from severe mismanagement with the diversion of 98% of its fresh water by Israel, Syria and Jordan and the discharge of untreated sewage, agricultural run-off, saline water and fish pond effluent in its place' (Friends of the Middle East).

The Food Security Complex and the Amity/Enmity Power Dynamic

The UAE and Saudi Arabia are among the major food security players in the Gulf region. Both countries focus on sustainability in all economic sectors including agriculture and food security using research and sound policies based on diversification (Zeyoudi 2018). The UAE securitised the agricultural sector on the history of its population, research, and innovation. The Vision of

2021 engages the youth in research and fisheries management. To minimise food dependency, the UAE incentivised rationing consumption, reinvention of traditional crops, and import diversification. 'Sustainable agriculture is deep-seated in our history; ancestors used our scarce water resources wisely by developing a water-well management system called Tawi, and a traditional water irrigation system known as Fala' (Zeyoudi 2018).

Unlike major food security players, Qatar imported 90% of its food from Saudi Arabia. Qatar transitioned from food insecurity to food security in almost one year. A diplomatic blockade initiated by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen was imposed on Qatar after a speech in Saudi Arabia given by the US president, urging Qatar to stop supporting terrorist organisations. In the aftermath, Qatar's food supply has been cut off for 'funding and hosting' (Hunt 2017). The suspension of the food supply including milk has been interpreted by Qatar as regionally orchestrated, 'unilateral and unjust', prompting Qatar to seek counselling at regional and international institutions including the World Trade Organisation (WTO), reporting the situation as an 'illegal siege' committed by its neighbours.

Acknowledging Iran as a regional 'Islamic power', seems to be a cause of the rift with Saudi Arabia, which feels undermined in regional competition (Hunt 2017). Qatar's diplomatic blockade shifted regional power into a triad formed by Qatar, Iran, and Turkey. Solidary with Qatar, Turkey, and Iran came with food and new ideas for trade and security partnerships. 'Cargo planes full of milk, yogurt and poultry', were deployed in less than 48 hours from Turkey in addition to military troops (Al Jazeera 2017). In the context of amity/enmity, Iran signed a transportation pact. The Turkey-Qatar route via Iran boosted friendship and trade. Qatar's regional friendship dilemma illustrates a shift in power dynamics and an opportunity to re-think food and environmental security. Although food prices shortly increased, a stronger partnership and cooperation in food and environmental security in the region has been created. 'Before the siege, we did not have any desire (to expand ties) because Qatar was importing most of its requirements from some of its neighbouring countries. But, right now, Iran has the desire and the plan to import and export to Qatar. We want to extend our business in Qatar' (Financial Tribune 2017).

The diplomatic blockade brought food and water security awareness to Qatar. Qatar plans to develop programs in 'agriculture, livestock, and fisheries to address climate change and achieve self-sufficiency and national food security' (HE Abdulaziz 2018). Through diversification of imports and investments in food security and sustainability, Qatar later refused imports from the UAE and Saudi Arabia on grounds of health security (The National

2018). On enmity/amity, Bahrain claims that since cutting diplomatic ties with Qatar, the incidence of terrorist attacks in Bahrain decreased. Known as one of the most polluted countries in the region, Qatar hosted UN climate change negotiations in Doha and displayed leadership in using and developing solar energy, as well as help others cope with food and water insecurity.

> [T]he most vulnerable in the world in the water and food production has no rivers, and no fresh water. Every single drop of water used in Qatar needs to be desalinated. Every single gram of food needs to be either imported or grown with desalinated water (Figueres 2017).

Qatar experiences water insecurity, increased desertification, and sea-level rise and is interested in food security and self-sufficiency. By 2024, Qatar hopes to produce 70% of its food requirements. As a regional power, environmentally friendly and technologically innovative Qatar securitised protection of the environment on the international Islamic identity and the Islamic effort to exchange information and experiences in the environmental sector. 'In order to effectively address the environmental risks, cooperation among the countries of the world in general, and those of Islamic world in particular, is imperative' (HE al-Rumaihi 2017).

The Joint Islamic Action seeks protection of the environment, preservation of natural resources, and sustainable development via Islamic cooperation, consultation, and dialogue on how to meet and cope with environmental challenges. The Global Dryland Alliance (GDA) illustrates a pan-Arabic dialogue focused on food security through sharing knowledge and support in case of disasters. Held by economic trade, amidst the diplomatic crisis, Jordan did not suspend economic trade with Qatar. After recalling ambassadors from Doha and Amman respectively, a Jordanian member of parliament said that, 'There is relentless parliamentary pressure on the [Jordanian] government to restore relations with Doha and develop them, while Jordan is subject to immense pressure to block it from restoring [full] relations with Qatar' (Al Jazeera 2018). The Saudi-led boycott of Qatar securitised on Qatar's support of extremist movements was viewed with scepticism by European powers who encouraged diplomatic relationships after the nine-month boycott on grounds that Qatar's regime or behaviour has not changed (Wintour 2018).

Food as a Weapon of War in Yemen

Yemen illustrates subordination of the environment to state political power. A heavily impoverished country with unravelling institutions, crippled by a civil

war and on the brink of becoming a failed state, Yemen imports 95% of its food. With a rapidly growing population, water scarcity is a major problem, as Yemen is predicted to be the first country to run out of water because of human-made environmental destruction. Experiencing social and political conflict since March 2015, access to food declined not because of food scarcity, but because of access. Yemen has a small amount of arable land available for cultivation. Despite being an agricultural country, the ability to produce its own food from agriculture is limited. Yemen has a well-developed fishing and livestock industry affected by water scarcity, disputes over land and water rights, and population displacement. International advanced projects to empower women and prevent population dislocation through access to food and income security from chickens and vegetables grown on the land and sold at the market exist. Due to conflict, international organisations lack opportunities to collect and analyse real data on food, water, and land security. Khat (a shrub with effects similar to amphetamine) farming demands 38% of the total water used by the agricultural sector is affecting the country's water and food security (Aldaghbashy, 2017).

At the societal level, Khat has been securitised on claims of 'medical benefits closer to relaxation, energy boosting, and hunger-numbing properties like coffee, alcohol and Viagra in the West' (Butters 2009). Yemenis also prefer to cultivate Khat for high profits. 'Khat is alcohol for Muslims… you can chew it and still go to prayers' (Butters 2009). Khat, as Butters (2009) notes, is expensive and costs more than food. The assault on groundwater by drilling rigs to support Khat is perceived by some as analogous to a military assault. 'I see unlicensed drilling rigs as mobile artillery batteries, and the tankers that distribute the groundwater as missiles landing in every neighbourhood. I do not think that language is too strong. What we are doing to our water resource does as much damage to our country as any military campaign ever will' (Butters 2009). High demand for Khat increases demand for water and pressure on the aquifers. Without available groundwater or technology to dig deeper wells, people prefer to collect water from rainfall or ride donkeys for kilometres to fetch water. Desalinisation is not an option for Yemen because of cost.

Food has been used in Yemen as a 'weapon of war', when people in positions of power refused humanitarian and commercial supplies (Norton 2016). On food security, Saudi Arabia and its military interventions, and naval, land, and air blockades brought the country to the brink of famine, disease, and mass starvation. Media headlines of 'emergency', 'food is scarce in the countryside', '21 million people desperately need food, water, medical and fuel supplies', 'humanitarian catastrophe', 'world's most urgent humanitarian crisis', fill the Internet pages. Expectations are that Yemeni society will eventually reach water consciousness; however, because of Khat, it is very

unlikely that this will happen soon. In Yemen, air strikes ordered by Hadi and executed by Saudi Arabia have killed more than 10,000 civilians and caused more than 14 million Yemenis (about half of the country's population) including 300,000 children to suffer severe malnutrition and starvation (Al Jazeera 2016).

Conclusion

In retrospect, vigilance, famine, and social and political conflict over water bring attention to environmental problems in the Middle East. Environmental issues are interlinked with social and political struggles at the state and regional level. Water and food security are areas in which countries have common interests. Alliances are formed between water and food secure countries (Turkey) and vulnerable countries (Qatar), or conflict arises between water and food secure countries (Saudi Arabia) and water and food insecure countries (Yemen). The Middle East is still consumed by sectarian and religious divisions and global powers continue to shape and influence amity and enmity relations. Food, water, and energy security are areas in which the possibility for governance of the common good is immediate. Common ground is usually found after a rearrangement of interests and loyalties. Rich countries like Qatar demonstrate a disposition to find, design, and implement security agreements in the environmental sector. High population growth rate, poor water management and conservation strategies, over pumping and overconsumption, lack of critical research, lack of regulations on the use of water from aquifers, and practices of resource capture are common practices influencing the security of the environment. Food and water remain resources with which to exploit power and alliances. On societal awareness of water management, more is to be learned about water, conservation, love and respect for the environment.

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Part II

VARIABLES AFFECTING MIDDLE EAST SECURITY

5

Demography, Migration and Security in the Middle East

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The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the implications of demographic factors for state and regional security in the Middle East. Population growth directly affects the sustainability of a society's resource base under the pressure of its needs and demands (Choucri and North 1995, 232). Put differently, the greater the population, the greater is the aggregate demand for resources. Yet, demographic correlates considerably affect governmental policies and constrain state actions. Since rising density in the international system is driven, among other things, by the increasing population, this, in turn, implies that people's activities are more likely to impinge on the conditions of other people's existence, both intentionally and unintentionally, and positively as well as negatively (Buzan 1991, 41). Therefore, the study of the impact of demographic factors is central to any integrated approach to security.

There is a clear link between demographic and migration trends in the sense that migration, whether in its domestic or international form, constitutes one of the most important parameters/variables when studying population growth. Consequently, significant migration flows may add to demographic pressures facing states and societies. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that migration is widely viewed by the national publics of the host states as posing threats to their national security, as well as to international stability. Thus, the security implications (military, political, societal, economic and environmental) stemming from increased migration have the potential to enhance the salience of the security implications, which result from other aspects of population growth. Most importantly, due to their securitisation, migration trends have become a matter of high domestic and international politics. Note, for example, the rise of anti-immigrant parties and increasing demand for anti-migration policies.

Although the separate literatures on migration and security have grown substantially since the early 1990s, few studies directly address the linkage between the two (Kleinschmidt 2006, 9–10; Guild and van Selm 2005, 1–2). As Nazli Choucri suggests, 'the connection between migration and security is particularly challenging and problematic because migration, security, and the linkage between the two are inherently subjective concepts' which are dependent on 'who is defining the terms and who benefits by defining the terms in a given way' (Choucri 2002, 98).

Initially, approaches to the phenomenon of migration were predominantly economic (Klein 1987; Simon 1989). However, economic approaches and explanations neglect two critical political elements: first, population movements are often encouraged or prevented by governments or political forces for reasons that may have little to do with economic conditions; and second, even when economic conditions create inducements for people to migrate, it is governments that decide whether migrants should be allowed to enter their state territories and their decisions are frequently based on non-economic considerations. Governments wish to control the entry of people and regard their inability to do so as a threat to their sovereignty and security.

However, economics does matter. Even a country willing to accept immigrants when its economy is booming is likely to alter its immigration policy in a recession. But economics alone does not explain the criteria countries employ to decide whether a particular group of migrants is acceptable or is regarded as threatening.

In reference to demographic factors, discussion within the broader security perspective focuses on three areas: first, the impact of demographic growth on the security of political, societal, economic and natural environments; second, the population structure and its relevance to the economic performance of states; and third, voluntary or forced migration of large populations within and among states.

However, demographic growth should be seen as a challenge rather than a security threat in the sense that depending on other conditions on the ground, it may either add to or detract from the security of the state. This is because the composition and distribution of populations significantly affect how demographic variables relate to other socio-political and economic phenomena (Choucri 1997, 96).

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section identifies and discusses the major demographic factors, while the second section explores recent demographic trends in the Middle East. The third section identifies the

various types of migration, examines how migrants are perceived by receiving societies, and explores the reasons behind the treatment they receive. The fourth section examines the causes of recent migration trends in the Middle East, while the final section offers a sectoral analysis of the implications of demographic trends and migration flows for domestic and regional security.

Demography and Demographic Variables

Demography is the study of human populations – their size, composition and distribution across space – and the process through which populations change (Preston *et al*. 2001; Daugherty *et al*. 1995). Births, deaths and migration are the 'big three' variables of demography, jointly producing population stability or change. In terms of spatial distribution of a country's population, the study of urbanisation trends is of special importance since major political struggles that have the potential of impacting a state's political and societal security tend to begin in cities before they spread into the rural areas.

In terms of their relevance to security, one of the most important aspects of demography includes the composition of national societies in terms of race, ethnicity and religion as well as in relation to their foreign-born population. As mentioned earlier in this volume, population composition is of special significance for the development of the *state-nation* where the management of relations among social groups is imperative for ensuring the socio-political cohesion of the state.

Lastly, of major importance is the study of 'demographic transition', meaning transition from high to low levels of fertility and mortality. Structural explanations for the fertility transition have involved the rising cost of raising children because of urbanisation, the growth of incomes and non-agricultural employment, the increased value of education, rising female employment, child labour laws and compulsory education, and declining infant and child mortality. One of the consequences of the decline in fertility has been the aging of the population. Population age structure depends mostly on fertility rates: high-fertility populations are younger and low-fertility populations are older.

Demographic Developments in the Middle East

It has been shown that population growth causes certain political, social, economic, and environmental problems which, in turn, may fuel domestic conflict which can easily spread beyond national boundaries and, therefore, endanger regional security (Choucri 1984). A region interdependent politically

as well as economically is certain to share those consequences. Thus, demographic factors are of crucial importance for current and future stability in the Middle East (Crane, Simon and Martini 2011).

Population Growth

Since the mid-1960s, most countries across the Middle East have gone through a 'demographic transition' leading to an accelerating population growth (Gillis *et al*. 1992; Rashad 2000; Bongaarts and Bulatao 2009). As a result, the total population of the Middle East has increased from around 110 million in 1950 to 569 million in 2017 (McKee *et al*. 2017, 4; UNDESA 2017). However, in recent years, fertility rates began to decline, in part due to the modernisation process, including educational, economic and social progress, and in part due to family planning, urbanisation and shifting patterns of migration (Puschmann and Matthijs 2015; Mirkin 2010; Tsui 2001; Fargues 1989). Nevertheless, due to population momentum, which is generated by the high proportion of women of childbearing age, absolute population numbers are expected to further double to over 1 billion inhabitants by 2100 (McKee *et al*. 2017, 5–6).

Within this population increase, there have also been transitions in the gender and age-specific ratios, which further enhance the effects of the overall population increase. Exploring Middle Eastern populations by gender reveals that the male population is and will remain marginally higher than the female population (Luy and Gast 2014). Due to regional conflicts, the ratio of male survivors to females above the age of retirement for the region has continued to decrease since 1980. The recent conflict in Syria, however, has seen an eight-year reduction in life expectancy for men relative to a reduction of just over one year for women (Loichinger *et al*. 2016). This trend of fewer men surviving to older age than women do implies that greater numbers of women are likely to be widowed and thus have proportionally higher levels of dependency among the older age categories than men (UNDESA 2017).

Aging

Age-specific ratios provide an important insight into both current and future trends of demographic transitions in the Middle East. Whereas today, the region is endowed with a young population, this picture is expected to change dramatically over the coming decades as the fastest-growing age group is the group beyond 64 years of age (McKee *et al*. 2017, 8). As people in the Middle East age, their social needs and potential economic contributions transition (Loichinger *et al*. 2016; Saxena 2013). Consequently, social protection systems in the region would face the need to both extend and improve upon

services offered to youth of working age, as well as prepare these systems to meet the evolving needs of aging populations (Loichinger *et al*. 2016).

'Youth Bulge'

The 2016 Arab Human Development Report concluded that the current Arab youth population is 'the largest, the most well educated and the most highly urbanised in the history of the Arab region' (UNDP 2016, 17). Large youth populations, however, present particular challenges. For example, correlations between youth unemployment rates and civil unrest have been drawn, particularly in Middle Eastern countries where the capacity to generate educational and employment opportunities, as well as avenues for political participation are limited (McKee *et al*. 2017, 5–9; Malik and Bassem 2013).

Education rates improve the potential for inclusion in 'legitimate' labour market activity, while at the same time prevent youth from engaging in unlawful activity (Raphael 2001; Grogger 1998). Youth unemployment, youth bulges and education were identified as critical contributing factors leading to the 2011 Arab uprisings (Paasonen and Urdal 2016; Courbage and Pushmann 2015).

(Un)employment

Poorly functioning labour markets in the Middle East and the absence of lawful economic opportunities are likely to make illicit, informal economic activities more attractive. While youth unemployment rates are universally higher than the average unemployment rates of many world regions, the Middle East has significantly higher and widening levels of youth unemployment rates (McKee *et al*. 2017, 9). Issues of youth unemployment affect countries already afflicted by social conflicts more significantly (Rashad and Khadr 2002). In addition, whereas education is seen to contribute positively to the likelihood of employment, the Middle East is distinguished in that those who have obtained higher levels of education face similar levels of unemployment to less educated people (ILO 2015 and 2017).

Thus, providing employment opportunities, as well as quality education, vocational training, health services, and social protection services (i.e. unemployment insurance schemes and income support) to this rapidly expanding labour force is a critical component in determining the broader social implications of population growth across the Middle East (McKee *et al*. 2017, 10). Yet, as youth population starts to decline across the region, youth employment will become increasingly important in preparation for demographic aging.

Health, Education and Social Services

As Middle Eastern states experience a demographic transition, emergent social issues will also transition. Adapting to shifting demographic dependencies requires governments to introduce more targeted social protection services that would support the more vulnerable elements of society (i.e. unemployed youth, migrant workers, retirees, female citizens, etc.). Concerns will eventually shift from youth unemployment to those pertaining to an aging population and the need to invest in retirement plans (Hussein and Ismail 2016). Moreover, for rapidly aging countries, the prevalence of diseases associated with old age (i.e. diabetes, cancer, heart disease, etc.) are likely to increase dramatically in the near future. Consequently, aging populations are likely to increase the public and private financial burdens of increased social welfare costs and further exacerbate inequality (McKee *et al*. 2017, 12; Taboutin and Schoumaker 2012). Financing retirement also has implications for national savings levels and funds for investment. Hence, it is expected that investment priorities and the distribution of state subsidies would shift considerably.

Regarding healthcare concerns and costs, one should add nutrition-related concerns that give rise to questions pertaining to food security (Popkin, Adair and Wen Ng 2012). Although malnutrition is now less widespread, it has been argued (McKee *et al*. 2017, 17) that dietary deficiencies and nutritional disorders in the Middle East are still far too common. Besides augmenting food supplies, a whole range of measures need to be taken, including more local food processing and enrichment, pest control, and general health education.

Despite the progress that has already been made in providing schools and educational services of all kinds, a high proportion of adults, particularly females, remain illiterate. Even among children, rapid population growth sometimes offsets extensive school building programs (McKee *et al*. 2017, 15). Thus, illiteracy is still common among the economically active population and it is expected to have important implications for the economic development of the region (Hoel 2014).

Urbanisation

Urbanisation continues to gain momentum across the Middle East. Almost 90% of absolute population growth across the region will be generated from urban areas by 2050 (McKee *et al*. 2017, 18). Thus, the Middle Eastern cities are increasingly congested and filled with young populations often frustrated in their aspirations. Under the pressure of these high population numbers,

municipal services break down and the quality of life suffers drastically. This is because people are without adequate water, sanitation, health, education, and other social services. Awareness of the great disparity in wealth and poverty among the urban population contributes to alienation and frustration on a massive scale. Urban centres thus become forcing grounds for criminality and violence (Gurr 1970).

Moreover, the often deplorable living conditions in urban centres contain the seeds of social unrest and political turmoil. Some Middle Eastern states have thus suffered the breakdown of governmental authorities and have become virtually unmanageable. Others have been governed by increasingly repressive regimes leading to a decline in their perceived legitimacy. The Arab Spring has clearly demonstrated that when the resources of a state are severely strained, those at the bottom of the social hierarchy come to realise that those at the top distribute the benefits in ways that favour some groups at the expense of others. These are the circumstances from which social revolutions are born.

Urbanisation places added pressures on the need for expanded social services associated with rapid population growth, because urban development requires more investment in infrastructure than does rural development. At the national level, much investment needs to focus on maintaining the viability of cities, such as providing work, housing, transport, electricity, water and education, as well as maintaining public health and public order. Although this may promote general economic development, the need to support the cities emphasises two important development problems: feeding the urban population and improving the distribution of goods and services across national space.

The necessity for urban planning in the Middle East is clear enough. The planning response, however, has been largely ineffective. Apart from the oil-rich states, like Saudi Arabia, financial problems impeded the implementation of planning policies. It should be recognised, however, that in addition to geographical factors, which offer certain advantages to some states and not others, decongestion and decentralisation are both difficult to achieve in the presence of powerful economic pressures.

Urbanisation also increases the pressures on local agricultural systems because a great number of people are moving to the cities from the countryside. They do so because of the higher income levels in the cities. They also move because population growth in the countryside stretches available food, water, arable land, and other resources, or because they have been displaced from subsistence farming as land is turned to commercial cultivation. Because of

the decreasing number of peasants, the need to import food from abroad increases, thereby further straining already limited resources and raising concerns about food sovereignty and food security.

Owing to the already limited availability of arable land and water resources and daunting economic diversification issues, such population growth projections will likely continue to pose a significant challenge to countries in providing employment opportunities and food security. It is especially evident that the three major river basins needed for local and regional food production will see dramatic population growth. This is especially true for the Nile basin and the Euphrates basin (Allan 1993; Beaumont 1978). However, the Jordan basin will see even more dramatic changes given its size and natural endowments (Beschorner 1993). Furthermore, while considerable scope for improvements in agricultural and water productivity exist across the region, population growth, the accompanying increases in urbanisation and demand for housing are resulting in urban encroachment.

Urbanisation can also have implications for an aging population. Whereas higher numbers of children in rural settings can offer labour support for family farms, and represent fewer challenges in housing and childcare costs, in urbanised settings population aging increases the burden upon national social protection systems (Yount and Sibai 2009).

The high level and distinct patterns of food consumption among urban populations in conjunction with the relatively declining rural production represents a growing challenge for Middle Eastern governments and for food system in general (Popkin *et al*. 2012). A growing reliance on imported food supplies to meet the needs of expanding populations will likely further exacerbate trade imbalances and vulnerability to world food price volatility and export restrictions. Such vulnerability is particularly pronounced among countries either with trade deficits, severe land and water limitations or limited means to increase agricultural productivity.

In sum, urbanisation creates three basic development problems. First, it contributes to an unequal distribution of national wealth between the core and the periphery, while the daily contrast in the cities between the wealthy elites and the poor masses dynamitise domestic stability. Second, the state is unable to absorb the massive labour force that concentrates in the cities. Thus, unemployment and poverty increase the level of popular frustration, which may lead to social unrest. Under certain conditions, frustration leads to acts of aggression against foreign workers who are seen as responsible for the unemployment rates. Third, urbanisation demands high levels of investment. Economic problems, however, pose great constraints to government

policies because there is a basic dilemma in defining the hierarchy of priorities. Current population growth tends to increase further the urbanisation problem and, consequently, economic and development concerns.

Migration: Types and Perceptions

Generally speaking, a migrant is a person who moves, either to another country (international migrant) or within their own (internal migrant). People who move inside their country's borders to survive the outbreak of a conflict are called 'internally displaced people'. This is an important group to include in the analysis of Middle East migrant populations since conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen have displaced millions of people within their countries in recent years.

Many *international* migrants move for job opportunities, to join family or to study, while others move to another country to escape violence or persecution. These forcibly displaced persons are called 'refugees' and 'asylum seekers'. However, under certain circumstances, the distinction between refugees and non-refugee 'foreigners' is blurred in the eyes of the natives of the receiving states. This happens particularly in countries where there are already problems between natives and non-refugee migrants.

There are three distinct types of forced and induced immigrations (Weiner 1992, 98–100). First, governments have forced migration as a means of dealing with political dissidents (Kulischer 1948) and in an effort to reduce or eliminate from within their own borders selected social classes or ethnic groups (Glazer 1985; Zolberg *et al*. 1989). Second, forced migration has also served as a means for states to achieve certain objectives. Governments, for example, have used migration as a way of extending their political and economic interests, acquiring recognition, putting political pressure on neighbouring countries, destabilising them, preventing them from interfering in their internal affairs, and prodding them to provide aid or credit in return for stopping the flow of immigrants (Glazer 1985). For example, in the late 1960s and during the 1970s Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia encouraged their citizens to move to France as a way to reduce unemployment at home and at the same time receive remittances that became a significant portion of their national economies. Third, governments may force migration as a means of achieving cultural homogeneity or asserting the dominance of one ethnic community over another (Tucker *et al*. 1990). For example, Turkey has forced the migration of Kurds from the Turkish territory into Iraq as a way to control Kurdish political activity in Turkey.

Contemporary population movements are linked to the rise of nationalism and

the emergence of new states whose boundaries have divided linguistic, religious, and tribal communities (Weiner and Stanton-Russell 2001). The result of this division has been that minorities, fearful of their future and often faced with discrimination and violence, have often migrated to neighbouring states to join other communities with whom they share the same ethnicity. Additionally, some developing countries have expelled their ethnic minorities when the latter were economically successful and competed with a middle-class majority. Furthermore, governments facing unemployment within the majority community and conflicts among ethnic groups over language and educational opportunities have often regarded the expulsion of a prosperous minority as a politically popular policy (Weiner 1992, 107).

Because in the political and social realms, security is related to collective identities, it constitutes a social construct (Weiner 1993; Choucri 2002). As such, security obtains different meanings in different societies. An ethnically homogeneous society, for example, may place a higher value on preserving its political and cultural identity than does a heterogeneous society and may therefore regard an influx of migrants as a threat to its security. Yet, providing a haven for those who share one's values is important in some countries, but not in others. Moreover, even in a given country what is highly valued may not be shared by the entire population. The influx of migrants may be feared by a government but welcomed by the opposition. One ethnic group may welcome migrants, while another is opposed to them. The business community may be more willing than the general public to import migrant workers.

Explanations for the response of migrant-receiving countries can be divided into two categories. The first is the host country's economic absorptive capacity. It is plausible, for example, that a country with little unemployment, a high demand for labour, and the financial resources to provide the housing and social services required by immigrants, regards migration as beneficial, while a country low on each of these dimensions regards migration as economically and socially destabilising. For example, the Gulf States and Israel have encouraged the influx of economic migrants because they needed additional labour to meet their economic development.

Second, in terms of migration volume, a county faced with a large-scale influx in relation to its population size may feel more threatened than a country experiencing a small influx of migrants. However, this is not necessarily because of economic reasons. According to Myron Weiner (1992, 92–94), the reluctance of states to receive migrants and refugees is only partly a concern over economic effects. The constraints are as likely to be political, resting upon a concern that an influx of people belonging to another ethnic community may generate xenophobic sentiments, conflicts between natives

and migrants/refugees, and the growth of anti-migrant, right-wing parties. Indeed, the second and most plausible explanation for the willingness of states to accept or reject migrants is ethnic affinity. A government and its citizens are likely to be receptive to those who share the same language, religion, or race, while it might regard as threatening those with whom such an identity is not shared.

How and why some migrant communities are perceived as threats to the identity of the receiving state is a complicated issue, involving initially how the host community defines itself. Cultures differ with respect to how they define who belongs to or who can be admitted into their community. These norms govern whom one admits, what rights and privileges are given to those permitted to enter, and whether the host culture regards a migrant community as potential citizens. A violation of these norms is often regarded as a threat to basic values and, in that sense, it is perceived as a threat to national security. However, there is always a possibility that host societies may display hostile attitudes toward migrant communities even in the absence of norm violation.

The perceived efforts of migrants to maintain their cultural and ethnic identities are often blamed as a cause of conflict within states. What some see as a development that enriches a society's diversity and cultural character, others view it as a threat to their own culture and conception of themselves. In recent years, the increase in international migration and refugee flows has given rise to paranoia and xenophobia. Migrants very often live a tenuous existence, rarely gaining the same rights as non-migrants, while their hosts are usually aloof. Blamed for a range of ills – from unemployment to crime, strained social services to lack of national unity – migrants are aware of just how easily their rights can be swept away (Heisler and Layton-Henry 1993). The plight of refugees is even worse (Robinson 1998).

Causes of Migration in the Middle East

Between 2005 and 2015, the number of migrants living in the Middle East more than doubled, from about 25 million to around 54 million (Connor 2016a). Two are the main reasons for migration during this period: the search for economic opportunities and the existence of regional conflicts.

Middle East Economic Growth and Economic Opportunities

Despite the initial drop in oil prices and the financial crisis of 2008 and 2009, the economies of Persian Gulf countries expanded considerably between

2005 and 2015. This economic expansion in countries like Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain has encouraged millions of migrants to move to the Middle East in search of economic opportunity. In fact, around 40% of the growth in the Middle East's migrant population during this period has been due to individuals and families seeking economic opportunities (Connor 2016a). However, the recent slowing of job growth in the Gulf States has resulted in a growing number of unemployed migrant workers leading to a decline in migrant remittances from the Gulf (Kumar 2016). Israel is another destination for migrants in the Middle East in part because of job opportunities there due to the repatriation of Jews.

Regional Conflicts and Migration

The majority of the migration surge in the Middle East, especially after 2011, was a consequence of armed conflict and the forced displacement of millions of people from their homes, many of whom have left their countries of birth (Heinitz 2013, 18). The rapid rise in the number of people looking for safe havens and new livelihoods has transformed the Middle East into the world region with the fastest growing international migrant and forcibly displaced population. In 2015, Syria (7.1 million) and Iraq (4.7 million) were home to the largest displaced migrant populations in the Middle East. Large numbers of displaced migrants were also living in Jordan (2.9 million), Yemen (2.8 million) and Turkey (2.8 million) (Connor 2016a). According to Philip Connor (2016b), such 'migration erodes the economies, social fabric, security and administrative capacities of most of the countries in a volatile region with consequences spilling into Europe, especially through illegal, hazardous migratory flows that too often result in the tragic loss of human lives'. Pressures on Middle Eastern countries will intensify as the regional population is expected to double by 2050.

The demographic composition of recent refugees differs from the typical native population in the Middle East. The refugee populations are made up of more children and women compared to the population of the origin countries. More than half of the Syrian refugees, for example, are under the age of 18, compared to about 40% of the pre-war Syrian population (Connor 2016a).

The number of internally displaced persons in the Middle East has grown rapidly over the past decade. In 2005, slightly more than a million people living in the Middle East had been displaced from their homes and were living in their countries of birth. By 2015, the number had climbed to about 13 million (Connor and Krogstad 2016). As of 2015, nearly all internally displaced migrants in the Middle East lived in just three countries: Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

The conflict in Syria had left about two million Syrians internally displaced by the end of 2012. As the insurgency opposed to President Bashar al-Assad's regime intensified and the caliphate declared by the militant group ISIS continued to expand across Syria, this number of internally displaced persons grew to 6.6 million by the end of 2015 (Connor and Krogstad 2016).

Sectarian violence in Iraq led to a total of 2.6 million internally displaced people within Iraq by the end of 2008. The number of Iraqis displaced within their country then declined, as the intensity of civil strife subsided. However, armed campaigns by ISIS soon drove more people from their homes. The number of internally displaced Iraqis rose from slightly less than a million in 2013 to more than 4.4 million by 2015 (Connor 2016a).

In Yemen, conflict also grew the number of internally displaced people. While this population numbered in the hundreds of thousands through 2014, a subsequent surge in violence increased the number of internally displaced Yemenis to more than 2.5 million by the end of that year (Connor 2016a).

Millions of people, while remaining in the Middle East, have crossed international borders as refugees or asylum seekers. A total of 9.6 million refugees or asylum seekers lived in the Middle East as of the end of 2015, up from 4.2 million in 2005 – a nearly 130% increase. In 2015, 85% of refugees and asylum seekers in the Middle East lived in just four countries: Jordan (nearly 2.9 million), Turkey (about 2.8 million), Lebanon (about 1.5 million) and Iran (about 1 million). The number of refugees living in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon grew rapidly after the onset of the Syrian conflict. Meanwhile, the number of refugees in Iran has been somewhat stable at roughly 1 million for the entire decade, with most of this refugee population displaced from neighbouring Afghanistan. Iraq (285,000 refugees and asylum seekers in 2015) has seen a rapid rise in persons displaced from neighbouring countries after 2011 as well, mainly Syria. Yemen (277,000 refugees in 2015) and Egypt (251,000 refugees in 2015) have also seen their refugee populations swell, due in large part to conflicts in Somalia, Ethiopia and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa (UNDESA 2015).

The majority of refugees and asylum seekers in the Middle East in 2015 can be traced to three points of origin: Syria (4.6 million), the Palestinian territories (3.2 million) and Afghanistan (1.0 million). As of the end of 2015, nearly all of Syrian refugees in the Middle East lived in just three countries: Turkey (2.5 million), Lebanon (1.1 million), and Jordan (628,000). Outside of the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria host Palestinian refugees. Meanwhile, Afghan refugees living in the Middle East are mainly located in Iran (UNDESA 2015).

Demography, Migration and Security

Demographic factors in the Middle East have important implications for all security sectors. It is important to note that, due to security interdependence, threats operating in one sector may quickly spill over into other sectors. For example, although water resources is an issue that is mainly associated with the environmental sector, access to water may become a military security issue or an economic security issue.

Military Security

In the military sector, the main preoccupation is the survival of the state and one of the main referent objects of security is the physical base of the state (territory and population) (Buzan 1991, 116–117). Therefore, the primary concern of governments is national defence and national leaders make careful calculations about the conflicts they wish to become involved in and how to go about them as they are primarily interested in avoiding the devastating consequences of a military defeat.

In the military sector, demography is usually associated with the number of people available to serve in the armed forces or mobilised for national defence purposes. Therefore, high fertility and low mortality rates, which lead to population increases are preferred to population decline and aging.

Migrants may threaten the military security of states in at least four ways. The first is when migrants use the territory of the receiving state for initiating military activities against their home country. For example, it has been claimed that Syrian rebels use the territory of neighbouring states to regroup and prepare their attacks against the Assad regime. Second, refugees may convince the receiving state to undertake direct actions against their home country. For example, the Palestinian refugees in Jordan not only revolted against the regime of King Hussein but also attempted to rally Jordanian support against Israel. Jordan, on the other hand, has been very careful not to allow the Palestinians to draw Amman into a war with Israel that may have negative consequences for Jordan. Third, the receiving state may have an interest in challenging the regime of the migrants' home country and uses them as a means to this end. For example, Syrian refugees may be used as an excuse for Turkey to challenge Assad's regime. Fourth, migrants may threaten the military security of their home country by providing financial and military assistance to rebel groups. Thus, struggles that could otherwise take place within the home country are internationalised.

However, there is another way in which population growth and migration

trends are relevant to military security in the Middle East, namely population increases leading to increased dependence on international rivers.

Specifically, the main water resource in the Middle East has been the rivers, which usually cross more than one country. In the past, water resource development has taken place largely at the local level. With increasing populations, and in particular the rapid growth of large cities, local water sources are often inadequate to supply the new demands (Beaumont 1993). As a result, individual countries have had to resort to the implementation of a number of large water resource projects, such as river dams, which have had an impact on riparian states. Consequently, significant problems have been created between states resulting from the efforts of some countries to control the water flow of rivers. The already old conflicts between Turkey and Iraq as well as between Egypt and Ethiopia are illustrative of this point. In fact, optimum river resource utilisation relies on a large measure of co-operation between riparian states and unilateral action by a riparian state is extremely prejudicial to regional security (Naff and Matson 1985; Starr and Stoll 1988; Young 1989; Starr 1991).

In the near future, Egypt, Sudan, Syria, and Turkey, which constitute more than 60% of the region's population will be dependent upon the Nile, Euphrates, and Tigris rivers by 2100, compared with 48% today (McKee *et al*. 2017, 6). This increased dependence on international rivers will not only have significant implications for the viability of supporting the likely increases in agricultural, industrial, and municipal water demands, but may also impact transboundary governance and lead to water access related conflicts.

Political Security

In the political sector, threats to the state usually result from a political struggle over the state's ideology, which may lead to governmental actions that would threaten individual citizens or groups (Buzan 1991, 118–119). Resistance to the government and efforts to overthrow it threaten state stability and enhance regime insecurity. As the Arab Spring has shown, the inability of Middle Eastern states to address the needs and concerns of their citizens has led to resistance and demands for political change that have challenged the organising ideologies of regional states. In fact, the 2011 Arab uprisings have challenged autocracy as a state ideology and have, by the same token, brought about the possibility of democracy as an alternative state ideology. Therefore, population increases may further reduce the ability of Middle Eastern governments to provide social services and economic opportunities to their citizens, which, in turn, may increase further the insecurity of political regimes. Efforts of those regimes to secure their access

to power would generate insecurity to the citizens of the state. In this way, a spiral mode of political insecurity comes into existence.

Political threats undermine the organisational stability of the state by threatening its national identity and organising ideology, as well as the institutions that express it (Buzan 1991, 119). In this sense, when migrants and receiving states share similar ideas, host countries may pose political threats to the ideology of the migrants' home country. On the other hand, when migrants are holders of an ideology different from that of the receiving state, then they may be perceived as a threat to the ideology of the receiving state (Heinitz 2013, 26).

The political security of states can also be threatened when migrants are opposed to the regime of their home country and are involved in anti-regime activities in the host country. These activities may be in conflict with the interests of the receiving states. For example, Palestinian and Syrian refugees are involved in political activities in foreign territories aimed at the governments of Israel and Syria respectively. Thus, migrants and refugees may threaten the political security of their home country by marshalling international public opinion through publicity campaigns aimed at the international community and at particular international institutions.

Finally, a case can be made that the institutions of the state can be threatened by patterns of transnational crime, such as smuggling and human trafficking; especially when women and children are involved.

For much of the 1990s, the concept of trafficking was poorly defined and frequently used as a synonym for smuggling or even illegal migration. Since December 2000, a global definition of trafficking has been available through the signing of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, which supplements the Convention on Transnational Organised Crime. The Protocol defines trafficking comprehensively: its focus is on coercion for the purpose of exploitation, and it precludes the possibility of legal consent by the victims of traffickers (Laczko 2002). Although in practice there are some problems in distinguishing between trafficking and smuggling, one of the most important results of such a distinction is that it is mainly women and children who are the victims of traffickers (Budapest Group 1999, 15). Frequently, the form of exploitation is forced prostitution or sexual enslavement, but sometimes it is bonded labour, in housekeeping or, for boys in certain Gulf countries, camel jockeying (Heinitz 2013, 30).

Increasingly, Africa is a source region with more clandestine movements, more diverse transit points and complex changing dynamics. From East

Africa, young girls and women are trafficked from war zones to the Gulf States (Adepoju 2004). According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), trafficking of women takes place from Ghana to Lebanon and Libya, women for domestic service from Central and West Africa to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and even voluntary migrations of women from Ethiopia to the Middle East where working conditions are considered to be virtual slavery (IOM 2001, 2).

Trafficking from South Asia to the Middle East is a serious problem with the region having become a destination rather than a point of transit (IOM 2001, 2). A particular abuse, of young boys trafficked for the violent and dangerous pursuit of camel racing, is documented in Qatar [children from Sudan, Somalia and S. Asia], Kuwait [Sudan, Yemen, Eritrea and S. Asia], and United Arab Emirates [Pakistan and Bangladesh]. In addition, extensive trafficking of children from South Asia and Africa is noted for begging rings in Saudi Arabia (Baldwin Edwards 2005, 19).

Societal Security

Societal security is about the protection of collective identities, such as religions and nations (Buzan 1991, 122–123). If societal security is about the sustainability of particular patterns of religious and ethnic identity and custom, the *state-nation* building process often aims at suppressing, or at least, homogenising sub-state social identities (Buzan 1991, 73). Since language, religion, and cultural tradition all play their part in the idea of the state, they may need to be 'defended or protected against cultural imports' (Olshtain and Horenczyk 2000). Therefore, for Middle Eastern states, such as Lebanon and Iraq which have to address ethnic and religious questions in their state-nation building process, population trends may exacerbate domestic conflicts and societal insecurity. For example, population growth may favour a particular, 'unwanted' ethic and religious community. Hence, population patterns may be seen as threatening national security. This is the reason that Lebanese and Iraqi governments are not interested in providing statistics about population composition in Lebanon and Iraq respectively.

In the long term, the most obvious effect of migration is the creation of ethnic minorities in host countries. Admitting migrants has long-lasting social effects on receiving states. It may turn relatively homogeneous societies into multi-ethnic and multicultural ones by the introduction of ethnically and culturally different people. Migrants often raise societal concerns because they are seen as potentially threatening to the popularity and strength of the nation-state. They are also perceived as challenging traditional notions about the meaning of nationality and citizenship and the rights and duties of citizens

towards their state and *vice versa* (Weiner 1992, 110).

It is widely established in people's minds that the existence of migrants has a substantial impact on social stability and economic prosperity, which are inter-related. The fact that very few states fit the idealised picture of the homogeneous nation-state, and that most states are cultural and social products of earlier movements of people, fails to register on the popular consciousness. Thus, migration in some Arab countries is seen as threatening communal identity and culture by directly altering the ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic components of the population of the receiving state (Heinitz 2013, 26).

Migrants may be seen as a threat to the cultural norms and value systems of the receiving states. In defending themselves against migrants, national societies may emphasise their differentiation from them. As a result, questions of status and race may be difficult to avoid. Moreover, migration occurs alongside the clash of rival cultural identities. In combination, migration threats and the clash of cultures contribute to a societal conflict between domestic and sending societies (Guild and Selm 2005). As it has already be shown, this conflict may easily feed into a restructuring of relations between the hosting and home states which may, in turn, affect regional and international security.

In addition, the governments of the receiving states are concerned with the migrants' alleged social behaviour, such as criminality and 'black labour' that may generate local resentment and lead to xenophobic popular sentiments, as well as to the rise of anti-migrant political parties that could threaten the government in power. Thus, countries receiving migrants may need to maintain social stability and cohesion in the face of the multi-culturalism produced by migration. It is possible, however, that under certain circum-stances, governments may pursue anti-migration policies in anticipation of public reactions.

As the case of the Gulf countries reveals, anti-immigrant feeling and xenophobia also increase in times of recession and high unemployment. Toleration levels are likely to be lower in countries that do not have a tradition of migration and higher in those that have. Migrants who are similar to the host population are also easier to accommodate and tolerate than those that are racially and culturally distinct.

Concomitant unemployment and deficient public services offer fertile ground for superficial but ostensibly pride-restoring rhetoric and solutions. These, whether expressed in radical religious terms, or as attacks against the

existing system (or the 'outsiders'), can be explosive (Abu-Lughod 1983, 237). It may be argued that among the various social problems that the MENA countries face, one of the most important is that of cultural conflict between the nationals of the countries concerned and Western immigrants. Western migration has traditionally contributed to the manpower needed for manufacturing and service industries. However, the demographic evolution of these immigrant communities poses several crucial policy issues for the host countries. As well as adding to the costs of infrastructural and service provision, immigrant communities are increasingly seen as posing a threat to national culture and identity by directly altering the ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic components of the population of the receiving countries.

Along with the unprotected status of forced migrants in many countries, the issue of human rights protection of migrants is paramount in the Middle East. Despite some small but welcome improvements at the national level, the situation remains quite problematic. As Jureidini (2004, 209) has shown, ratifications of the principal human rights treaties by Middle Eastern states is quite poor. Thus, there are several millions (presumably) of female migrant domestic workers in the Middle East whose rights are almost non-existent, save under the general provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Given the massive reporting of abuses and violence against female migrants in particular, this represents one of the most serious deficits of migrants' human rights protection anywhere in the world today.

The lack of labour law protection for domestic workers in conjunction with the apparent nexus of trafficking, domestic service and forced prostitution demonstrates the ease with which employers and traffickers can trick and cheat immigrants of their few legal rights. The Arab Charter on Human Rights of the League of Arab States, adopted in 1994, does contain some universal provisions for all persons on the territory – apparently regardless of their legal status or national origin (Baldwin Edwards 2005, 27). However, it also emphasises national law and citizenship as important aspects of economic relations while in practice many signatory states are failing to observe the minimal standards of human rights guaranteed by the Charter.

Economic Security

In the economic sector, one of the main referent objects of security is the economic ability of the state (Buzan 1991, 126). Therefore, in terms of economic security, the importance of demography is highlighted by the effects of demographic growth on the economic capability of the state and how this would affect its socio-political stability (Cammett *et al*. 2015). Specifically, due to population growth rates that prevail in the Middle East today there would

be a need to significantly increase national production to maintain per capita income levels. There would also be a need to increase employment and social overhead capital investments (McKee *et al*. 2017, 4). These phenomena make the developmental race to catch up with the needs of the region and its population more problematic and, thus feed into greater potential for instability.

Population growth in the Middle East is an important issue with regard to socio-economic development. Depending on issues of economic development, this demographic change can be seen as either a 'gift or a curse', since the lower dependency ratio allows a greater working age population to more easily support the elderly. The demographic changes in the Middle East have produced 'some of the most intense pressures on labour markets observed anywhere in the world in the post-World War II period' (World Bank 2004, 71). The excess of labour force growth over employment growth has resulted in high unemployment rates (World Bank 2003, 72). Labour force growth is not determined solely by demographic issues, and in fact participation rates (especially female) have been rising continuously. Thus, currently the number of jobs required to absorb the new labour market entrants, and to deal with current unemployment levels is around 100 million. This is effectively a doubling of the current levels of employment, requiring massive labour market and economic reforms. However, in the absence of structural economic change, the demographic shift would probably result in higher unemployment.

Population growth also exacerbates certain societal problems by contributing to lower standards of living as well as to the uneven distribution of wealth (Birdsall, Kelley and Sinding 2001). Poverty, uneven distribution of wealth and lack of access to basic human needs are prime causes of domestic conflicts, especially when relatively poor people see others living much better. Conflict is bound to erupt where basic human needs are not met (Streeten 1981; Burton 1990). Thus, in order to put accumulation on a firm foundation, and to move through demographic transition, Middle Eastern countries must meet the basic human needs of their populations. Economic conditions, however, prevent these states from developing welfare policies since a considerable amount of money must also be invested in improving the infrastructure necessary for economic development.

Population growth in the Middle East is an important issue with regard to socio-economic development, and migration flows add to the pressures associated with it. Migration has dominated the economic landscape of the Middle East for more than 40 years (World Bank 2004; UNDP 2002 and 2003).

It has been argued that migrants in the Middle East threaten the economic stability of the receiving states by imposing limits on their financial capability (Heinitz 2013, 30). Due to their numbers and level of poverty, migrants create a substantial economic burden by straining housing, education, sanitation, transportation, and communication facilities, while at the same time increasing consumption. To deal with this economic burden, the receiving states need to increase taxes paid by their own citizens. Middle Eastern societies, or specific social groups within them, have usually reacted to the influx of migrants for three reasons: first, because of the economic costs the latter impose on the receiving state; second, because of the migrants' purported social behaviour; and third, because migrants may displace local people in employment because they are prepared to work for lower wages (Baldwin Edwards 2005, 25).

In general, government responses to the challenges posed by the significant number of migrants (especially refugees) have been considerable. Yet the many services needed by refugees, including food, shelter, clothing, health care, schooling and safety, overwhelm governmental capacities and undermine public support, especially in refugee-weary Lebanon and Jordan. With gainful employment and proper schooling difficult to obtain, refugees are often hard pressed to establish a semblance of normalcy (Connor 2016a).

One of the main effects of outgoing migration in the Middle East has been 'brain drain'. Although migrants' remittances constitute important contributions to the economy of the sending country, against this has to be balanced the loss – potential or actual – of skilled scientists or younger workers (Wickramasekara 2002, 7). Wickramasekara advocates dual citizenship and recognition of diaspora, in order to promote 'brain circulation'. For such a circulation, however, specific practices are needed in both sending and receiving countries. These include, for receiving countries: visa regimes, student fee levels, networking with sending countries, and ethical and controlled recruitment campaigns. For sending countries, taxation and human rights problems are clear disincentives, as well as incentives not only to return but also to attract expatriate investments, along with other issues of economic growth and development (Sorensen 2004a and 2004b). This approach is emphasised systematically in UNDP Arab Human Development Reports (2016; 2003; 2002) as well as the World Bank regional employment report (World Bank, 2004).

Environmental Security

Environmental security can be understood in terms of the human impact on the natural environment (Buzan 1991, 131). Demographic growth may have a

significant impact on the environment (Murray 1985, 33–34). The reason for this is that the effects of population growth on economic development often lead to excessive pressures on natural resources. Rapid deforestation, desertification, and soil erosion are most acute where population growth and poverty are most apparent. Especially in the Middle East, where a growing population will require increased quantities of elementary goods, which may lead to increased production and a more extensive use of fertilisers and irrigation techniques which may damage the environment.

Central to any analysis of population-environment interaction is the issue of water. The availability of fresh water for both domestic and agricultural use has always been a basic prerequisite for human life and civilisation. But as it was noted above, in no other world region has water availability played such a dominating role in determining the settlement, growth and movement of human populations as it does in the Middle East. The efficient use of the scarce water resource has become a central ingredient of Arab culture and of the structure of Middle Eastern societies and economies. Thus, the precarious balance of water resources in the Middle East is likely to be a sensitive and potentially explosive issue (Naff and Matson 1985; Starr and Stoll 1988).

Today, the growth of large cities in the Middle East and the need for industrialisation have imposed a tremendous burden on the water supply facilities of the urban centres for domestic and industrial use. The increase in population numbers over the last 40 years has meant that such supplies have now become inadequate, and the water catchment in the region has had to be continuously enlarged in an attempt to cope with water demands. Even with these tremendous efforts, it may be said that almost every large city in the Middle East has water supply problems, and that these are likely to increase further.

Water availability is the most important constraint on rural land use in the region and the effects on cultivation are marked. The lack of water resources is likely to be felt most strongly in agricultural areas for two reasons. First, because their production systems lack redundancies that would allow them to adapt to sudden shifts in the amount of water resources available; and second, because they have little access to capital (other than land) that would permit rapid evolution of production strategies. This means that the Middle East economies will be very much affected by possible shortages of water since they are basically agricultural economies.

The human problems engendered by these shifts in water resources would be enormous. Changes in the productivity of agriculture associated with potential

and eventual shortages of water resources would lead to massive inland and international migrations that would in turn enhance existing social, economic and other related problems. Moreover, such changes would even lead to intra- or inter-state conflicts that would consequently endanger regional peace and stability. The situation becomes more dramatic if we take into account the high rate of population growth in the region.

Water availability also affects livestock rearing. The type of animals kept in particular areas is related to the amount of precipitation and drinking water to be expected there. Numbers increase in wet years and decrease in dry ones, creating a kind of dynamic equilibrium that is easily upset. The effects of drought and water shortages in such a situation can be devastating.

Related to the problem of water supply is the problem of sewage disposal (Beaumont, Blake and Wagstaff 1988, 107). Human wastes are discharged untreated into the ground or into the nearest watercourse. As a result, the shallow aquifers have become contaminated. Waste and effluent disposal is also causing concern, as the waters of special regions and cities, all of which possess great value from aesthetic, recreational and other utilitarian standpoints, become increasingly polluted.

Conclusion

The population of the Middle East is expected to continue growing in the foreseeable future. This could lead to some problems, as Middle Eastern governments struggle to close the gap between the rich and poor, decrease poverty rates, provide essential necessities (housing, jobs, health care) to their citizens, and develop their countries' infrastructure. This would require significant investment. Therefore, demographic factors are closely related to the development of the Middle Eastern states and the region as a whole. Moreover, demographic factors have important implications for all security sectors, while security interdependence makes the management of security threats not only challenging but politically imperative. Thus, addressing the impact of current population patterns on Middle Eastern communities, societies and states, as well as managing regional and transnational patterns of conflict and migration in the region is imperative for achieving both domestic security and regional stability.

Recent migration flows in the Middle East have been caused partly by economic reasons (people searching for economic opportunities) but most importantly by regional conflicts resulting in internal displacement and inter/ transnational movement. Some states' responses to these developments are worrisome. For example, countries like Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United

Arab Emirates (UAE) have placed legal obstacles and physical barriers preventing entry of asylum seekers and refugees as well as returning them involuntarily to their homes or to third countries. Generally speaking, national governments and local populations are loath to accept large numbers of people in great need, who are ethnically different and may pose threats to social stability. Most prefer fewer foreigners crossing their borders given economic uncertainties, record government deficits, high unemployment, growing anti-immigrant sentiment, and concerns about national and cultural identity.

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6

Geography, Resources and the Geopolitics of Middle East Conflicts

DINA RASHED

For most of its modern history, the Middle East has been besieged by international conflicts. Since the early nineteenth century, European powers have competed to colonise the Middle East's territories in an attempt to control its natural resource and geostrategic location. Almost two centuries later, the region finds itself embattled in another round of intense crises in which both super and regional powers compete for territorial influence. The once stable region became an arena for violence in the aftermath of the popular uprisings of the 2010s, and what started as peaceful demands for democracy and freedom soon metamorphosed into civil and regional wars in many areas. The rise of violent change and the counter violent quest to maintain the status quo has been closely tied to the region's resources. In an attempt to understand the role of geography and resources in the region's crises, I ask the following questions: Which resources have been exploited in the ongoing crises? How did these resources complicate and impact the transformations that have come about? And what changes characterise the post-uprising moment?

The chapter first highlights the different resources of power in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, noting that mineral and economic wealth, demography and geographic location are three resources that helped shape the conflict. It investigates how these resources were exploited during and after the mass protests that have swept the region since 2010. As the analysis explores the geopolitical characteristics of the post-uprising moment, I argue that the chaotic transitions from the status quo brought about or intensified two significant changes: the mushrooming of non-state political

armies, and the reconfiguration of regional and international alliances. Finally, the limits of these resources as well as states' inefficiencies in exploiting their assets at different moments are discussed with some concluding remarks on the region's future.

Resources and Power in the Middle East

Most writings on state power in international relations focus on material power, in particular economic output and military spending. Demographic power is often folded into those two measures as scholars contend that states with large populations can raise a significant workforce to produce more goods and fill the ranks of strong armies.[1] While these theories have yielded fruitful insights into our knowledge of international dynamics, confining the role of population to that of production machines overlooks how human resources interact during times of instability to affect change.

Instead of focusing only on fossil and mineral wealth, this chapter adopts a broader view of resources that pays attention to the demographics and geostrategic power of regional parties. The analysis takes into account the degree to which a state exploits its share of these resources and how this has impacted its influence within the region. Most Gulf States enjoy high economic revenues from their oil-based rentier economies. Other countries are rich in their demographic component. While most of the Middle East features what is often referred to as a 'youth bulge', few countries have enjoyed strong institutions be they rooted in the state or civil society. Where these institutions existed, they acted as a bedrock for less chaotic transitions during acute moments of upheaval. Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Turkey, and Tunisia are good examples where strong institutions applied the brakes against uncontrollable change. Finally, countries with geostrategic resources are those that enjoy a central geographic location that when coupled with a relatively well-educated population and economic power can play an extensive role in the political dynamics of their neighbourhoods. Turkey and Iran have been successful in mobilising their resources and expanding their influence in the post-uprising era.

Economic Power

The region is home to some of the world's most important natural resources, especially fossil fuels. In 2015, Arab countries, which constitute only 5.2% of the world's population enjoyed 55.2% of the world's oil reserves and 27.5% of the world's natural gas reserves (Joint Arab Economic Report 2015). Yet the

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[1]   For more on how state power is measured in the International Relations literature see (Kennedy 1987; Mearsheimer 2014).

region suffers from internal economic imbalances with its overall wealth. Most of the natural energy assets are concentrated in the Arab Gulf and fewer in North African countries. And discrepancies exist between oil-rich and non-oil rich states, as well as within the oil-rich camp. This is reflected in country rankings on global economic indicators.

For instance, the 2016–2017 Global Competitiveness Report shows that the region's economic achievers, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar, rank at 16 and 18 respectively (Global Competitiveness Report 2016–2017, 4). While Israel and Turkey, two non-oil rich countries ranked at 24 and 56, respectively, higher than Saudi Arabia (29) and Iran (76). Egypt ranked at 115 while Yemen ranked last at 138.[2] These imbalances indicate that few oil-rich countries were able to move from rentier to productive economies.

The region is also home to some of the highest rates of income inequality in the world. Recent studies find that in the Middle East, income accruing to the top 10% income share reaches 61%, and the top 1% share exceeds 25%, compared to 20% in the United States, 11% in Western Europe, and 17% in South Africa (Alvaredo and Piketty 2014) Not only has the region been a relatively high-inequality place, but economic opportunities have been limited to a select number of individuals.

Research on stock markets in Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates shows that the largest 20 companies in each country were not listed on the stock exchange (Ghassan Omet 2005). By and large, the biggest companies' boards of directors have been staffed with high-ranking government officials and royal family members (Ghassan Omet 2005). These indicators are telling when examining the extent to which average citizens have access to state resources, especially revenues from hydrocarbon wealth or other rents-based enterprises.

In addition to limited access to resources, citizens in the region face inefficient bureaucracies with rampant corruption levels. According to one report by Transparency International, government officials, tax officials and Members of Parliament are seen as the most corrupt groups in the region (Global Corruption Barometer 2016). The skewed distribution of resources, coupled with limited access to economic opportunities and corruption impacts people's preferences during times of instability, making the once socially-prohibited choices more acceptable and legitimated.

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2   The World Economic Forum defines competitiveness as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of an economy. For more on the indicators see (Global Competitiveness Report 2016–2017)

Demographic Power

One of the region's strongest assets is its young population. According to the 2016 Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) young people between the ages of 15 and 29 make up nearly a third of Arab countries' population, and another third is below the age of fifteen (Arab Human Development Report 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality). The percentage will probably be higher if one adds the youth in non-Arab highly populated countries such as Iran and Turkey.[3] The share of this age category is considered the highest demographic percentage in the history of the region. And compared to earlier generations, the current youth strata are better educated, more connected and healthier (Arab Human Development Report 2016). These attributes make them seeds for development as well as destruction.

Economic development has often been tied to the availability of a well-trained, able population. But the Arab region is characterised by some of the lowest employment-to-population ratios in the world. MENA has been outpaced by other developing regions in terms of employment ratios. Figures from the International Labour Organisation show that the ratio has remained relatively constant between 1995 and 2015, rising from 44.1% to 46.8%. This figure is below the global average of 59.2% and lags behind the South-Eastern Asia and Pacific region 66.9% and sub-Saharan Africa's 65.0% in 2015 (Dimova, Elder, and Stephan 2016, 20). Youth in particular remain a challenged group when it comes to employment. While the global youth unemployment rate stood at 13% in 2014, the Middle East and North Africa regions witnessed the highest youth unemployment rates – 28.2% and 30.5%, respectively (International Labour Organisation 2015).

Politically, the majority of populations living in the region do not enjoy freedoms or security. Arab youth express a deep sense of discrimination and exclusion. They are insufficiently represented in public life and have no meaningful say in the shaping of policies that influence their lives (Arab Human Development Report 2016). At the same time, they are increasingly connected to the world through digital media. The MENA region ranks second in the world by number of daily YouTube video views, and the Gulf countries of Bahrain, Qatar, and UAE enjoy a 100% smartphone penetration to overall population, which is higher than the percentage for the US.[4] This discrepancy

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3   The United Nations defines youth as individuals of ages 15–24 years, but the Arab Human Development Reports (ADHR) 2016 report employs a wider definition of youth, which stretches across ages 15–29 so as to reflect the prolonged transitions to adulthood faced by many young men and women in the Arab region.

4   These three Gulf countries rank higher than the US at 80% penetration to population. For more on the digitisation of the MENA see (Benni *et al*. 2016).

between capabilities and opportunities present the region with a dilemma; on one hand, it has the human resources needed for development, but on the other, the very same source can feed destructive conflicts. As more demographic groups have access to education and global exposure to better quality of life standards, demands for change are harder to meet by inefficient and corrupt governments.

Geo-Political Power

Geopolitics is the analysis of geographic influences on power relations in international relations (Deudney 2006). The strength of a nation and its chances of survival are dependent to a great extent on geographic factors: location, size, shape, depth, climate, population and manpower, natural resources, industrial capacity, and social and political organisation (Boland III 1992). The strategic position and military potential of a nation depends on its location with respect to the major land and sea trade routes, and the development and extent of its external transportation system (Boland III 1992).

Iran and Russia are two land powers, while Turkey and China enjoy more geopolitically advantageous territories because they are land and maritime powers. The limited access of land powers to maritime passages put constraints on their abilities to project influence. In the Middle East, the strategic significance of Turkey is in part a function of its location as a land bridge between Europe and Asia, and as a land barrier across the only outlet of the Black Sea. Egypt's geostrategic power emanates from its central location in the heart of the Middle East serving as a bridge between Africa, Asia, and Mediterranean Europe. Morocco enjoys significant maritime assets but is limited by its location on the outer part of the region. Iran's mountainous terrain had protected it from invasion for most of its history, but also limited its capacity to project power and influence. Historically, it has been more influential when its neighbouring countries face deep political crises. Its influence has been pending its ability to accrue significant wealth and military might or to exploit the weakness of its neighbours (Friedman 2016). This may explain the increasing role of Iran after the US invasion of Iraq and the collapse of Syria following the post-uprising civil war.

The Arab Uprisings and Resources: Blessings or Burdens

The mass political mobilisation that started in Tunisia in December 2010 brought to the fore deeply rooted calls for better governance, transparency and democracy. Governments' poor economic and political performance and failure to put sound distributive policies in place brought millions to the streets

in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria. In other instances, exclusionary policies based on sectarian divisions alienated the majority of the population and prompted calls for regime change as in Bahrain. Five regional powers, all economically-rich, have followed interventionist policies in countries where uprisings erupted. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Turkey, and Iran meddled in the domestic politics of the six uprising countries. At the same time, the demographic and geographic assets of uprising countries played significant roles in shaping and limiting regional and international interventions.

To the extent that countries enjoyed developed institutions prior to the uprisings, regional and international interventions have been limited. In Egypt, Saudi Arabia supported Salafi groups while both Qatar and Turkey supported the Muslim Brotherhood. Turkey saw in the Muslim Brotherhood a vehicle that can market and replicate the Islamist neoliberal model of the Turkish ruling Justice and Development Party. Turkey's support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt contributed to the rise of Islamists to the apex of power. But the Brotherhood's success was short-lived and the experience of Islamists in government soon came to an end with the aborted presidency of Mohamed Morsi.[5] Despite the presence of regional and international interests to shape Egypt's future, foreign political intervention has been diluted by the interests of state institutions, especially the military which managed to build a coalition with other state institutions such as the police and the judiciary to prevent an overhaul of the state (Brown 2013, 2012). In Tunisia, the balance of power in civil society did not reflect a similar strength for Islamists as in the Egyptian case; a more secular civil society in Tunisia made Islamists' quest to rule less tenable. And when the lessons of the Muslim Brotherhood's ouster in Egypt reverberated through the region, the UGTT, Tunisia's labour union, emerged as the strongest institution that mediated through the country's tumultuous transition (Chayes 2014).

In other countries, mass protests had a more devastating impact on state and society. In Libya, the economic assistance soon shifted to a direct military intervention, while in Syria and Yemen foreign intervention was indirect through assisting militant groups. In Libya, where the demographic composition lacked strong institutions and was characterised by tribal divisions, the transition from the Qaddafi regime became protracted and violent. Both the Gulf petro dollars and the international quest for the country's oil resources played a role in the further fragmentation of the state. As the transition failed to produce a unified government, regional powers

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[5]   The Muslim Brotherhood's failure to build a lasting coalition from the revolutionary forces in addition to its challenging of state institutions increased public discontent. The Islamist president Mohamed Morsi was ultimately removed by the Egyptian military in the wake of another mass mobilisation in the summer of 2013. For more on how the Muslim Brotherhood managed challenges while ruling Egypt, see (Hanna 2013).

diverged on their support for local militias and ultimately supported two governments in the east and west parts of the country (Matar 2015). Petro-dollars also played a role in the Syrian conflict. Despite the relatively high levels of education of the population, the absence of strong state or civil society institutions opened the door for extensive intervention from the Gulf governments, Turkey, and Iran. Turkey, backed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, facilitated the passage of foreign fighters through its borders. Iran on the other hand leveraged its influence on the Syrian Regime and Lebanon's strong Hezbollah to provide a steady stream of soldiers, arms and logistical support to the Assad regime.

In Yemen, the petro dollars of Saudi Arabia and UAE sustained the mobilisation against former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh for long months. Despite the tradition of Saudi influence over politics in Yemen, Saudi influence had its limits as Saleh was able to mobilise significant sectors of the well-armed population, and later exploit sectarian divisions to resist a complete transition of his regime. In Bahrain, both economic resources and geographic location made the uprising short-lived. The Gulf countries led by Saudi Arabia swiftly acted to prevent a movement that brought calls for regime change into their neighbourhood. That the Bahraini movement had a sectarian profile, which threatened a direct Iranian intervention into the Arab Gulf states, facilitated a unified position from the Gulf rulers against it.

The geography of instability plays a role in the duration of conflicts as well as chances for stability. While Tunisia's less strategic location has helped protect its domestic politics from interferences from regional and international powers, its borders have been challenged by arms transfers and militia movement from Libya. The porous borders often facilitate the transfer of arms and human power as in the case between Yemen and Oman,[6] as well as the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza strip.

Regional Changes in the Twenty-First Century

Old Armies and New Armies

The decades of independence movements in the twentieth century brought about the rise of national armies in Middle Eastern politics. Fighting against colonial or invading powers, national armies led state-building processes. Conversely, the post-uprisings violence bears significant challenges to the

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[6]   Some reports indicate that the porous Omani borders with Yemen have been used as safe routes to transfer arms from Iran to Yemeni militias fighting Saudi Arabia. For more on US claims about Oman's role in the Yemeni crisis, see (Bayoumy and Stewart 2016)

states' institutions of force. In their efforts to defend social groups and reshape a new geopolitical map of the region, armed militias mostly target national standing armies.

The mushrooming of non-state armies finds ready supply of abled bodies in the disaffected youth. Economic dissatisfaction, political exclusion and ideological appeal are three factors that have contributed to the successful recruitment of young men and women into militias that pepper the military landscape of the region. Lack of employment opportunities is one indicator of the failure of national economies to respond to the economic needs of younger generations. The average rate of participation of youth in the workforce is close to 24%, which is the lowest regional average in the world. Meanwhile, the youth unemployment rate is the highest in the world, reaching almost 30% (Arab Human Development Report 2016). The shift to neoliberal economics that preceded the uprisings put limits on the state's provision of services, especially in terms of employment and housing. As a result, large numbers of urban residents have turned to the informal sector to make a living. And much of the informal employment has been physically and socially situated in an illicit world of violence and impunity (Davis 2009). With the collapse of states or decline in their abilities to provide law and order, venues of cooperation were made available among underground groups with their access to illegal trade routes and political militias. The product of this collusion has been well-organised networks that engage in illicit activity and carry on functions similar to mini-states including governance of territories under their rule, and conducting foreign-policy-like activities such as negotiating, baiting and providing security.

Political militias with sound funding from strong patrons, provide attractive employment opportunities for the impoverished and needy. Iran remains one of the biggest patrons of armed militias in the region. According to some reports Iran spends between $100 million and $200 million per year on Hezbollah, $3.5 billion to $15 billion per year in support of Syria's Assad Regime, $12 million to $26 million per year on Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq, and $10 million to $20 million per year to support Houthi rebels in Yemen (Howell 2015). While Iran's financial support of armed militia's remains an estimate, US reports show that the US has spent about $1 billion over the Syrian crisis up till 2015.

On another level, the mobilisation effect of the uprisings ignited interests for political participation, but such political aspirations have not been met by dynamic and adapting political organisations. In countries undergoing political transition, youth show more interest in politics relative to older age-groups (Arab Human Development Report 2016). But retrenchment of old political

elites, practices, and political organisations have increased the lack of confidence of young people in the democratic process. Compared with other social groups, this limits their participation in elections, thus deepening their deprivation. Lack of opportunities to improve the standard of living and authoritarian encroachments on political, economic and social freedoms produce conditions of possibility for adopting violence as a means for change and/or colluding with violent groups that promise better economic and/or social conditions.

But democratic institutions by themselves are not a sufficient condition for the prevention of violence. Ideological appeals that rely on violence as a means for change remain an attractive recruitment method for armed groups. Tunisia, the most successful case of democratic transition among the six uprising states, is the country of origin for the highest number of foreign fighters who migrated to Syria (Trofimov 2016). Extreme religious ideologies have been gaining ground and attracting not only the most economically needy or educationally limited but also the brightest.

Reconfiguration of Regional and International Alliances: New Alliances or Renewed Alliances

The uprisings burst at a time of relative regional political stability. Internationally, the US enjoyed dominance over most of the region's capitals. The Gulf countries and Egypt had been close US allies for decades, and the war on terror enabled the superpower to consolidate intelligence cooperation with Tunisia, Morocco, and Yemen. Russia on the other hand was losing much of its appeal – at least on the popular level – in two of its traditional allies: Libya and Syria. While Syria maintained some level of military relations given the Russian military base in Tartus, Libya's abandonment of a nuclear armament project was the result of successful negotiations with the UK and the US (Jentleson and Whytock 2006). The gradual shift towards market economy in the previously socialist-leaning Arab countries facilitated warming up to the US. The notable exception has been the failed US intervention in Iraq, which Iran is credited with making an unsuccessful adventure. Regionally, the Gulf countries remained a source for economic assistance to most troubled Arab economies including Egypt, whose military provided assurance for security against possible Iranian encroachment. As the uprisings' earlier calls for democracy and freedom metamorphosed into chaotic transitions, the upheaval disrupted stable relations, led to preference divergence among traditional partners and deepened grievances that were less pronounced under the status quo. The political shifts not only intensified the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, but also empowered the Russian role and set fractures into the US-led alliances.

The US-led alliance which traditionally included Egypt, the Gulf monarchies, and Turkey has been tested by the political reconfigurations of the post-uprising moment. On one level, the Egyptian and Gulf positions have diverged on the crisis in Syria and Yemen. Egypt not only opts to refrain from the interventionist role played by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Turkey, but also has kept communication channels open with the Assad regime. The Egyptian policy of restraint was even more pronounced in the Yemeni crisis where Saudi Arabia has been leading its first regional war. Egyptian-Saudi Relations have strained over the Egyptian military's decision to play a minimal role in the war against forces led by Ali Abdullah Saleh and the Houthis in Yemen.[7] The Yemeni crisis exposed the limits of Saudi power and increased Iranian influence over more territories in the region. While the war may help build stronger state institutions in Saudi Arabia, the more immediate negative repercussions are evident in the country's economic position. According to reports, the Saudi government tight-fisted its budget for 2016, reflecting scaled-back revenue expectations and lower spending on subsidies because of sinking oil prices and the war in Yemen. The kingdom has been witnessing its first deficit in almost two decades (Habboush 2015). The kingdom is also losing some of its relative leverage in global oil markets due to its decision to forgo its historic role of swing producer and actually ramp up production despite increase in global oil output.[8] Meanwhile, Iran's ability to alter the balance of power in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon is now extended to Yemen. In each of these cases, Tehran was able to spread its influence by cultivating non-state actors and militant groups, and exploiting the fears and grievances of religious minorities, namely Shiite Arabs (Sadjadpour and Ben Taleblu 2015). Iran's influence has been possible during times of fragmentation and governments' political weakness. Iran also benefited from its nuclear deal with the West, as well as from cooperation with Russia especially on the Iraqi and Syrian crises.[9]

On another level, US-Turkish relations have been strained by their diverging positions on the Kurdish involvement in Syria, especially the fight against the radical forces of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Turkey,

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[7]   In Yemen, the transition soon gave way to a civil war where opposing sides sought support from the regions' oil powers. Refusing to give up on his political power, the country's former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, a long-time ally of the US and Saudi Arabia aimed to boost his position by playing the sectarian card and inviting Iran into the Yemeni crisis.

[8]   In addition, US shale oil production is putting limits to Saudi Arabia's power. For more on Saudi Arabia's financial challenges see (Daiss 2016).

[9]   Both Iran and Russia reflected stronger support for their allies, a trait that is much appreciated by most regimes in the Arab world whose domestic legitimacy is not only in doubt but also in flux after the uprisings. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force (IRGC-QF) Commander, Qassem Soleimani, reportedly said: 'We're not like the Americans. We don't abandon our friends' (Sadjadpour and Ben Taleblu 2015).

powerhouse of the Middle East and NATO member, has relied on its strategic position and pragmatist foreign policy to maintain open channels with warring sides. It has maintained strong relations with Saudi Arabia without alienating Iran. It has mobilised against the Assad regime yet still was able to rebuild broken bridges with Russia. Its effort to work with both Iran and Russia to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis threatens a lesser impact for the US and its Gulf allies.

As old alliances fracture, new ones are bound to emerge. The positioning of Iran in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen, its rapprochement with Russia and Turkey, in addition to increasing economic relations with European counterparts following its UN nuclear deal, are threats to Israeli's security as much as to Saudi Arabia's. Iran, with its nuclear deal has more access and opportunities to emerge as a global player. While its relationship with the US may be more in doubt under the new Trump administration and increasing right-wing populism in the US, its relationship with Europe is a much smoother sail. That both Saudi Arabia and Israel see a common enemy in radical violent religious movements such as ISIL but a much bigger enemy in the rise of Iran, may produce conditions of possibility for enhancing security cooperation between the two states, albeit on a more covert level.

Conclusion: The Region in the Post-Uprising Moment

Numerous writings have claimed the failure of states as a result of the uprisings and how they have led to destruction, yet such analyses may be missing an important aspect in the emergence of violent actors: the role of strong capable states in creating these irregular militias. The strength of armed militias could not have endured but for sustained support from patron states. Iran fostered Hezbollah and al-Hashd al-Shaabi in Iraq. The emergence of ISIL, Jabhat al-Nusra and other militias that are active in Syria could not have been possible without the opened borders of Turkey, Lebanon, and Iran, logistical support from Turkey and the US and funding from all of the above. Wielding an unmistakable will and power, the Turkish government kept its borders between Europe and Syria accessible to thousands of foreign fighters. With the fall of the Qaddafi regime in Libya, stashes of arms were lifted from the North African embattled state to the conflict in Syria. The flow of human bodies across the Turkish and Iranian borders was paralleled by adequate funding from oil-rich countries, all under the supervision of the US and Russia.

While the region's conflicts have highlighted the irregular armies model and its impact on the destruction of nation-states, the region still experiences the old pattern of irregular armies that fight to establish nation-states. That

Kurdish forces fighting in Syria is a case in point. Their fight against ISIL not only aims to curry favour with the US, but is also a campaign to showcase its nationalism and capability of statehood.

The uprisings exposed the extent to which ideational sources, in particular religious rhetoric, wield power over demographic groups especially the youth in the region. The political mobilisation of the uprisings may have given power to radical political groups, but it did not create them. The jihadi ideology has existed since the mid-1970s, and despite some efforts to eradicate it, it persevered for various domestic reasons, with external military intervention in the region providing further stimulation (Pape 2005).

Youth are also the victims of wars and violence. More than 13 million children, equivalent to around 40% of all school-age children in the region, are being deprived of a school education because of conflict. Current estimates indicate that the number of inhabitants living in countries vulnerable to conflict in the Arab region is expected to rise from around 250 million in 2010 to over 350 million in 2020 (Arab Human Development Report 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality).

The Arab uprisings may have exposed the extent to which the current interests of regional and international parties diverged from old contracts/ alliances but the uprisings have not created them. Egypt's re-alliance with Russia has been fuelled by its military's desire to diversify sources of armament beyond the US. Turkey's re-orientation towards Iran, Russia, and Islamic states in Central Asia reflects a deep interest to direct its economic and geostrategic power to gain influence in neighbouring Asia and not to confine its movement to European and Western circles. The post-uprising moment may bring geography more power to bear on political configurations in the Middle East than before.

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7

Science, Technology and Security in the Middle East

YANNIS A. STIVACHTIS

Science and technology enhance the capabilities of states and societies to obtain and transform resources necessary for their development and advancement. On the other hand, lack of scientific knowledge and access to technology not only affects a country's level of development but also jeopardises its national security. In an anarchic international system, security interdependence implies that the security of a state is closely tied to the security of the other states and especially its neighbours. Since national securities are interdependent, the security or insecurity of a state may have a considerable impact not only on the security of its immediate neighbours but also on the security of the whole region in which it is geographically embedded (regional security).

Technology, as a factor affecting national security, is closely related to population growth. The greater the population growth and the greater the pace of the technological development of a country, the greater the likelihood its activities and interests beyond its borders will expand. The greater the demographic growth and the less rapid the technological development of a country, the greater the likelihood it will face significant socio-economic problems and instability (Choucri 2002, 98). In other words, unevenness in the interactive growth and development within and across the societies contributes to unevenness in the size, development, and capabilities of such societies, to differential capabilities among them, and to competitions, conflicts, and violence (Choucri 1984).

As an engine of growth, the potential of technology is still largely untapped in the Middle East where states not only lack adequate skilled labour and capital, but also use these factors less efficiently. Therefore, the purpose of

this chapter is to investigate the impact of science and technology on national and regional security in the Middle East. In doing so, the chapter is divided into six sections. The first section discusses the relationship between technology and development, while the second section explores the relevance of science and technology to security. Drawing on a historical analysis, the third section examines the reasons science and technology have not, so far, played an effective role in the development of Middle Eastern states and societies. The next section identifies and discusses the instruments and patterns of technological development in the contemporary Middle East. The last section of the paper offers a sectoral analysis of the relationship between science and technology, on the one hand, and security (national and regional) in the Middle East on the other.

The Technology-Development Relationship

The commonly held view is that technology and development are strongly linked with development driven by technology and technology serving as a key indicator of national development. In reality, however, technological change is often highly problematic with respect to its socio-economic and environmental implications as it may exacerbate inequality, uneven development, ecological degradation, and/or social exclusion (Murphy 2017, 1). A critical understanding of the drivers, dynamics, implications, and geographically uneven distributions of technology and technological change is thus an important component of development studies and practice (Murphy 2017, 1).

Generally speaking, technology is the branch of knowledge that deals with the creation and use of technical means and their interrelation with life, society, and the environment, drawing upon such subjects as industrial arts, engineering, sciences, and applied sciences. In this sense, technology is embedded deeply in social, cultural, economic, and political systems. Due to its spatial diffusion, technology has uneven geographies of use, significance, and impact (Murphy 2017, 1).

With respect to development, technology is seen as an essential driver and determinant of socioeconomic, cultural, environmental, and political change. Economically, technology can increase national productivity through improvements to the efficiency of production and logistics, while encouraging and enhancing innovation and knowledge creation. Alternatively, technology can exacerbate socioeconomic differences and create uneven development within and between countries and regions. Culturally, technology has a profound effect on the norms and identities that help to constitute particular social groups. Environmentally, technology can contribute in significant ways to

greener and more sustainable societies or exacerbate ecological degradation through intensified or expanded impacts locally and globally. Politically, technology can have democratising effects (e.g. the Facebook revolutions in the Middle East) or it can facilitate enhanced forms of repression or surveillance by state authorities (Hanska 2016, 32).

Science and technology are key drivers of development. This is because technological and scientific revolutions and innovations underpin economic advances and contribute to improvements in health systems, education, and infrastructure. Thus, developments in science and technology have profound effects on economic and social development.

Apart from constituting a salient political issue, access to and application of technology are critical to a country's development. By the same token, access to high quality education, especially higher education, is essential for the creation of scientific knowledge. Science and technology are the differentiating factors among countries separating those that are able to tackle poverty effectively by growing and developing their economies, and those that are not. The level of countries' economic development depends to a large extent on their ability to grasp and apply insights from science and technology and use them creatively. To promote technological advances, developing countries need to invest in quality education for youth, continuous skills training for workers and managers, as well as to ensure that knowledge is shared as widely as possible across society. Moreover, adopting appropriate technologies leads directly to higher productivity, which is the key to growth. Creativity and technological innovation emerge naturally in societies that have large stocks and flows of knowledge. In sharp contrast, in societies with limited stocks of knowledge, creative people feel constrained and migrate to other countries thereby causing 'brain drain' to their own countries and societies. Such societies are prone to remain in poverty and dependency.

Hence, in the presence of many social, economic and defence needs and demands, access to quality education as well as the adoption and application of appropriate technologies do not only constitute a policy question but also a question of policy priorities. Moreover, both of these questions are tied to a country's political development.

Science, Technology and Security

It has been suggested (Stivachtis 2011, 397–422) that development and security are interrelated. Indeed, the end of the Cold War allowed the identification of development with human security (UNDP 1993, 2). For instance, the *Declaration on the Right to Development* (1986, 2) asserts that

all human beings have a human right to development and that

> development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural
> and political process, which aims at the constant improvement
> of the well-being of the entire population and of all its
> individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful
> participation in development and in the fair distribution of
> benefits resulting therefrom.

Development has been consequently subdivided into several sectors, such as political development, economic development, and socio-cultural development. In addition, development and the environment are inextricably linked (UNDP 1994, 24–40). Moreover, it has been shown (Stivachtis 2011, 414) that there is a close relationship between development sectors and security sectors in the sense that the absence or presence of development in a particular sector impacts security and *vice versa*. For example, political development is related to political security, while economic development is related to economic security. As a result, lack of political development has the potential of enhancing political insecurity.

Yet, as in the case of security, problems in one development sector may affect other development sectors and, as an extension, the corresponding security sectors. For instance, political underdevelopment may affect economic development and, therefore, a state's economic security. This means that security and development can, to a great extent, be operationalised in the same way (Mittleman 1988, 22). Yet, it has been argued (Stivachtis 2011, 415) that national security becomes inextricably connected to national development. This means that neither development can be achieved without security nor security without development.

One of the most important questions in the field of security and development studies is whether a particular security or development sector is so significant that policy priority should be given to it. The expectation is that if problems/threats in this sector are addressed this would have positive effects on the other sectors.

Addressing this question, political scientists stress the political prerequisites for economic development – political order and stability – implying the presence and function of viable institutions and enforceable rules (Almond and Coleman 1960; Almond and Powell 1966). For example, whether political instability in a country may result from the inability of the national government to promote economic development and create sustainable and effective welfare mechanisms, or from its inability to manage social and political

change in a period of rapid economic growth, political development appears to be fundamental.

As far as the last point is concerned, the record contradicts the conventional wisdom that the way to avoid political instability is to stimulate economic development and industrialisation (Olsen 1963). Empirical research shows that whatever the long-term benefits of modernisation, its short-term impact tends to be more instability and sometimes violence (Skocpol 1994; Feierabend *et al*. 1966). Thus, discussion about development has emphasised political development, meaning the need to establish institutions capable of managing socio-political tensions and preventing their escalation into violence that may threaten the security of the state and its citizens.

However, since developing states have widely divergent social, economic, and political attributes, this diversity implies the absence of a unique policy formula that could apply without distinction to any developing state.

Development enhances state power and capabilities and enhances national security. On the other hand, security provides the fertile ground for development while any threats to security ultimately affect development. Underdevelopment, on the other hand, increases the vulnerability of the state thereby enhancing its insecurity. Science and technology are key drivers of development and therefore central not only to a country's socio-economic development, but also its national security.

Science, Technology and Development in the Middle East: A Historical Account

Over the centuries, scientific and technological advances have repeatedly enabled foreign powers to interfere with the functioning of Middle Eastern economies, as well as to undermine the security of the less advanced countries of the region. This section will discuss some of the main technology-related events that led to this situation, which continues today.

Following the rise of Islam in the seventh century, science and technology flourished in the Islamic world to a far greater extent than in the West. Muslim rulers promoted the translation of Greek philosophy and science, and then encouraged further scientific exploration in numerous fields including mathematics, astronomy, medicine, pharmacology, optics, chemistry, and physics. Much of the knowledge developed by the Muslims and transmitted to the Europeans enabled Europe to emerge from the Dark Ages into the Renaissance (Saliba 2011).

Until the sixteenth century, the Arab world was connected by a unique system of trade and transport that unified its large population scattered over vast areas of land and sea. The system sustained the economy of each Arab state, underpinned trade with Europe, and fed into the various international trading systems (Zahlan 1999, 261).

In fact, the Arabs had developed an effective transnational trading system which reached its peak in the eighth to sixteenth centuries and which was based on local technological inputs, such as skilled merchants and caravan managers, navigators with extensive geographic knowledge efficiently operated ports and trading emporia, scientifically bred camels and seaworthy dhows (Bahlan 1999, 262). Trust and mutual dependence among closely knit social groups prevailed. The socioeconomic support of the transport and trading system enhanced regional harmony and the stability of local communities. The mechanics of the Arab trading system were so flexible that traders could move their business readily from place to place in response to changes in supply and demand, or in order to avoid ruthless rulers or areas of conflict (Bahlan 1999, 263). Since trade brought prosperity and employment, local governments sought to attract traders, and provide security and support facilities to ease the process of trade and the life of the traveller.

The Arab transport system was responsible for the large–scale circulation of people and information. This included the diffusion of agricultural products, inventions, and all types of knowledge. Thus, the trade and transport system had a powerful economic, social, and cultural impact. It also integrated the economies of Arab countries with each other and with those of Asia, the Mediterranean, and Africa.

According to Antoine Zahlan (1999), there are three main reasons Middle Eastern countries lag behind in terms of technology and scientific knowledge: their loss of trade and transportation systems, the effects of the Industrial Revolution on Arab economies, and the political and economic effects of the colonisation and neo-colonisation processes.

The Collapse of the Arab Trade and Transport Systems

The collapse of the Arab trade and transportation systems was induced by Portuguese technological advances in ship design, navigation, and naval warfare (Guilmartin 1974). The strategic breakthrough was the invention of transoceanic ships. These ships could carry a large number of guns and could navigate the high seas. The Arabs failed to acquire or develop the necessary technological capabilities to match Portuguese naval vessels.

The small but powerful Portuguese fleet interfered violently with trade between the Arab world, Asia, and Africa (Guilmartin 1974). The Portuguese used their superior naval force to harass and interfere with shipping, attack coastal towns, loot ships, and pillage coastal towns. Ottoman technical assistance to the cities of the Arabian peninsula ultimately saved the people of the Arab coastal towns from outright massacre by the Portuguese. For the next three centuries, the forces of the Ottoman Empire protected the region from European devastation. However, the Ottomans themselves were unable to cope with European technological challenges and their empire eventually collapsed.

Portugal's naval technology diffused to the European Atlantic states. By the early seventeenth century, the British, the Dutch, and the French had displaced the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean. Between 1620 and 1670, these three countries introduced a new innovation: the East India Company which controlled fleets, marketing systems, finances, storage space, and armies (Platt 1977). While Arab trade depended on the efforts of a very large number of traders operating in a small scale and each working on their own, the East India Company was centrally managed possessing the financial resources necessary to exercise monopolistic behaviour and thus control markets. Consequently, the East India Company quickly managed to eliminate Arab long distance trade (Platt 1977).

By the eighteenth century, trade routes throughout the Middle East were being reoriented toward coastal towns and European trade and transport. Whereas the Arab international trading system had been heavily land-based and internal, the new system was heavily dependent on European shipping and trade (Bahlan 1996, 264). This loss was soon followed by the progressive displacement of internal land-based long distance travel services by European shipping. No serious Arab competition arose to challenge the rapid development of European Mediterranean shipping firms (Headrick 1981).

When in 1832 the French occupied Algeria, and later Tunisia and Morocco, they sought to close all trans-Saharan routes, which were being used by resistance movements and by 'clandestine' trade (Bahlan 1999, 265). Thus by the early twentieth century, the complex and rich system of internal trans-Saharan transport had been dismantled. Two further technological developments accelerated the dismantling of regional and local trade and transport systems: the construction and operation of railway systems by foreign firms, and the construction of the Suez Canal (Headrick 1981).

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the national systems of trade and transport had disintegrated to the level where they were replaced by totally

imported systems with very little local participation (Zahlan and Zahlan 1978). The displacement of camel-based transport technology with railway and steamship technologies without the transfer of mechanical and new naval technologies meant that the Arabs lost the employment generated by operating their system of transport (Headrick 1981). Even today, Arab countries remain unable to acquire the employment derived from operating and maintaining their extensive transport systems.

The strength of the Arab and Muslim worlds was based on a common market and not on political unity. Although many Arab countries were in conflict, this did not eliminate trade and cultural exchanges between them. But as the Arabs were unable to acquire, adopt, or develop alternative technologies to contain technological challenges, which eventually led to the collapse of the transnational Arab trading system, the forces that bound the Arab communities to each other were loosened and the cohesiveness of the Arab world began to weaken.

Industrial Revolution

The second phase of technology dismantling was induced by the Industrial Revolution, which undermined the traditional textile industries that were firmly based in Arab countries. Steam power, machine production, chemical sciences and technology, electrification, petroleum production and refining, communication technologies, radio, electric power and engineering, and countless advances in medical science, construction technologies, city planning, and management systems all had dramatic consequences for the Arab world.

Every technological advance in Europe contributed to the continuing decline of inter-Arab cohesiveness (Zahlan and Zahlan 1997). The acquisition of Western military technologies, beginning with the Ottomans and Muhammad Ali, led to the progressive divorce of military institutions from their local environment and to their progressive integration into the military-industrial-intelligence complexes of Western powers.

New technology was imported in a dependent mode and packaged with its consultants, contractors, operators, and financiers, and without any effort being made to develop new technologies at home (Zahlan and Zahlan 1991). The cost of this dependency was enormous as were the resulting economic and political consequences of the Egyptian and Ottoman debts: the occupation of Egypt in 1882, and the collapse of the economy of the Ottoman Empire.

Colonisation and Independence

The third phase of technology dismantling began with the direct occupation of Arab countries when practically every single important decision was made by the emissaries of the colonial powers. Colonialism affected all aspects of life in the Middle East. The net result was the further divorce of the elites, the culture, and the economy of the region from technical matters (Zahlan 1999, 267).

The fourth phase was induced by political independence. When independence was achieved, the rulers and elites of the new states had little knowledge of contemporary developments in science and technology, which had become so central to the industrialised world in the late twentieth century. Not only did all equipment, industrial supplies, and maintenance services have to be imported, but also Arab countries depended completely on foreign consulting and contracting services (Helie 1973). The new leaders sought to develop their countries through the rapid expansion of educational systems and investment in new industries. Cultural distortions and alienation were intensified by the accelerated programs adopted at this time (Beblawi and Luciani 1987). Because they wished to accelerate the process of development, the new national elites unknowingly adopted methods that ultimately led to even greater technological dependence. As a result, foreign consulting firms conceived and designed enormous projects, foreign accounting and law firms monitored them, and an army of foreign contractors and foreign labour implemented them (Zahlan and Zahlan 1978). Although major things were built, such as power and desalination plants, hospitals, irrigation schemes, enormous dams, transport systems, and airports, locals contributed little to the process (Beblawi and Luciani 1987). However, those who mediated these contracts earned enormous commissions and well-placed people accumulated personal fortunes in the billions of dollars (Zahlan and Zahlan 1984). Meanwhile, the gap between the Arab world and industrial countries has continued to grow, and Arab economies still suffer from chronic stagnation and low productivity.

Components and Instruments of Technology Systems

The major instruments of national technological development are university education systems, research and development (R&D), national consulting and contracting firms, relevant economic and financial institutions to support technological development, and science policy (Zahlan 1996, 269).

There has been a significant and dramatic expansion of the proportion of people in the Middle East who have completed four or more years of higher

education. The number of universities has also increased including a significant number of foreign universities (Kjerfve 2014). Yet, the quality of higher education in the Middle East is among the lowest in the world. Only two or three Arab universities are in the list of the top 500 universities in the world and none is in the top 200. Employers in the region complain that university graduates lack the skills needed to work in the global marketplace. Many are not well-trained in science, mathematics, engineering, and other technical subjects where the jobs are. Furthermore, these graduates lack the 'soft skills', including creativity and teamwork, partly because their training has emphasised memorisation and rote learning (Devarajan 2016).

Much of the emphasis of Arab foreign education has been in science and engineering (Qasem 1998). Doctoral-level knowledge-producing education, however, is still highly underdeveloped in the region and, therefore, specialisation is pursued abroad (Dini *et al*. 2015).

Arab universities have been the leading centres for both basic and applied research in science and technology. The number of professors in Arab universities has increased with the majority of them associated with science and technology (Zahlan 2012). The number of research and development centres also increased with half of them engaging in research in agriculture, nutrition, water and irrigation, marine sciences, and the biological science. The rest focus on oil and petrochemicals, ecology, basic sciences and computer science (Lightfoot 2018). Research activity in Arab countries is thus highly focused on applied subjects, with a priority in medicine and agriculture. Despite the valiant efforts of a number of scientists, basic research is on such a small scale that it is virtually non-existent (Zahlan 2012).

R&D organisations play a major role in successful planning, design, and operation of economic installations. However, because the consulting and contracting services utilised in establishing industrial plants are generally imported on a turnkey basis, the demand for local R&D services is still limited (Sehnaoui 2017). Technological dependence severely constrains the development of the requisite R&D capabilities to support and service the various economic sectors (Zahlan 2014).

Arab science and technology-related human resources are more than adequate and could, in principle, constitute an integrative social factor. But in the absence of rational and appropriate science policies and adequate financial resources, the potential of this human resource is dissipated (Zahlan 2012). The reason for such a low figure is the lack of resources and the absence of demand for services by nationals: both the public and private sectors depend nearly exclusively on foreign firms for technical services (Zahlan 2014).

Arab countries are near the top of the Developing World level of activity, but far below the levels of industrial countries. Thus, although the output may be comparable, the application of scientific findings is more constrained than in other large developing countries where there are no political or economic barriers to the circulation of ideas and expertise (Segal 2018).

The Arab world provides a large market for technology products and services. This can be seen from the large number of identical contracts for the same technology that are awarded repeatedly over short periods of time in a number of technological fields. Such a market provides excellent opportunities for technology transfer because technology is best acquired as part of the repeated undertaking of similar projects (Zahlan 2012). The absence of adequate financial and insurance services to support national consulting and contracting firms, combined with the absence of adequate technology policies, are the main reasons for the slow pace at which technology trickles into the region (Zahlan 1984). Contracts with foreign consulting and contracting firms are in agricultural development, construction, transport systems, industry, educational technologies, aviation, communication, and so on (Emery *et al*. 1986; Zahlan and Zahlan 1991).

Since the national markets for sophisticated technological services of each Arab state are small, any serious effort to transfer technology has to involve substantial Arab economic cooperation. There has been no significant effort to date to implement inter-Arab cooperation in technology. Moreover, the subject of technology transfer to the Arab world has become synonymous with trade (Emery *et al*. 1986; Ilgen and Pempel 1987). In this type of analysis, Arabs are not seen as participant in a process of technological development. The main focus of this approach is on the suppliers of technology rather than the consumers. In addition, emphasis is often placed on the competition among the various industrial powers for the lucrative Arab markets; the behaviour of the Arab trading parties tends to be of minor interest. This is mainly due to the fact that much of the planning and decision-making is done by foreign institutions. The leading Arab development institutions, as well as the Arab governments utilise foreign consulting firms almost exclusively (Zahlan 2014).

In the presence of foreign skills and know-how, the construction of petrochemical plants, refineries, and water desalination plants is well within the capabilities of Arab organisations. Arab firms lack neither the technical expertise, nor the natural, financial, or human resources to undertake such projects. What is missing is a variety of other inputs, such as financial, legal and technical support services that Arab governments do not make available to their national organisations.

Finally, the weakness of Arab science and technology systems in conjunction with the absence of effective science policies in the Arab world have made the economic integration of technological activity very difficult (Zahlan and Zahlan 1980). The inability to formulate and adopt sensible technology policies has contributed to the continuing disintegration of Arab society and culture (Beblawi and Luciani 1987, 27). Unemployment, alienation, marginalisation, and the intensification of civil unrest and violence are all direct or indirect indicators of the absence of an integrated science policy and of the impact of that absence on the economic life of the Arab world (Bizri 2017).

Science, Technology and Security Sectors

In the military sector, the referent object of security is mainly the state. Military action usually threatens the state's physical base (territory and population) and institutions (Buzan 1991, 116–117). The relevance of science and technology to military security is highlighted by the need of states to produce weapons systems necessary for national defence. It is not by accident that due to current conflicts in the region, the major focus of many Middle Eastern states is access to military-related technologies. States that have the necessary technology to produce their own weapons systems find themselves in a better position than those that have to import weapons. This is not only for economic reasons (i.e. impact on trade balance) but also because they can be less politically dependent on weapon supply countries.

When it comes to achieving military self-reliance in the Middle East, technology transfer and the expansion of local production for international export are common objectives of regional countries (Singer 2009). Indeed, in their contacts with the major Western producers of military equipment, some Middle Eastern states have made it clear that 'If Western providers of military equipment want to work with local Arab companies, they will have to transfer their technical knowledge to the ones that are part of a rising indigenous defence sector' (Mouchantaf 2018). However, some analysts are sceptical of this attitude because regional states lack the capability to absorb military technology not only due to the shortage of nationals in the defence industry but also because of the limited access to science, engineering, and mathematics graduates (Mouchantaf 2018).

In the political sector, the referent object of security can be the government or the citizens. Threats may arise as a result of peoples' dissatisfaction with governmental policies or from the attempts of governments to exercise tight control over their citizens in their effort to maintain power. Surveillance and other control-related technologies in the hands of governments, such as

control over the mass media and press show the relevance of technology to political security. On the other hand, the recent Arab uprisings demonstrated that communication technologies, such as the internet (Facebook) and cell phones can be effectively used to organise and coordinate popular resistance to the government (Berman 2017).

Specifically, although text messaging was used extensively in the Arab Spring, it had a limited effect and did not lead to direct political change (Brown 2012). As a tool, it helped individuals to communicate and coordinate, but this impact was indirect. Satellite TV also had more subtle and varying effects. What made the big difference was the use of cell phones, which provided a ubiquitous image and video capture device (Ellis 2011). Anyone possessing a cell phone could document and transmit footage instantly. Without camera-phones, the only actors capable of documenting the 2011 uprisings would have been professional journalists whose coverage is usually lacking in dynamic situations such as the Arab Spring. Cell phone technology also helped to include citizens who were watching events unfold, as they were seeing video and images captured by regular citizens. This mobilised individuals who felt like they too could take part in the protests and have a political voice. Social media and the Internet also had a significant impact on the outcome of the Arab uprisings as they offered the protestors a space to express and develop political viewpoints unhindered by regimes. This is because social networking sites like Facebook have structural features that promote participation and mobilisation (Hanska 2016, 29–30).

On the other hand, the Arab Spring demonstrated that it is quite dangerous to be friends with regime critics on Facebook. For example, the Syrian Electronic Army (SEA) was established to wage online war against Assad opponents. As a result, SEA has attacked domestic sites as well as international targets, such as the Associated Press Twitter account (Ellis 2011).

Technology, however, has a long history of being used in revolutionary movements in the Middle East. For example, during the Iranian revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini produced and distributed tapes of sermons denouncing the Shah, helping to grow dissent in the country. Parallels can also be drawn with the Cedar Revolution of 2005 in Lebanon, where protests occurred after the Lebanese Prime Minister was killed. Citizens demanded an investigation and the withdrawal of Syrian troops from the country (Ellis 2011).

A final aspect of the impact of the internet on the Middle East conflicts involves the utilisation of social media for jihadist recruitment. The phenomenon is particularly relevant in cases of so-called self-radicalisation

where individuals succumb to the lure of extremist propaganda, produced in Middle East sites. Pulled into ISIS circles, some cyber recruits carry out violent acts as 'lone wolves', while others travel to the Middle East in order to fight for the caliphate.

In the societal sector, the referent object of security is collective identities, such as religious or national identities (Buzan 1991, 122–123). As in the political sector, surveillance and other control-related technologies can serve as instruments of power in the hands of governments that aim at controlling particular religious and ethnic groups. This is the reason societal threats can be difficult to disentangle from political ones. On the other hand, targeted social groups may use communication technologies to raise support for their cause or invite external involvement for protection purposes.

In the economic sector, national security issues can emerge involving linkages between economic capability on the one hand, and military capability, power, and socio-political stability on the other (Buzan 1991, 126). Due to its connection to economic development, science and technology become central to economic considerations (Chambers 2015; Ahmed 2018). Moreover, a state's military capability rests, at least partly on the possession of an industrial base capable of supporting the armed forces. The absence or the economic decline of basic industries can, therefore, raise questions about the ability of the state to support independent military production (Buzan and Sen 1990). For example, the desire of several Middle Eastern states to maintain or acquire production capability in key militarily related industries has inserted a national security requirement into the management of the national economy. On the other hand, the pursuit of military research and development has prevented some Middle Eastern states from investing in their civil economy.

Yet, when technology cannot support economic development, economic threats may also enhance domestic instability. The link between economic and political stability generates a set of questions about development, which can easily be seen as national security issues. For example, some Middle Eastern states that are not efficient producers find themselves locked into a cycle of poverty and underdevelopment from which there is no obvious escape. Hence, the governments of those states find themselves having to choose between investing in new technologies and knowledge creation at the expense of lowering the already very low living standards.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) constitute one of the fastest growing sectors in the Middle East. Nevertheless, most of the countries in the Middle East have shown no signs of impending information

revolutions (IRs). The proliferation and ever-more-sophisticated employment of ICTs are critically dependent upon economic factors, as well as the nature of the government and its role in ICT development. Except for Israel and Turkey, every other country in the region is deficient in necessary economic factors or government participation (Burkhart 2003). Thus, it has been argued that despite having high mobile penetration rates, the Middle East lags behind other areas in terms of technological advancement and regional states need to improve technology education and the regulatory framework (Saadi 2017). Moreover, governments need to address information-related security vulnerabilities that threaten the operation of both the private and public sectors and impact national economies.

In the environmental sector, science and technology become extremely relevant due to the need to have an efficient use of natural resources and to protect the environment. The overall aridity of the Middle East has motivated some of the richer countries to search for technological solutions to their water requirements. Through sustained investment in research, they have become experts in water desalination, water recycling, and solar energy. The region's oil-poor countries, however, cannot afford such advanced technologies and remain dependent on more traditional water resources. Yet, the need to secure access to water has led to the utilisation of construction-related technology to create water dams. Unfortunately, while these dams regulate the water flow to cropland, generate vital electricity, and supply potable water, they also introduce environmental problems that have cast a shadow on their overall success. Since the region's major rivers no longer flood to produce natural fertilisers, farmers downstream are forced to use massive amounts of artificial fertilisers, which in turn pollute the regional rivers.

Conclusion

The technological dependence of Arab countries has enhanced their vulnerability to outside interference and reduced their internal, national integration. National integration depends on economic exchanges within society. Dependent technology policies reduce such exchanges. Instead, economic exchanges take place with foreign countries without involving the national population. The counterpart of weak internal cohesiveness is a high degree of dependence on imports. In general the extent of Arab dependence on imports for all necessities of life is striking.

On the positive side, Middle Eastern countries possess enormous human, strategic, and natural resources, which, if efficiently managed and put to effective use, could induce a rapid economic change. But those resources

cannot be put to socioeconomic use because of the underdeveloped state of their national and regional institutions. In other words, socioeconomic development is difficult to achieve in the absence of an adequate level of political development. This situation is a direct consequence of the strength and stability of the prevailing rentier political economy (Beblawi and Luciani 1987). Therefore, Middle East governments need to strengthen their political, legal, and institutional systems, adopt a performance-oriented political economy, and introduce an appropriate science and technology policy.

Today, Arab countries face three major challenges: population pressures, global increase of oil and gas sources, and declining Arab labour productivity. Mounting population pressures will decrease the resources available for undertaking economic reforms. By the year 2050, an expected increase of some 400 million inhabitants will bring the total population to some 700 million. Half of these will be below the age of 18. This young population could be an important force for positive and creative change if provided with proper education and training. The absence of appropriate technology policies, however, could transform this abundant and youthful population into a disruptive and destabilising force. To this, one may add the fact that the expanding number of gas and oil sources worldwide have combined to reduce Arab income and increase the cost of imports. In addition, increasing labour productivity in the newly industrialising countries is reducing the attractiveness of Arab countries for foreign direct investment. Most of the subcontracting to the Arab states now is for low-value-added and low-technology activities. In other words, internal and external factors are not favourable to promoting technological development in the Middle East. However, it is imperative.

The future of any country is contingent on its capacity to produce the goods and services in demand. The major tool in achieving this goal is science and technology. The Middle East has remained outside this competition because Arab states have not sought to acquire the requisite political economy. However, people in the region retain the capacity to alter their future. Thus, a positive response to global technological challenges would require the adoption of a successful program of technology transfer in order to narrow or close the technology gap. Technology transfer takes place over a substantial period of time and is a cumulative and systemic process. Transfer, however, involves changes in a country's political culture, the legal system, the economy, social organisation, and management.

To promote technological advances, Middle Eastern governments should invest in quality education for youth, continuous skills training for workers and managers, and should ensure that knowledge is shared as widely as possible

across society. Yet, particular attention should be given to improving the investment climate, which is crucial, as are the right incentive structures, to guide the allocation of resources, and to encourage research and development. Successful countries have grown their ability to innovate by investing public funding to help finance research and development in critical areas.

The benefits to flow from technological revolution in an increasingly connected and knowledge-intensive world will be seized by those countries that are sensitive and responsive to the rapidly changing environment and nimble enough to take advantage of the opportunities. Those who succeed will make substantial advances in reducing poverty and inequality. Those who do not, will face enormous internal insecurity and will transform themselves into a threat for their neighbours and the region in which they are embedded

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Part III

ISSUES IN MIDDLE EAST SECURITY

8

Unmasking 'Religious' Conflicts and Religious Radicalisation in the Middle East

BETTINA KOCH

Whether it is 'Muslim-Hindu' violence in India, 'Christian-Muslim' violence in Indonesia, 'Buddhist-Muslim' violence in Sri Lanka, 'Sunni-Shia' violence in Iraq, or, indeed, 'Islamic terrorism', the advertent follower of the news or reader of academic journals instantly encounters numerous references to contemporary or more recent conflicts that are deemed 'religious' or 'sectarian'. The marker 'religious conflict' instantly implies a conflict has religious root causes, a conflict is fought in the name of and over religious causes. Thus, the qualifier 'religious' serves simultaneously as a description and as an analysis; although, too often, it is not obvious what an author means when they attach the qualifier 'religious' to a conflict.[1] Moreover, reports of the number of religiously motivated casualties must be approached with caution; frequently, news reports suggest religious motives even in conflicts that are fought along ethnic or tribal lines, while the conflicting parties share similar religious outlooks (BBC News 2013).

Consequently, whenever one aims at discussing conflicts that have a potentially *religious* background, it is mandatory to raise the question *when and under what circumstances does a conflict qualify as a 'religious' or 'sectarian' conflict*? Is it sufficient that at least one party in a conflict has a distinctively religious outlook or identity? Is it sufficient to have 'religious' language involved? Or is it essential that the conflict, in order to qualify as a <u>religious</u> conflict, is fought a) by using religious justification or b) over

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[1] This is even the case for the widely praised study by Brian and Finke (2011).

contested truth claims or dogmata? Moreover, does religion have to be the (main) reason or is it sufficient if it is one of many? Finally, a conflict's transformability needs to be considered. As Hans G. Kippenberg (2011, 199–200) notes, although 'a link between religion and violence is neither impossible nor necessary', a religious interpretation of a conflict may alter its nature. Kippenberg's observation has implications not only for the parties directly involved in a conflict, but also for the (news) reporting of a conflict: altering the narrative might contribute to the creation of a reality that previously did not exist.

To be sure, conflicts are more than just the narrative about them; yet, narratives play a significant part in how conflicts are fought and what means are considered justifiable. For conflicts geographically situated in the Middle East, the tendency of labelling a conflict 'sectarian' or 'religious' is particularly common. Yet, ignoring other possible root causes undermines the possibility for conflict resolution. To tackle the issue of conflicts in the Middle East, this essay is divided into two parts. The first part aims at providing a brief overview of past conflicts in the region, including the changing narratives about them; the second part takes a closer look at the current conflict in Syria.[2]

Religion and Conflicts in the Middle East - A Brief Overview

If one concerns oneself with conflicts in the Middle East, then the focus lies instantly on the religion(s) of Islam, Shia-Sunni conflicts, and the concept of *jihad*. Yet, as Michael Bonner (2006, 120) notes, even the great *fitna*, the strife in the Muslim community after the third calif's death, was fought 'over leadership, morality, and the allocation of resources'. Bonner's observation suggests we be cautious when interpreting inter-communal conflict as religious right from the beginning of the history of Islam. Nevertheless, because the conflict was fought, as far as leadership was concerned, over two caliphs (successors) and, thus, assuming that the caliphate is associated with religious leadership and rule, it allows for religious reinterpretation.

Although contemporary Islamist authors argue that at the heart of Islam lies the desire of an Islamic state that has to be created, if necessary, by force, Azmeh Wayel (2016) suggests that the Islamists' conceptions of the caliphate, understood as religious rule in a religious state, as a 'blue-print' for Islamic governance is essentially a misconception. Similar arguments can be brought forward against narratives of a 'Golden Age' during Muhammad's time in Medina. Here, it might be appropriate to speak of 'Golden Age' in the plural. Despite the fact that most Islamists today refer to Medina, Mecca,

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[2]   The essay's first part draws upon Koch (2015).

Damascus, Baghdad, or Delhi as similarly associated with golden ages of Islam that, ideally, have to be restored. Moreover, as Khálid Durán (1983, 712) notes, often 'it is difficult to assess what the "Medinese Model" really amounts to'. Finally, as Olivier Roy suggests (not completely without some mockery), despite the fact that Prophet Muhammad's time serves as a dominant vision today, it is not a vision that is

> a transition of the past (why would it have taken Muslims fourteen centuries to notice that only the Prophet's model of polity is legitimate?). [...] When they insist on the need to return to the time of the Prophet, Islamists and neofundamentalists alike are the first to say that no political formation in the Muslim world ever corresponded to a true Islamic state. The question of the state is, indeed, a very modern question (Roy 2007, 58, 62).

Yet, despite the current emphasis on the 'restoration' of the caliphate and the establishment of a truly Islamic state, even extremist movements like al-Qaida or the Islamic State disagree on the necessity of a caliphate and, if it is assumed to be necessary, whether it should come into place by force or as a result of a (longer) transformative process. While al-Qaida's al-Nusra Front regards the establishment of a caliphate and an Islamic state as rather a long-term goal and considers anti-Shiite sectarian violence contrary to its mission, Islamic State's Zarqawi and his successor Baghadi both see sectarian violence and the immediate formation of a caliphate as central to their ideology (Celso 2015, 48). It should be obvious from the disagreement between two of the most extreme Islamist movements about the legitimacy of sectarian violence that sectarianism is not necessarily at the heart of most conflicts in the Middle Eastern region.

Despite al-Qaida's and the Islamic State's extreme violence and, particularly for the latter, its powerful ideology, as Bente Scheller (2013, 39) notes, 'it may be more accurate to say that they [the Islamists] hijacked media attention – partly due to their agenda, but to no lesser extent because of the special focus on them that blew their significance out of proportion'. Although one cannot deny tendencies of re-Islamisation in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, including demands for Islamised states, one might be well advised to read this trend rather as a rejection of authoritarian secular rule and a demand for a state that 'exclude[s] corruption and personal power' (Roy 2007, 62–3). Another aspect that should not be neglected may be a clash between conservatism and a revolutionary, modernising approach. This tension as a potential source of conflict is particularly visible in the writings of al-Afghani and Ali Shari'ati but is of similar relevance in violent conflicts in

Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century (Koch 2014).

If one looks at two of the most prominent conflicts, the Iranian Revolution and the still ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, one may observe another phenomenon, namely the phenomenon of religious reinterpretation that also displays internal tensions between conservative and progressive forces. In a recent essay, Hans G. Kippenberg (2016) exemplarily reconstructs the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to show how a conflict over a territory eventually becomes redefined and reinterpreted as a conflict rooted in religious causes. Kippenberg shows how the conflict that was initially framed and understood within the context of International Law, transformed into a conflict that was interpreted as an essential part of salvific history. This transformation happened on both sides.

A few days prior to the Six Days War, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook raised (with reference to Joel 4:2) the biblical issue of a divided country, although by then the majority of the Israeli citizens appreciated the partition of the previous British mandated territory by the United Nations. After Israel's victory in the Six Days War, followers of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook reinterpreted the war as a war of salvation. Soon thereafter, some of his supporters settled in the West Bank. Israel's loss of territory in 1973, then, was interpreted as divine punishment. In this reading, the government had failed to act in accordance with the divine mandate given to the Israeli people. The messianic interpretation set a reinterpretation of the conflict in motion: the land is holy; Jewish settlements speed up salvation; the Palestinians have no right to the territory. After the Oslo peace process, the tensions both between more secular and religiously minded people and between Israelis and Palestinians escalated, culminating in the 1994 Goldstein massacre in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron that left about 30 praying Muslims dead and more than 100 others wounded (Kippenberg 2016, 69–71).

A similar reinterpretation of the conflict occurred on the Palestinian side. The *Palestine Liberation Organisation* (PLO), founded in 1964, intended to represent all Palestinians, independently whether they were Christians or Muslims. While accepting the initial UN partition, the PLO framed their resistance against Israel in secular terms as a fight of the Arab people against imperialism. Their counterpart, the Muslim Brotherhood, first favoured re-Islamising Palestinian Muslims over actively and violently resisting Israel. Yet, stimulated by the Iranian Revolution, a new generation of militant Muslims disapproving of the Muslim Brotherhood's the-time-has-not-yet-come-approach emerged. Militant Muslim groups mushroomed, leading to the first *intifada* in 1987. In an attempt to undermine the PLO's authority in coordinating the first *intifada*, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the founder of the

Islamic Centre, initiated the formation of the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Hamas*) as one of the wings of the Muslim Brotherhood. While the PLO, following the logic of the 1947 UN resolution, continued to frame the conflict in national and pan-Arabic terms, *Hamas* forcefully aimed at devising the conflict in religious language: *Hamas* increasingly invoked the language of *jihad* and martyrdom; in the process, *Hamas* denied Israel all rights to Palestine, shaping a language of *Israel or Islam* ('Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it') (Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement 1988).

Eventually, the way *Hamas* devised the conflict in Islamic terms mirrors almost exactly the Jewish reinterpretation of the conflict with reference and as an integral part of salvific history. Despite the fact that both sides of the conflict engaged in religious reinterpretations of the conflict and in the process contributed to religious radicalisation, the conflict itself is still a conflict over territory. Yet, the religious reinterpretation has created new realities that removed the initial cause of the conflict from sight.

The process of reinterpreting a conflict in religious terms that goes hand in hand with religious radicalisations is perhaps even more visible in the Iranian Revolution. Karen A. Feste (1996, 33) identifies as one of the most lasting results of the Iranian Revolution that 'Islamist movements have become a central force on the political landscape of the Arab world'. Furthermore, she emphasises that '[c]onservative and anti-Western sentiments in the Middle East were strengthened significantly by the Iranian revolution'. Yet, as Rob Leurs (2012) has shown, that the Iranian Revolution eventually turned in its perception into the Islamic Revolution of which Khomeini became the face is, at least partly, also the outcome of Western media coverage.

Indeed, if one takes a closer look at the parties and movements that were engaged in the revolution, one has reason to doubt whether the people's desired outcome was a theocratic state. In addition to the more secular oriented parties like *Tudeh* (The People's Party of Iran) and *The National Front*, particularly three groups are worth mentioning: The *Marxist Feda'i*, the *Islamic Mujahedin*, and the *Marxist Mujahedin*. The members of these guerrilla groups are part of the young intelligentsia. The *Marxist Feda'i* group is an offspring of *Tudeh* and the *National Front*'s Marxist wing. Most members of this group have a secular modern middle class background, though the other two groups also attract people with more traditional backgrounds. Despite the fact that the guerrilla movements did not receive much credit for their role in the Iranian Revolution, these organisations 'delivered the regime its coup de grâce' (Abrahamian 1982, 495). Another indication that for many the desired outcome was not an Islamic theocracy can be seen in a statement

of the *People's Fedayi* (1979) that was published instantly after the revolution. The statement raises the concern that Khomeini's appeal to Islam might turn out to be just another means of oppression:

> But if, on the contrary, the purpose of appealing to Islam and its teachings is the repressing of every opposing thought, form an opinion, the chaining of thought and revival of an inquisition and instruments of repression, the revival of the slogan of 'only one party' and the muffling of every freedom-seeking voice under the pretext of defending the Koran and the Shari'a, we are certain every liberationist patriot will condemn it and we believe that the people also will rise to expose and destroy it because they see it as a ploy in the hands of imperialism and reaction.

By contrast, members of *Tudeh* did not seem to expect the creation of a theocratic state as the revolution's outcome. On the contrary, at first, *Tudeh* aims at demonstrating that their party's goals are not in conflict, but in total agreement with Islam (Tabari 1979, 29–30). Later in an interview, however, Iraj Eskandari, the Secretary General of the *Tudeh* party, admits some disagreements with the religious leaders. Yet, for Eskandari (1979, 30b), these disagreements were only an issue 'if the matter concerned the creation of a theocratic state. But as far as we know, the Iranian religious leaders have not called at all for anything of the sort'.

The outcome of the revolution as an Islamic revolution certainly came for some with some surprise. As Morteza Motahari (1985, 208), the chief-ideologue of the Iranian Revolution has put it, Khomeini 'fought against oppression, injustice, colonialism and exploitation'. These issues can be read in religious as well as secular terms. Prior to the revolution, Khomeini consistently translated his message to the general public into secular language. Thus, the Iranian people had no reason to assume that Khomeini would consider the guardianship of the jurists as the *only* legitimate and just version of government. In this context it is worth noting that Ervand Abrahamian sees some roots of the Iranian Revolution in the 1953 coup. One significant side effect can be seen in the destroying of the base for more secular-oriented political parties, particularly *Tudeh* and the *National Front*. Although unintendedly, it strengthened the 'Islamic "fundamentalist" movements' (Abrahamian 2008, 122). As Misagh Parsa (1989, 1) suggests,

> [t]he revolutionary struggle was largely carried out by a coalition of classes and political groups, each mobilised by separate interests and conflicts. Eventually, political power

was transferred to a religious faction led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who by then had garnered overwhelming popular support.

Thus, it is important to note that, although religious movements and a charismatic religious leader were involved in the revolution, these religious forces were not the only forces that carried out the protests. Yet, the more secular oriented groups failed to have their voice heard; for Khomeini and his followers, they served as a means to a religious end.

Religion and the Conflict in Syria

The question of who dominates the discourse about a conflict is also of some significance in the still ongoing Syrian conflict. While the current conflict has a long pre-history and has turned in parts into proxy-warfare with a number of regional powers directly or indirectly involved, it is useful to consider the event that triggered the civil war and humanitarian disaster in Syria. For this, we have to go back to the Syrian city of Dara'a in February 2011. Here, we meet 10 year old Abdulrahman al-Krad and his friends in the school yard. Inspired by the graffiti from the uprisings in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt Abdulrahman and his friends saw on TV, Abdulrahman buys a spray can with yellow paint and starts spraying some graffiti on the school walls. Eventually, he aims at spraying 'You've plundered the country, al-Assad'. Yet, Abdulrahman is not good at spelling and, accidentally, he omits the Alif in Assad, thus writing al-Sad, the dam or dike, instead of al-Assad, the lion. Neither Abdulrahman nor his friends realise that they did something that could get them into trouble; they were just playing.

The next day in school, all students had to take part in a spelling competition. Abdulrahman repeats his initial spelling error and was identified as the one who was responsible for the graffiti. He got arrested, interrogated, and tortured by the Syrian secret police. His father and at least 16, maybe 20, other children, all between nine and 15 years old, were also arrested and tortured.

At first, their fathers protested in front of the secret service headquarters, demanding their children back. Instead, the fathers experienced further humiliation. Eventually, this was one humiliation too many. Thereafter, the protesters demanded not just their children back, but also the governor's resignation. First, the regime responded with teargas; soon, the regime moved from teargas to sharp munition. On March 18, the first protestors died. With the slogan, 'Our Souls, our blood, we sacrifice for you, Dara'a', the protests spread throughout Syria (Krüger 2016). The regime's reaction, thus,

has unnecessarily provoked the Syrian uprising that eventually escalated into the current civil war.

As many other rulers in the past, Bashar al-Assad has ignored fourteenth century Ibn Jama'a's advice when dealing with sectarians who revolt against their ruler's injustice. Ibn Jama'a (1934, 16.1–2) suggests that the ruler is advised to restore justice and fight the protesters only if they continue to revolt after justice has been restored. If they repent, he should accept their repentance. If they persist, he has to fight them. Instead of removing the apparent injustice, the Assad regime instantly turned violently against the protesters.

If one keeps in mind what actually sparked the conflict in Syria, one may instantly have some doubts about narratives that picture the conflict in Syria as just another sectarian or religious conflict. At the beginning, this was certainly not the case. Yet, reframing the narrative of the conflict instantly took place. The regime promptly accused the opposition of being sectarian Islamists. Eventually, each group accused each other of pursuing sectarian goals. By its enemies, the Assad-regime was and still is frequently framed as 'Alawite regime' (Phillips 2015, 359, 365). Yet, this does not mean that there is no religious dimension to it. In 2011, Assad's supporters, based on pre-existing fears, instantly assumed that the opposition could adopt a sectarian agenda. Yet, as Christopher Phillips (2015, 361) puts it

> [o]n the regime side numerous Sunni bureaucrats dependent on government pay checks remained loyal, as did many in the middle class, including conservative Sunni merchants in Damascus and Aleppo, even if some secretly aided the opposition. [...] Indeed, after the rebels attacked Aleppo in 2012, the mostly Sunni city was divided among economic, not sectarian lines: the wealthy west remained loyal while the rebels made a base in the poor east.

Nonetheless, the sectarian fear was not totally without reason. Since Hafez al-Assad took power for real in 1970, both members of the Assad family as well as high-ranking officials of the Ba'th Party had to suffer through periods of, although not always successful, assassination attempts, usually exercised by members of a more militant branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Neither Hafez al-Assad nor his son Bashar, who has been in power since 2000, however, has any sympathy for Islamist movements or ideas. To some degree, parts of the current Islamist outlook of the civil war can be seen as a backlash from the Islamist violence that fractured Syria in 1979–1982. Triggered by the killing of 83 Alawite cadets at the Military Artillery School in

Aleppo, the regime's military and newly formed pro-regime militias acted forcefully against the opposition, not shying away from large scale atrocities and massacres; the regime even assassinated opposition leaders and journalists living in exile. Similar to today's situation, the Islamist uprising did not have the support of the majority of the Syrian population. As today, the rift exists more along class than creed lines. However, the crackdown on the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups led many into exile; some joined the Afghan battlefield or even moved up to high ranks within the al-Qaida nomenclature, including the leading al-Qaida ideologists Abu Mas'ab al-Suri and Abu Khalil al-Suri. The latter served as top al-Qaida representative in Syria (Lia 2016, 546, 548, 551, 556).

Yet, instead of becoming a symbol of unity, the legacy of the 1979 revolt has turned into a symbol of discord that illustrates the widened 'gap between political Islamists and hardline jihadists on the utility and legitimacy of armed struggle'. While the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood distances itself from the hardliners, the jihadists oppose all political and non-violent means of regime change. For the hardliners 'it is all about how to learn to fight more effectively and harness all other efforts towards this aim, with a particular emphasis on how to raise and sustain ideological support for the "armed jihad only" position' (Phillips 2015, 557–8).

It is worth noting, however, that Hafez al-Assad's preoccupation with security made the tension between Islamist forces and the regime more severe than necessary. By security Hafez al-Assad meant the regime's or the state's security, not the Syrian citizens' security. His obsession with security certainly displayed some paranoid features; regime security, Hafez al-Assad considered an end in itself. The paranoia and regime's security obsession certainly did not go away when Bashar al-Assad took office. In order to consolidate his power base but also to address economic stagnation, Bashar al-Assad initiated economic reform that aimed at the integration of the Syrian economy into the world economy through market liberalisation. Yet, as it turned out, these reforms were almost exclusively to the advantage of the "sons and daughters of the Ba'this' nomenklatura," who chose business careers rather than following their fathers in political or military careers' (Scheller 2013, 24). As a result, wealth became accumulated in even fewer hands. Simultaneously, Bashar al-Assad cut the farmers' diesel and fertiliser subsidies.

These economic reforms that disfavoured the mostly Sunni peasant population coincided with the 2006–2010 major draught and caused mass migrations into urban areas and certainly undermined the Sunni peasantry's support of the regime. In addition, the economic reforms weakened state

institutions. Some of the state functions, particularly in the social sector, were filled by sub-state groups with a religious or ethnic identity and, thus, fuelled sectarian identities (Scheller 2013, 367–8).
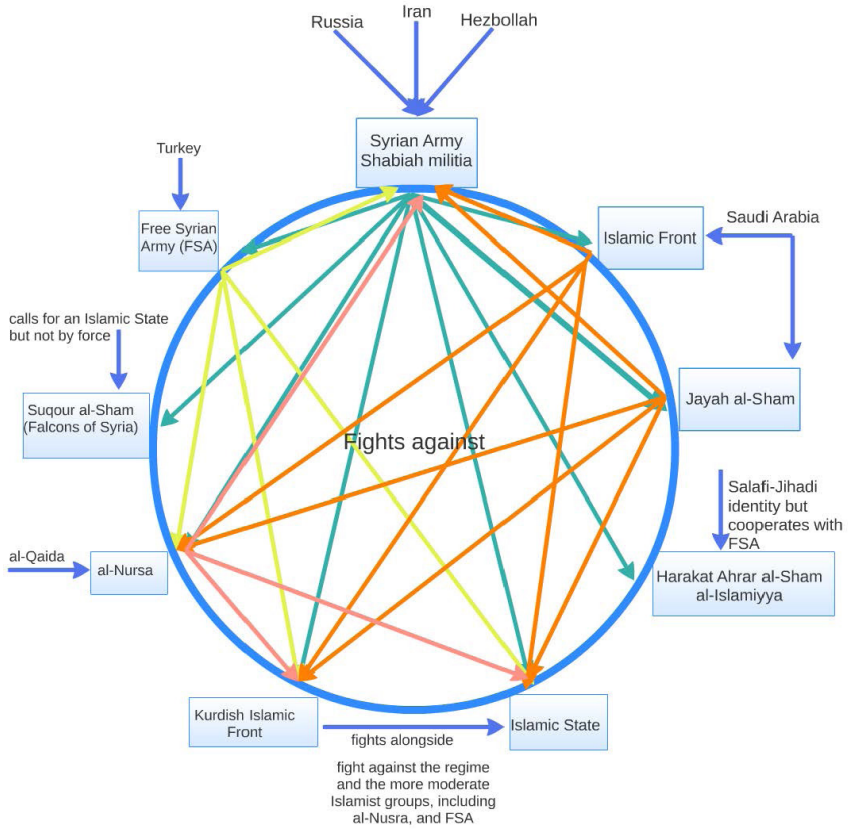
Yet, Bashar al-Assad also fueled sectarian conflict, although unintentionally, through other means. Similar to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (Dorronsoro 2012, 34; Hegghammer 2012, 41–2) but also Iran and Iraq, Bashar al-Assad supported opposition groups in neighbouring countries in order to undermine his neighbours' regional power aspirations. When Turkey increased the pressure on the Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK), al-Assad, both father and son, actively supported the PKK.

Before the 2003 Iraq war, Bashar al-Assad actively supported Iraqi opposition groups. Most of them had a sectarian outlook. At the beginning of the Iraq war, Syria kept its borders open and allowed busloads of (radicalised) foreign fighters into Iraq (Scheller 2013, 100, 180, 190). Although the motivation was either weakening the neighbouring states or keeping the US in Iraq busy to prevent an invasion of Syria, his policy fuelled sectarian tensions and emerging sectarian identities throughout the region as well as in Syria itself. In addition to the power vacuum that was created through the uprising in Syria, Assad's policy of the previous decades certainly filled Pandora's Box with more evils that were eventually released in what has turned into the twenty-first century's most violent conflict – so far.

If one takes a look at Syria in 2015 or 2016 and asks who is fighting whom, then the picture looks more or less like the graphic below. The Kurdish problem, however, has been ignored here, primarily because the Kurds in Syria stayed relatively passive for a long time. The situation is different in Northern Iraq, where Kurdish militia are among the more active groups fighting Islamic State forces.

The question is, of course, not only who is fighting whom, but also, and more importantly, for what reason. Moreover, it is also important to notice which external forces are supporting whom and what is the rationale behind it.

First, the al-Assad regime: Their main domestic forces are the regular Syrian army (or what is left of it) and the *Shabiah*-militia. The *Shabiah*, recruited primarily from Alawite communities, usually fights alongside the Syrian army and is known for its brutality. The Alawite communities and particularly the *Shabiah*-militia stand and fall with the Assad regime. Thus, they have nothing or all to lose and, consequently, fight until the very end, which also might be their end.

Russia   Iran   Hezbollah

Syrian Army
Shabiah militia

Turkey

Free Syrian
Army (FSA)

Saudi Arabia

Islamic Front

calls for an Islamic State
but not by force

Suqour al-Sham
(Falcons of Syria)

Jayah al-Sham

Fights against

Salafi-Jihadi
identity but
cooperates with
FSA

al-Qaida

al-Nursa

Harakat Ahrar al-Sham
al-Islamiyya

Kurdish Islamic
Front

fights alongside

Islamic State

fight against the regime
and the more moderate
Islamist groups, including
al-Nusra, and FSA

Although the Assad regime is basically bankrupt, it has three external allies: Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah. All three promised unconditional support to the Assad-regime whose one and only goal is the regime's survival and restoration. In a way, Russia is among the most puzzling cases here. Before the Syrian revolution, Russian-Syrian relations had significantly cooled down; during the 15 years period prior to the uprising, Russia had treated Syria at best indifferently. Yet, the more isolated Syria becomes internationally, the tighter Assad-Russian relations become. By contrast, the Arab League supported in one way or another Syrian opposition groups early on in order to achieve regime change, if necessary, by force. Despite having stronger economic ties with some of the Gulf countries, Russia has supported the Assad regime for the following reasons:

1. Fear of Islamism: Russia's fear of Islamism is rooted in the country's own experience in the Northern Caucasus and it 'projects its own security concerns from its experiences in the Northern Caucasus on Syria' (Scheller 2013, 205).
2. Its rivalry with the United States.
3. Geopolitical interests in the region: Presently, Russia has just one military base in the Middle East in Syria; Russia sees Syria as its entry gate to increased economic activities in the Middle East.

Russia supports the Assad-regime with military equipment. In addition, Russia is involved in military activities in Syria, primarily through air-strikes. Because Syria is bankrupt, the question is, who pays for the military support and weaponry. It has been suggested, although not confirmed, that Iran is picking up the bill.

Iran

With Iran, Hafez al-Assad had built ties immediately after the Iranian Revolution. Both regimes are tied by pragmatic reasons rather than by shared ideology. Since the Iranian Revolution, both countries are also rivals for regional leadership; nonetheless, they share a number of similar interests. Moreover, in phases of increasing international isolation, Syria was almost the only ally Iran possessed in the region – and vice versa.

What Iran fears most at present is regime change that might replace the current regime with a Sunni dominated one in Syria. A Sunni regime would certainly cooperate with Saudi Arabia or the Gulf States rather than with Iran. Thus, for Iran, the survival of the Assad-regime essentially means avoiding regional and international isolation.

Hezbollah

Over the last decades, Syria has more or less constantly supported Hezbollah in Lebanon. Particularly after the end of the civil war in Lebanon, Syria had an interest in keeping its neighbouring state dependent, especially as far as foreign policy is concerned. For Syria, Hezbollah was also a factor in Syria's opposition to Israel and in its support of the Palestinian cause. Hezbollah's unconditional support of the Assad-regime, however, has caused a legitimacy crisis for Hezbollah; by now, their survival depends almost entirely on the survival of the al-Assad regime (Alagha 2015).

One of the only secular opposition groups in Syria, there are a few more but they are so marginal we can ignore them here, is the *Free Syrian Army* (FSA). Their recruits are primarily deserters from the Syrian army; although not perfectly well organised and, thus, less effective than they could be, their one and only goal is the removal of the Assad-regime. Early on, they were supported by Turkey, both with weaponry as well as through military training.

Islamic Front and *Jayah al-Sham* are rather umbrella-terms. In order to identify opposition groups that may be Islamist in their outlook but distance themselves from al-Qaida and the Islamic State, Saudi Arabia insisted that they unite under one umbrella. *Islamic Front* was formed in November 2013 'in response to Saudi Arabian concerns over ISIS and al-Nusra'. *Jayah al-Sham* is a similar umbrella group supported by Saudi Arabia and formed in September 2013. It consists of more than 50 different opposition groups from the Damascus region. It has been suggested, though unconfirmed, that Saudi Arabia has supported Islamist Syrian opposition groups with approximately $5 billion (Atwan 2015, 28–52).

Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya and *Suqour al-Sham* (Falcons of Syria) have a strong Islamist identity. While *Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya* has a Salafist-jihadi identity, it nonetheless cooperates with the *Free Syrian Army*. *Suqour al-Sham* shares much of Islamic State's ideology but differs on one significant issue: Their commander Abu Issa or Ahmed al Sheikh 'has called for an Islamic State but does not believe this should be imposed by force, as Islamic State does' (Atwan 2015, 108).

In addition to a number of other groups with marginal influence, *al-Nusra* and Islamic State related groups play a key role in opposing the Assad regime. The *al-Nusra* front, originally initiated by al-Baghdadi, who later called out the caliphate, and led by Abu Muhammad al-Julani, was for al-Baghadi the Syrian arm of Islamic State in Iraq, thus forming ISIS. Yet, al-Julani saw his allegiance with al-Qaida's al-Zawahiri. Thus, *al-Nusra* is more of an al-Qaida

than an IS related group, though the differences may appear marginal. Under Haji Bakr, a former colonel of Saddam Hussein's air force intelligence who is closely related to al-Baghdadi, however, ISIS already had a stronghold in the Aleppo area (Kaválek 2015, 15).[3]

While the conflict has attracted thousands of Sunni foreign fighters, for the Syrian people 'the shared accident of being Sunni Muslims has not bonded together opposition to Bashar al-Asad's allegedly 'Alawi regime any more than it has prevented Sunnis from collaborating with it' (Hamdan 2015, 31). Yet, although the majority of the Syrian people have not become radicalised, another factor contributes to Islamising and radicalising the conflict; namely, the alleged impossibility for secular groups to receive (foreign) support. As Carsten Wieland (2013, 19) notes, '[w]eapons and money are coming from Islamic forces. So those groups that claim to be Islamists will get the weapons to defend their families and villages. Some have grown beards and use religious symbols just to get access to weapons and resources'. Nonetheless, radicalisation has its limits. Particularly the strategy of classifying regime supporters and Muslim minorities as un-Islamic and, therefore, allowing them to be killed, turns out to be counterproductive. In Syria, 'jihadi groups mobilise against ISIS'. If confronted with 'ISIS's fanatical imposition of sharia', some of the groups that still support ISIS insurgences may simply rebel (Celso 2015, 39).

Conclusion

Conflicts, however, are not always what they are, but also, transforming narratives about them may change perception of the conflict entirely. Yet, a changing narrative does not necessarily mean that a conflict's root causes have disappeared. They are only harder to identify. While one can already observe in older conflicts the power of reinterpretation that, in tendency, favours religious over secular readings, current conflicts, like the ones in Syria and Iraq, in particular are marked by another dimension; namely, existing power vacuums that allow sectarian non-state movements to engage in the conflict and to attract a significant amount of media attention – with a tendency of blowing their significance out of proportion. While in the conflicts narrated above some sectarian elements certainly exist, their role is at best part of the conflict, and sectarian issues usually do not belong to any of the current conflicts' root causes. Thus, in most cases, it is more appropriate to speak at best of partial sectarian conflicts or of conflicts that are partially (ab)used for sectarian goals. Yet, can we speak about a religious conflict if a party that was not present initially tries to use it for its sectarian goals that are unrelated to the conflict's original causes?

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[3]   Haji Bakr is reported to have been killed in January 2014.

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9

Violent Non-State Actors in the Middle East: Origins and Goals

CHRISTOPHER P. DALLAS-FEENEY

The history of the Middle East is littered with violent conflict – interstate wars, civil wars, insurgencies, revolutions, coups, invasions by foreign powers, and ethnic and sectarian strife. Especially since the 1967 war between Israel and a group of Arab nations led by Egypt, peace in the Middle East has been elusive (Quandt 2005; Dennis 2004).[1] Independent of the agency of the groups we will discuss in this chapter, there are a variety of structural conditions in the Middle East that permit a range of political actors to violently resist or even defeat the authority of the state and its allies.

Competition for regional hegemony is a fact of life in the international system and is particularly evident in this region of the world – whether longstanding rivalries such as Iran vs. Iraq (Williamson and Woods 2014) or more current rivalries such as Iran vs. the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Gause III 2014). As part of that hegemonic competition, states sponsor violent groups as part of a bid to revise or maintain the status quo (Byman 2005). As a result of civil wars and/or the use of military force by foreign powers, four countries in the region (Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Libya) are failed or failing states that provide sanctuary for many of the most violent and resilient violent non-state actors (VNSAs) along with the wide assortment of criminal gangs and war profiteers. What has emerged in a more virulent form in the region since at least 2001 (Gerges 2005)[2], however, is the entrance of the disruptive force of

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[1]   The two notable peace accords signed since 1967, of course, are the peace accord between Egypt and Israel in 1979 and Israel and Jordan in 1994. The global effort to bring peace to the Middle East is a widely-covered phenomenon, but two helpful sources from the US perspective are: Quandt, William. 2005. *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*. Washington: Brookings; and Dennis, Ross. 2004*. The Missing Peace.* New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux.

[2]   Al Qaeda was founded in 1988. Al Qaeda in its original form (Bin Laden-led and

transnational VNSAs whose radical Islamist political and social vision for the region demands the violent transformation of the Islamic world beginning with the home of Islam, the land and peoples of the Middle East.

In this chapter, I focus on the origins and primary goals of four key VNSAs that represent major organisations that are able to mount sustained campaigns of strategic anti-government violence to achieve their political goals in the Middle East – those that use terror, guerrilla warfare, punishment and, when possible, conventional warfare to challenge the incumbent governments for control of territory (Jones 2016; Salehyan 2009). VNSAs as varied ideologically as transnational Salafi-Jihadi groups such as ISIS[3] and its affiliates, and Al Qaeda and its affiliates, operate in the Middle East as well as Shia Lebanese nationalist groups such as Hezbollah and Sunni Palestinian nationalist groups such as Hamas. Either in opposition to the state or as a partner of the state (e.g., Hezbollah in Syria,), VNSAs are important political actors in the widening political and military conflicts that have killed hundreds of thousands and displaced tens of millions of citizens with global repercussions (Human Rights Watch 2018 and 1992) [4].

While we will explore in more detail in this chapter only a handful of the more infamous VNSAs, they are not operating alone in the conflicts in the Middle East. There are a variety of other actors in the region that need to be accounted for to fully grasp the 'industry' of violent non-state actors that shape the level of conflict in the region and the related political outcomes that result from these conflicts. But there are simply too many groups to properly cover in this brief chapter. To give you a sense for the scale and scope of the VNSA industry in the region I will provide a brief synopsis of the nature of the literally hundreds of other VNSAs that operate in the region currently. We will then take a closer look at those few groups that I believe have distinctively shaped the politics of the Middle East in the last 20 years and promise to do so for the foreseeable future.

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often referred to as Al Qaeda central) clearly targeted the far enemies (i.e., the United States) as its primary targets. While these goals never formally changed, the refocusing of kinetic activity on Middle Eastern opportunities was made during the US war with Iraq (2003–2011).

[3]   ISIS refers to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (or al Sham) that is the successor organisation to Al Qaeda in Iraq. The group has numerous alternative names that are discussed later in the detailed discussions of key groups.

[4]   It is important to note that the authoritarian regimes in the region are also complicit in the scale and scope of death and destruction in the region. The most current example is the role of the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war. The Iraqi regime under Saddam Hussein was also complicit in the deaths of tens of thousands of its citizens in the wake of the Gulf War in 1991.

Overview of the VNSA 'Industry' in the Middle East

Multiple states in the region do not have a monopoly on the use of force within their borders, and that means, for the time being at least, VNSAs hold vital and decisive power over the course of political events in the region. The current level and nature of conflict in the region, in fact, seems to be degrading the power of the state even further. This allows not only the major VNSAs to influence the politics of the region but also the 'industry' of hundreds of other groups who also act as critical factors in the course and speed of political change. Paraphrasing Hobbes, life in the Middle East seems to be even shorter, even more brutish and seemingly more hopeless.

There are a variety of groups that operate in the shadows of the larger Islamic mass movements and serve as strategic paramilitary partners for more established VNSAs such as Hamas or Hezbollah. The nature of their affiliation is generally intentionally obscured to grant some level of political immunity to the political wing of its parent group. Groups such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) (Fletcher 2008) and Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (AAMB) (Fletcher 2005) have persisted for decades but remain clandestine and maintain very limited and exclusive membership. In addition to violent actions taken by the group on its own, it often functions as a strategic partner to other larger groups who are designed as mass movements (PIJ and Hamas and AAMB with Fatah and Hamas. There are also several groups that act as local agents of foreign governments such as Iran or transnational actors such as Al Qaeda. Ansar al Islam (AI) (Stanford University n.d.) and Kata'ib Hizballah (KH) (Stanford University n.d.) have been listed by the US State Department as foreign terrorist organisations for at least 10 years. AI is a Sunni group based on Salafi Jihadi principles whose primary mission has been to resist the Kurdish regional government in Iraq and advance the potential for Sunni Islamic rule in that region of Iraq. Its founders were trained in the AQ camps during and following the Afghan war and currently affiliate with Al Qaeda groups in the region. It has at times cooperated with and fought with ISIS as well. KH is a relatively large Shia paramilitary group that is reportedly backed by Iran and seeks to strengthen the ability of Iran to influence Iraqi politics in favour of the majority Shia community in Iraq. It has played a prominent role in the Popular Mobilisation Units in Iraq (Toumaj 2016).[5] KH troop strength, noted to be as high as 30,000 civilian fighters, was

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[5]   In the Shia arena, there are over 120,000 fighters operating in Iraq and Syria collectively known as the Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU) with approximately 80,000 of these forces "fighting under the banners of Iranian-backed militias" (Toumaj 2016). They were formally called into action by the Grand Ayatollah Sistani following the fall of Mosul in 2014 – ostensibly to protect the most important Shia shrines from desecration and destruction by the then marauding ISIS army. The four primary Shia groups are: the Badr Organisation, the Mahdi Army, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, and Kata'ib Hezballah. One

called to action to defend Iraq against the invasion by ISIS in 2014 in Iraq. There are hundreds of other VNSAs that arose – or became prominent – in the wake of the wars in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya. A few of the prominent groups that rose up in the last 5 to 10 years include Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia in Iraq (Iraqi Sunni nationalist) (Stanford University n.d), Ahrar al Sham in Syria (Syrian Salafi Jihadi nationalists) (Stanford University n.d.), the Houthis in Yemen (Yemeni Shia nationalists) (International Crisis Group 2014), and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group in Libya (Libyan Salafi Jihadi nationalist) (Witter 2011). These groups vary in size, ability, and political ideology, but all play/have played important roles in their respective political/ military areas of operation. In addition, there are new VNSA groups emerging in Egypt in reaction to the authoritarian regime of the current President, Abdel Fattah al Sisi (BBC News 2014). Groups such as Hasm and Liwa al Thawra in Egypt (El-Gundy 2017) are still small, just a few years old, but increasingly active with attacks on government officials and military targets. Though rumoured, it is not clear what, if any, links they may have to more long-standing activist groups in Egypt such as the Muslim Brotherhood or potentially ISIS. They seek to overthrow the sitting President of Egypt, al Sisi, through violence and to establish an Egyptian society based on Islam.

Focus for the Discussion

Islam inspires the political visions of all of the four organisations I will focus on in the remainder of this chapter. But each organisation translates Islam differently into political and violent action. All four groups (or their affiliates) have at one time taken and held territory by violence. All are capable of competing with both rival VNSAs on the battlefield or Western-style military forces in conventional combat. The four groups are:

1. Hamas – a Sunni Islamic Palestinian group formed in 1987 that is devoted to the formation of an independent Palestinian homeland.
2. Hezbollah – A Shia Islamic Lebanese group formed in 1982 that is devoted to the political rights of the Shia community in Lebanon and the deterrence of Israel.
3. Al Qaeda and its affiliates (AQ) – a transnational Sunni Salafi Jihadi group whose core was formed in 1988 in the aftermath of the Soviet-Afghan war, focused on the re-establishment of the Caliphate but, more immediately, on defensive jihad to defeat the 'far enemy' who they argue were the root cause of oppression of the Islamic faithful – that is, the Western powers such as the US who support the leaders in the Middle East that they consider to be apostate.

of the groups (the Badr Organisation) has been in existence since the early 1980s, closely aligned with Iran and had actively engaged the US and coalition forces in combat during the building stages of the insurgency of the Iraqi war (2004 to 2006).

4. Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its affiliates – A Sunni Salafi-Jihadi group that was formed as a spin off from Al Qaeda in 2014. They focused on the establishment of the Caliphate in the very near term and the prosecution of the offensive global Jihad to expand the geographic scope of the Caliphate.

Hamas

Hamas has been in existence since 1987 and is now, with the pacification of its rival Fatah in 2007, the largest Palestinian militant movement.[6] Hamas is an offshoot of the Sunni Islamic movement known as the Muslim Brotherhood of Palestine that was established in the Palestinian territories in 1935.

Recognising that Hamas can be vague in its public statements and has evolved its thinking on core issues (e.g., conditions for settlement with Israel on the state of Palestine, the role of democratic elections domestically, the role of Islam in the governance of society), the organisation has consistently maintained its focus on two super-priorities since its origin and more recently on one other. First, Hamas is a nationalist movement inspired by Islam. It seeks an independent Palestinian state consisting of Gaza and the West Bank. It is zeroed in on the plight of the Palestinians versus the greater Muslim community. In regards to the notion of an Islamic state, Gunning notes that Hamas has more recently conceded that Islam must be 'willed by the people, and can only come about if a clear majority support its establishment' (Gunning 2010). The notion of an independent Palestinian state is not negotiable for Hamas but the boundaries (1948 vs. 1967) and the basis for the rules of society are negotiable (i.e., Islam vs. a secular model).

Second, Hamas is committed to sustaining steadfast resistance to the occupation (and later, to its non-violent variant, the siege/blockade) by Israel and will use violence as needed against both military as well as civilians in Israel to compel the Israelis to conduct what they see as fair and even-handed negotiations for the establishment of the Palestinian state. It seeks these goals on behalf of all Palestinians currently in the Territories and the refugees from the 1948 war who live outside the Territories. It has waged bloody terror campaigns against Israel almost since its inception including two major suicide bombing campaigns in the mid-1990s in opposition to the Oslo Accords (Ariav and Lindsay 2012) and as part of the second Intifada from late 2000 to mid-2005. Hamas has also engaged in four conventional wars with

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6   Scholars of Hamas generally recognise the birth of Hamas as December 1987 even though their covenant was not published until June 1988. The outbreak of the first intifada was in December 1987 and Hamas is generally recognised as having been active in that effort since its inception.

Israel since 2006, the year that they won the national elections in the Palestinian Territories and assumed formal leadership of the Palestinian Authority. While summarily defeated in each of these wars, Hamas and its allies have maintained their resistance to Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories to the present.

Third, Hamas seeks intra-Palestinian unity; Hamas wants to avoid civil war or the factionalism that would weaken the Palestinian cause in the presence of a superior enemy such as Israel (Rabbani 2008, 59–81). After its stunning victory in the 2006 Palestinian national elections, Hamas turned its attention to the business of governing. One of its earliest initiatives was to push forward with a national unity government with Fatah – a goal it has yet to achieve. Hamas could ill afford, nor was it inclined to be, ideological purists since the support of a broad constituency is vital to the accomplishment of its political goals (Brown 2009, Brown 2012, Lybarger 2007).

Hamas '… is neither Al Qaeda nor the Taliban. It owes something to Hezbollah (Ghaddar 2013) and much to the Muslim Brotherhood. It is Islamist but nationalist; Sunni, yet supported by a Shia regional power (Iran); democratic, yet opaque; populist, yet cruel' (Milton-Edwards 2010). Its founders established Hamas to 'get in the game' politically and militarily and use force against Israel in addition to the preaching and other 'quietist' methods to prepare the faithful Muslims of Palestine to accede to the state of Palestine.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah emerged during the summer of 1982 in the wake of the second Israeli invasion of Lebanon within the prior four years. Lebanon was at war with itself since 1975 and had split into several armed factions vying for control of the country. Hezbollah was formed from a splinter of Amal, the Lebanese Dawa party, the Association of Muslim Ulema and the Association of Muslim Students (Ranstorp 1997; Palmer-Harik 2004; Norton 1999). Following Israel's swift defeat of Syrian and Palestinian forces in southern Lebanon in the summer of 1982, Iran inserted an estimated 1500 Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps troops (IRGC) into Lebanon's Bekaa Valley with the cooperation of Syria. They trained the Hezbollah fighters (estimated at no more than 500 full time forces at the time) in the political ideology of Islam and the fighting methods of the elite forces of the IRGC. They were groomed to conduct terror and guerrilla operations against Western forces in the region and the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and SLA (South Lebanon Army) forces in the south.

In 1985 Hezbollah articulated its political agenda in its Open Letter (Norton 1987). They proclaimed that they were dedicated to evicting all foreign occupiers, annihilating Israel and forming an Islamic state in Lebanon based on the Shia model that was established in Iran in 1979. But Hezbollah quickly yielded on its goal of forming an Islamic state in Lebanon. They acknowledged that the peoples of Lebanon have the freedom to choose their own system of government – openly admitting that they preferred an Islamic system but yielding to the Qu'ranic stipulation that Islam cannot be imposed on anyone (Norton 1987).

A core belief of Hezbollah is that oppression is what is wrong with the world – regardless of religion. 'The only religious obligation upon the Party is that it actively pursues justice, regardless of whether or not this culminates in the creation of an Islamic state' (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002). As part of its mission to bring social justice to Lebanon – and relieve the suffering of the 'dispossessed' – Hezbollah built a robust social welfare network in large part to close the large gaps in public services that the weak national government could not deliver. Hezbollah's social services organisations rivalled or exceeded the abilities of the Lebanese government as it relates to important social services (e.g., education, medical care, financial aid, and trash collection). Hezbollah uses its NGOs to serve mostly the needy Shia but, in times of great crisis, they are open to all in need. They see it as part of the greater jihad to transform each member of Lebanese society regardless of whether they are Muslim or convert to Islam.

While Hezbollah is generally viewed as patriotic to Lebanon,[7] virtually incorruptible and willing to suffer enormous personal loss to fight for their political goals, its dependence on Iran and Syria for military, political and economic support raised doubts about their ultimate purpose. Iran and Syria combined have contributed handsomely to the movement in order to build its political and military power for use against mutual foes. Iran bankrolled Hezbollah with an estimated $50 to $100 million in annual support for the development of Hezbollah's military, political, and social services operations in the early years of its existence – to this day it plays a major role in the financial viability of the group (Ranstorp 1997; Byman 2005; Rafizadeh 2016). Syria provided military and political support and collaborated with Iran to ensure safe transit of weapons into Lebanon for use by Hezbollah as it conducted its terror campaigns in the 1980s against the US and Western

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[7]   Beyond the dependency on Iran for substantial financial support, the group's ideological submission – and at times, strategic policy decisions – to Grand Ayatollah Khomeini and his successor via the guardianship of the jurisconsultant (*velyat al faqih*) has caused concern in many Lebanese about the group's autonomy and fealty to Lebanon.

powers (e.g., France) in Lebanon[8], guerrilla wars against the IDF and SLA in the 1990s and the building of its deterrent military forces to oppose Israel in the 2000s (Reenders 2006, 38–56).[9] Today, over 35 years after its founding, Hezbollah is recognised as a highly effective military organisation (Biddle and Friedman 2008) and the single most powerful political organisation in Lebanon (International Crisis Group 2005).[10] While perplexing to its Lebanese followers (Kizilkaya 2017, 211–228) Hezbollah's willingness to fight and die in Syria in the service of President Assad since 2013 to the present, Hezbollah has solidified its role as a major political force in the regional politics of the Middle East (International Crisis Group 2017).

Al Qaeda and Affiliates

Al Qaeda was founded in 1988 in the wake of the war in Afghanistan between the USSR and the various Afghan militias who resisted Soviet occupation and their appointed leaders. Osama Bin Laden had claimed repeatedly that Muslims around the world were being oppressed by foreign powers (the USSR's incursion in Afghanistan was just one more example of that for him) and that jihad was an individual obligation of all faithful Muslims (Kepel and Milelli 2008, Gerges 2005). Along with his mentor Abdullah Azzam, Osama bin Laden called for the formation of Al Qaeda (the 'Base') in Afghanistan in order to attract thousands of foreign fighters to their camps there to build them into a kind of special jihadi forces that would be trained in both the principles of its Salafi-Jihadi (Maher 2016, Bunzel 2016) interpretation of Islam and modern special warfare. Once properly trained and equipped, the intent was to ultimately return them to their homelands to advance the cause of the Muslim faithful by terror and guerrilla warfare as well as by preaching and spiritual development. Al Qaeda wanted to transform the overall 'Jihadi industry' from one that was focused on toppling the 'near enemy' – the likes of Saddam Hussein in Iraq or Hosni Mubarak in Egypt – into one that relentlessly attacks the 'far enemy' (Gerges 2005) the powerful Western nations that backed leaders whom Al Qaeda viewed as apostates, dictators and tools of Western government oppression of the Muslim faithful. Once the far enemy was defeated, the powerful global Jihadi army that was to be raised would destroy local leaders via a series of bloody battles that would fulfil the apocalyptic prophecies in either the Koran or the Hadith (Gerges 2005; Fishman 2016; McCants 2015; Byman 2015). While the goal of the

[8]   Hezbollah also fought a series of battles with the armed forces of Amal between 1989 and 1990. Syria and Iran intervened to stop the intra-Shia warfare.

[9]   'Hezbollah's self-declared mission to sustain a 'balance of terror' had evolved since the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000 in an attempt to find new directions from the party that would preserve missionary zeal for its own militants'.

[10]   See also a more current discussion of Hezbollah's political and military status: Noe, Nicholas. 2011. and also New York Times: Shadid, Anthony. 2011.

restoration of the Caliphate was a longer-term one for Al Qaeda, it was subordinate to acting as the vanguard to inspire faithful Muslims around the world to take up jihad (Byman 2015) to defend against the oppression of the West and apostate Muslim leaders. Ayman Zawahiri (Bajoria 2011), AQ's senior leader, explains in his book, *The Knights Under the Prophet's Banner,* that 'no solution is possible without jihad' (Kepel and Milelli 2008).

Rooted in Al Qaeda's conviction that Muslims were oppressed and under attack by the West, they articulated four primary goals in a public address to the world in 1998. They released a fatwa via their umbrella organisation, the World Islamic Front for Combat Against Jews and Crusaders, which included these four goals (Byman 2015, 47–48; Kepel and Milelli, 2008): 1) Ending the US presence in the Middle East; 2) Destroying Israel; 3) Reorienting the Jihadi Movement; and, 4) Opposing 'apostate' regimes in the Muslim World. These goals are fairly broad and allowed a lot of room for the group to pursue its political agenda as it saw fit and as opportunities presented themselves. Al Qaeda's primary mission through the mid-2000s was to bring the fight to the 'Far Enemy', but the US invasion of Iraq presented a unique opportunity to kill Americans in the Middle East. As it built out its affiliates (e.g., Iraq, Northern Africa, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and ultimately Syria in 2012), it began to spread its ideology and special forces throughout the modern Middle East to both bloody the US and coalition forces and establish control over territory in the Middle East.

Al Qaeda's presence in the Middle East increased dramatically in 2004 when the group then known as Monotheism and Jihad merged its organisation with Al Qaeda. The resultant organisation had a variety of names but was generally known as Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and was founded by an especially violent jihadi named Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the 'Sheik of the Slaughterers'. This organisation would become the present day Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) when it split with Al Qaeda in early 2014 (see below). In addition to AQI, Al Qaeda would form a variety of affiliates in the Middle East (Zimmerman 2013) including AQ in the Islamic Maghreb (2007), AQ in the Arabian Peninsula (2009) and Jabhat al Nusra (2011). Given space limitations, I will discuss just two AQ affiliates – AQI and Jabhat al Nusra – in this chapter.

Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) – As noted, AQI was founded in 2004 as a result of the merger of Abu Musab al Zarqawi' group, Monotheism and Jihad, into Al Qaeda. AQ central's instructions to Zarqawi in 2005 were to do four basic things: '… expel the Americans, establish an Islamic state, expand the jihad to Iraq's neighbours, and ultimately confront Israel. Zawahiri described the first two goals as "near-term". He (Zawahiri) hoped that eventually it would

reach the status of the caliphate' (Bunzel 2016, 15). Clearly AQ central and AQI believed that the Caliphate was an important goal but they disagreed on important aspects of how and when to best pursue it. They disagreed on the conditions that were necessary for its founding, the role of violence against the Shia as preparation for its founding and the related timing of its founding. In contrast to AQ central, Zarqawi saw the Shia as a greater threat to the goals of Al Qaeda than the coalition forces (Bunzel 2016, 14). AQI would expend substantial resources on waging a sectarian war against the Shia between 2003 and 2010 – a war that AQ central saw as unnecessary since they believed the Shia could be redeemed through preaching. AQ Central did not want the public relations problems of being accountable for killing fellow Muslims. For AQI the extermination of the Shia was central to its pursuit of the solution to the ills of all faithful Muslims (Lister 2014; Fishman 2016; McCants 2015).

Jabhat al Nusra (JN) – The second AQ affiliate that has played a significant role in the Middle East, Jabhat al Nusra (Victory Front for the People of the Levant), was formed in early 2012 as a spinoff from AQI. Jabhat al Nusra (JN) was an outgrowth of AQI given Al Qaeda central's (AQC) continuing need to expand in the Middle East and to develop sanctuaries for AQC to ramp up its actions against 'far enemies' around the globe. Bin Laden had been assassinated by this time (May 2, 2011), and coalition forces had degraded AQI significantly by March 2010 by killing or jailing over 75% of its leadership. Iraq had become a vastly more difficult country in which to conduct operations. The US and its allies began winding down operations in Iraq and turned greater attention to kinetic operations in Afghanistan in an attempt defeat the Taliban and track down and kill/capture the remnants of AQC in that region. The Syrian civil war had not yet evolved to the scale and scope it would become in 2012 and beyond but it appears that AQC leadership saw the potential to exploit the deteriorating conditions for the development of a new branch (Lister 2016) and a new sanctuary at the same time. JN was built largely with a foundation of Syrian nationalists who were members of AQI that signalled a change from the foreign fighter dominated models that Zarqawi had used to great effect in the early days in Iraq. From 2012 to the present, JN evolved its operating style and philosophy to the point where it was no longer clear whether it was still committed to the broader Al Qaeda mission of global jihad to re-establish the Caliphate, or simply one more Syrian nationalist insurgency (Lister 2015; Lister 2016), trying to unseat a local dictator – a very big difference for the organisation and its followers (Abbas 2016, 45–64). They changed their name to Fatah al Sham in 2016 and claimed that they were no longer affiliated with AQ. Most analysts believe that they are, in fact, still an AQ affiliate but are simply creating strategic ambiguity to optimise both funding from sponsors and also to potentially compel coalition forces to reduce/redirect attacks away from JN to ISIS and its

affiliates in the Syrian battle space (Lister 2015). With the fall of Aleppo in December 2016 to regime forces, the tide of the Syrian civil war had clearly turned against anti-government resistance organisations. Nonetheless, JN (now Fatah al Sham[11]) appears poised to continue to lead the fight in Syria for the foreseeable future along with its allies and affiliates (Stanford University n.d.). JN's transnational intentions are less clear at this time but many analysts believe they are playing 'the long game' and will return to the pursuit of the global Jihad regardless of the outcome of the Syrian war.

ISIS and its Affiliates

ISIS (The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria [Stanford University n.d.]) officially became an independent entity when it split with (or was disowned by) Al Qaeda in February 2014 as a result of the split of AQI from AQC (Joscelyn 2014). ISIS is known by a variety of names (e.g., Daesh, ISIL, the Islamic State) but I will use ISIS to refer to the group in this chapter.

While aspiring to fulfil the overall mission that bin Laden had expressed in his 1998 fatwa, ISIS holds an even more strict interpretation of Salafi-Jihadi doctrine than Al Qaeda and its affiliates such as JN (Coker 2014; Lister 2016; Bunzel 2015). This profound difference of vision and strategy triggered a running conflict between AQ Central and Zarqawi, the fiercely independent leader of AQI and his equally independent successor Abu Bakr al Baghdadi (McCants 2015), regarding who were legitimate targets of violence (i.e., the Shia, non-combatants?) and when the Caliphate should be established. While most leaders in Al Qaeda, if not the larger Jihadi community, agree that the Caliphate is a good and desirable goal, they believe that the Muslim faithful need to be prepared through preaching and spiritual development prior to that realisation – a process that generally takes generations to implement. In addition, the conditions on the ground need to be right. Bin Laden and the other senior leaders of Al Qaeda expected a long and bloody jihad (decades potentially, given the military might of the far enemies) before the conditions on the ground would be propitious to even think about establishing a Caliphate – bin Laden understood that declaring a Caliphate from a cave in Afghanistan or a safe-house in Iraq wouldn't be sufficiently credible nor effective (though AQI tried it in Iraq and failed in 2006). ISIS disagreed and built an army of local and foreign fighters that exceeded 30,000 by 2014 (Dodwell 2016) to take and hold territory in Syria and Iraq with the intent to build an even larger army to re-establish the global footprint of Islam and provide a lasting solution to the oppression of the Muslim faithful. In sharp contrast to its predecessors in Al Qaeda, ISIS was intent on taking and

[11]   The AQ affiliate in Syria continues to undergo a variety of name changes as part of federation and de-federation from various Islamic groups on the Syrian battlefield (Stanford University. n.d.)

holding large amounts of territory in Iraq, Syria and beyond and did so by the summer of 2014. ISIS is a state-building project and employs an offensive form of jihad to take and hold territory in sharp contrast to its rival, Al Qaeda (McCants 2016, Bunzel 2015). With the impressive collection of captured territory and the spoils of victory yielding $1 million per day in income from conquered territories, the Caliphate was declared in June 2014 (Lister 2014). The current leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, became the Caliph and promptly demanded pledges of loyalty from all Muslims, threatening death should they not comply (Al Arabiya English 2014). The declaration of the Caliphate immediately prompted negative reactions from the Zawahiri, now the leader of AQ and ISIS' strongest rival, as being illegitimate since it was not founded according to the prophetic method (Joscelyn 2014). Their intent was to claim the mantle of leadership from bin Laden's ghost – to fulfil the mission that bin Laden declared to the world in 1998.

ISIS promptly commenced an affiliate building effort and built a network of groups that extended throughout the Middle East (e.g., Egypt, Libya, Yemen) and other parts of South Asia and Africa (Gambhir 2015).[12] ISIS sought to establish itself as the number one 'global brand' for Salafi-Jihadi organisations with Raqqa, Syria as its global headquarters. Today, ISIS is under pressure in Iraq and Syria and has been routed from much of the territory it captured in 2014. ISIS remains a potent military force in the Levant but also vis-à-vis its global affiliate network (Leigh, French and Juan 2014, Stanford University n.d.). Its affiliates in Afghanistan (ISIS Khorasan), the Arabian peninsula, and Nigeria (Boko Haram) continue to operate as a terrorist organisation using guerrilla tactics.

Conclusion

VNSAs play a decisive role in the politics of the Middle East. This chapter focused on a select few established organisations that have been able to mount sustained campaigns of strategic anti-government violence to achieve their political goals – those that use terror, guerrilla warfare, punishment, and conventional warfare to challenge incumbent governments for control of territory. They represent varied political philosophies, difference-making military and political power, and the resilience to overcome massive counter-force to sustain violent challenges to undermine incumbent governments. Syrian nationalist groups attempting to overthrow the Assad regime and Islamic nationalist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah are focused on state-building projects within the internationally recognised boundaries of their particular states. The transnational Salafi-Jihadi movements and their

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[12]   See also: Rahmani, Bardia, and Andrea Tanco. 2016. "ISIS Growing Caliphate: Profiles of Affiliates." Wilson Center. Last modified February 19, 2016. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/isiss-growing-caliphate-profiles-affiliates.

expanding networks of affiliates, however, are prosecuting a truly global jihad and discard most known state boundaries as irrelevant. They seek to break up the Middle East and the international order as we know it to reshape it according to their interpretation of the designs of the founders of Islam. Furthermore, Hezbollah has evolved from a minor partner of Iran and Syria to become a major partner of these states in their campaign to defeat the anti-Assad insurgency in Syria – they have evolved from simply a Lebanese movement to a force that can play a substantive role in changing or maintaining the balance of power in the Middle East. The Sunni insurgency in Iraq boasts tens of thousands of fighters that both resist the government and are also in conflict with ISIS and the Shia militias that were born to counter ISIS and US/coalition forces. The Yemen and Libyan civil wars have continued unabated since 2011 and these states are sliding into even deeper failure permitting a variety of VNSA's to flourish and rule fragments of these countries. Affiliates of the transnational salafi-jihadi movements comingle with criminal gangs, warlords, and various nationalist rebel groups in the four failing states in the region (Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Iraq). But these same volatile collections of actors are also operating in several states in the region that have viable governments in place (e.g., Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia).

VNSAs are formidable challengers of the legitimacy and security of the existing state system in the Middle East and to those who govern those states. To understand the politics of the Middle East, analysts and policymakers need to account for their difference-making power.

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10

Elite Choices, Path Dependency and the Arab Spring

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In December 2010, a young man named Mohamed Bouazizi was ticketed for selling fresh produce in the town of Sidi Bouzid. Unemployed and desperate, the man set himself on fire and subsequently unleashed a wave of events that came to be known as the 'Arab Spring' (BBC 2013). An entire horde of politicians, journalists and academics have since that day attempted to make sense of events and explain their significance for everyone on this globe but most importantly for the people living in affected countries. Despite their best efforts, answers remain elusive because of the variation among cases and lack of general theory that explains the behaviour of a significant number of cases, i.e. in at least four cases, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen there was a change in government, in many more countries there was not; in several cases, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, there is civil war while in many more despite the intensity of protests there has been limited violence and the protests have since slowed down. It has been relatively difficult to explain the variations despite the cultural and political similarities in the countries affected.

This chapter is going to explore the richness of the research that has already been done on those areas, from Pareto, Mosca, and Michels to Dahl, Skocpol, and Linz, to circumscribe the theoretical landscape in which modern day political forces in Arab countries where the revolutionary Arab Spring swept political institutions operated. What were the main institutional relationships that have been challenged during these revolts? The answer to this question will hopefully provide the researcher with a theoretical landscape within which citizens, political activists, and institutions interacted to bring about diverse results in policymaking in the different countries.

It is the main contention of this work that despite the universality of elite

theory descriptions and predictions, the set of political solutions to all socio-political actors in any of the Arab Spring countries will certainly be affected by the existing institutional setup and the historical development of said institutions. Based on the works of North, Pierson, Ruth, and David Collier, I argue that revolutionary movements are rarely spontaneous and despite the claim that social revolutions tend to re-draw the political, but most importantly, the social map of the country they occur in, the outcomes of said social revolts depend on pre-revolutionary institutional structures and cultural affinities.

In addition to the study of the critical junctures that led to and defined the Arab Spring, this paper will consider the relationship of elites to non-elites during the turbulent times and the exogenous factors that limit the policy options Arab Spring countries faced. Does this relationship of elites to non-elites define the policy options countries in revolt faced regarding their political future? Did exogenous factors matter? If yes, how much? What do the results of these interactions reveal regarding the options elites themselves had during the Arab Spring of 2011–2012?

Finally, the paper will conclude with a brief episodic comparison of the 'Autumn of Nations' which occurred with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the Arab Spring, which we hope will highlight the strengths of elite theory analysis and will also create additional significant questions both in terms of methodology but also in terms of the usefulness of social revolutions as unique empirical case studies.

Defining 'Elites'

A commonly accepted definition of modern elites is the following: 'An élite is a selected and small group of citizens and/or organisations that controls a large amount of power'. Based on the social distinction regarding other groups of lower strata (Daloz 2010), most of these selected groups are constantly seeking differentiation, as well as separation from the rest of society (Vergara 2013). This distinction of groupings of people in society, so well-illustrated in Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Bourdieu 1979), assumes that social class plays a tremendous role in defining aspects of the individual life to such an extent as to define the self. Vergara argues 'social class plays a significant role in the construction of a personal identity (i.e. a person's interests). Thus, as social classes are in permanent interaction during the daily life, several "social differences" are reinforced' (Bottomore 2013, 241). But how does this translate into concrete choices and actions of political consequence? Action thus becomes the central tenant of such theories because absent political action, any explanation would be void

of meaning. Elite theory has grappled with this question for a long time. Classical Sociologists such as Mosca and Michels have long argued that first elites are superior intellectually and are thus very influential in public life while they are also as inevitable as an 'Iron Law' (Vergara 2013, 34). Michels, in one of the most influential books in social science research of the twentieth century, argued that organisations (in his case political parties) are necessarily run by smaller, highly efficient and salient groups called elites and that most organisations formed in democratic society will inevitably turn out these groups which he describes as oligarchic, thus stating that 'Historical evolution mocks all the prophylactic measures that have been adopted for the prevention of oligarchy' (Michels 1962). One then is compelled to ask whether a reaction to such tendency is as inevitable as the Iron Law, and whether the Arab Spring is such an expression of the public will against Arab elitism.

Elite theory, then, attempts to describe this relationship between the groups which are described as elite and their interaction with the masses as well as their relationship to power because if their distinction in society is meant to be meaningful it must involve a measure of power upon those who do not belong to the group itself. Why? Because as Vergara argues 'the possession of multiple forms of capital (social, cultural, economic, politic, among others) allows elites to ensure their social reproduction as well as the cultural reproduction of the ruling class' (Vergara 2013). Starting with Schattschneider and Mills who argued that, first, the pluralist system upon which democracy is based is flawed and is being manipulated by a rather small group of people and that it is generally led by well-established elites who have important and established roles in society such as the military, politicians, bureaucrats, and the business elite (Mills 1956). In his critique, E.E. Schattschneider famously noted: 'The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent' (Schattschneider 1960). One could argue that the flaws in American democracy may not be so different from the flaws in other democracies or for that matter in non-democracies. The one significant question thus in democracies and non-democracies alike is Who Governs? According to most of the theorists cited, governance is akin to political party representation and political parties are run by smaller groups of competing elites. But in non-democracies this does not apply and elites are established socio-political entities that rule over the people instead of ruling for the people. These elites do not live to serve the people in any meaningful capacity but rather they exist parasitically and 'from' the people. According to Schmitter, this feature could be a result of the professionalisation of politics in highly advanced democracies in which professional politicians exist in most important institutions of society, from the parliament to the military to the economy (Schmitter, 1991). In non-democratic regimes, these elites are equally as important if not more important given the latest research on democratisation.

Democratisation as a Process

Transitions to democratic rule have interested researchers since the beginning of the twentieth century but came under intense scrutiny at the time of what was termed the 'Third Wave' of democratisation, which started with the return to democracy in Southern Europe with the Carnation Revolution of Portugal, the death of Francisco Franco in Spain, and the collapse of the Greek junta in 1974 after losing half of Cyprus to the invading Turks (Huntington 1991). Much of the discussion naturally included Southern Europe and its regional peculiarities, as well as Latin America, which was going through some increasingly brutal and declining dictatorships (O'Donnel and Schmitter 1986). As the wave gained strength, the research became increasing unable to explain the differences in the democratisation process of each country, which until then only included two modes – gradual reform from monarchic rule or revolution and destruction of the previous system, something Schmitter terms the English and French ways (Schmitter and Lynn 1991). Until the Arab Spring, the theory did not explain the reality of transitions accurately and most transitions did not fit either model.

Linz and Stepan, in a very influential argument, detailed the requirements for a successful transition to democracy, i.e. the rules, the institutional structure, and the regulations that needed social and political approval (Linz and Stepan 1996). Thus, elites became key in the explanation of how the transition would happen and what kind of results would be yielded. Several countries for example started witnessing hybrid regimes in which by giving up some of the more egregious violations of freedom a country made strong steps towards democratisation but the process was never completed. One such example is Turkey which made significant democratic concessions to its people, including holding elections and mostly eliminating unlawful imprisonment and torture, but never really completed the process of transition only to slide backwards (Akyol 2015). Schmitter termed these hybrid versions, *Dictablanda* (minimal changes towards democracy) and *Democradura (*extensive changes towards democracy) (O'Donnel and Schmitter 1986).

Subsequently, the Berlin Wall collapsed and the transition literature had to account for the changes in Eastern Europe, some of which were exogenously driven and as such had to be explained because they lay outside the transition to democracy scheme. It became apparent that the difference and in some cases the similarities between the transitions in Southern Europe and Latin America with those in Eastern Europe were the elites involved. Until then, the research focused primarily on the impact of bottom-up revolutionary struggles and it overemphasised leftist working class movements and unions (Collier 1991).

It quickly became apparent that most of these transitional and hybrid regimes were the result of top-down decisions rather than revolutionary activity by Guevara type revolutionaries and the subsequent research indicates that democratisation was driven by the upper middle class for selfish reasons, mostly to force the ruling regimes to accept them as partners in the decision-making process (Collier 1991). As the argument goes, rich elites excluded by rulers from decision-making are likely to bristle under authoritarianism and will very likely attempt to push for democratisation, something seen as the impact of inequality on democratisation (Albertus and Menaldo 2013). Obviously, richer more educated elites have an interest as stakeholders in the future of their country and as authoritarian regimes attempt to extract more and more wealth from them, they revolt. The nature of the elite and its social position can play a key role in the outcome of the transition to democracy. Economic elites have different interests from political elites who may in turn differ from both military elites and the public as a whole. Albertus and Menaldo argue that there are really three types of actors in transition games, a) economic, b) political and c) the public, and their gaming analysis of the interaction of the three results in the affirmation that the threat of property rights will cause the economic elites to support regime change (Albertus and Menaldo 2013).

Acemoglu and Robinson make the argument that nations fail because their political systems are extractive and incentivise rent-seeking behaviour (Acemoglu and Robinson 2013). In such regimes, there is a point in which the interests of the economic elite diverge from the interests of the political regimes who, by extracting too great a rent, threaten the wellbeing and property rights of the former. In these cases, economic elites switch their allegiance towards democratisation and move to produce a compacted democratic transition which will focus on the establishment of 'rules of the game' favourable to the economic elite (Boix 2003). In such cases as Mexico and South Africa we see elite driven democratisation which not only aims at better political results, i.e. governance, but also secures the property rights and other interests of the economically dominant classes, i.e. the wealthy part of society. Why, then, would political elites in non-democratic countries, i.e. the military in most cases, attempt to extract such a potentially hazardous rent?

First, because economic elites are not as salient as political elites. The salience of elite preferences is a sticky point for authoritarian regimes while in democratic regimes democratic party preferences are important (Stoll 2010). Preferences find vocal expression in political party agendas, in parliamentary democracies as 'the' agenda, and in presidential systems like the US, in the form of competing interest groups attempting to dominate the debate. In authoritarian regimes, the analysis is not as easy to achieve. Oppressive regimes most times do not need to heed to pressure groups, though

sometimes they do because of exogenous factors such as approximation to Western European Democracies, as Levitsky and Way (2010) have shown. Nonetheless, 'regime outcomes hinged on the character of state and ruling party organisations. Where incumbents possessed developed and cohesive party structures, they could thwart opposition challenges, and competitive authoritarian regimes survived; where incumbents lacked such organisational tools, regimes were unstable but rarely democratised' (Levitsky and Way 2010). In-group v. out-group dynamics always help political elites solve their elite preference problem. As Blaydes, among others, has very effectively argued, the 'authoritarian regime in Egypt uses the highly competitive electoral market as an indirect mechanism for the allocation of rents or access to rents – both relatively scarce resources – to members of Egypt's broad elite coalition' (Blaydes 2008).

Second, because the impact of political decisions taken by rulers may not affect everyone in the economic elite the same way, thus splitting the block so to speak. In their seminal work, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith have argued that bad behaviour is almost always good for politics because it is fragmented. They divided these societal groups into interchangeable, influential and essential. The key for ruling a country is the size of your coalition. The coalition is then built on the support of essential (elite) members which, barring benefits to their class, would otherwise defect making staying in power impossible. They then came up with fine rules for potential dictators: first, keep your winning coalition as small as possible. Second, keep your nominal selectorate as large as possible. Third, control the flow of revenue. Fourth, pay your key supporters just enough to keep them loyal. Fifth, do not take money out of supporters' pockets to make the people's lives better (De Mesquita and Smith 2011, 17–18). The analysis is because the body politic is fragmented and small but influential coalitions can make or break the ruler.

Third, the benefits of taking unfavourable action against economic elites may outweigh the benefits of support from such elites. While authoritarian rulers may not be as vulnerable and as dependent on the public as democratic ones, in certain cases and usually during times of stress it might seem beneficial to them to take on small economic elites that have supported them to increase favour with the public. The best example of this has been Robert Mugabe's expropriations of agricultural lands that belonged to white farmers in Zimbabwe in 2000 (Meldrum 2000). It would seem counter-intuitive that by destroying the country's farming community the leader would derive a benefit when famine became a real possibility and immigration to South Africa became the only way to seek financial security, and yet it makes absolute sense in political terms. Mugabe was attempting to both provide some additional support for his loyalists at the expense of the most powerful

economic elite in the country while also increasing the selectorate favouring him through a highly populist move of land re-distribution. The decision was influenced by political incentives, which at that time in Zimbabwe did not coincide with the economic elites' interests and the result seems to have justified the action as Robert Mugabe, who just celebrated his ninetieth birthday, remained in power fourteen years after that decision, with fiery rhetoric according to some sources (The Guardian 2014). Albertus and Menaldo have argued that 'the majority of Latin American countries have experienced at least one large-scale expropriation of land, banks, or natural resources under autocracy from 1950-2002' (Albertus and Menaldo 2013).

Given the research discussed on the process of democratisation so far, it is hardly a surprise that most revolts against authoritarian regimes fail to produce legitimate liberal democratic regimes.

Path Dependency

It is my contention that variations in the outcomes of the Arab Revolts which have been titled the Arab Spring are due to path dependency and exogenous stimuli. What is path dependency? According to Pierson,

> The notion of path dependence is generally used to support a few key claims: Specific patterns of timing and sequence matter; starting from similar conditions, a wide range of social outcomes may be possible; large consequences may result from relative 'small' or contingent events; particular courses of action, once introduced can be virtually impossible to reverse; and consequently, political developments are often punctuated by critical junctures that shape the basic contours of social life (Pierson 2000).

Historical institutionalist explanations, such as the seminal work of Ruth and David Collier in their book *Shaping the Political Arena*, describe how movements such as those that occurred during the Arab Spring are not only consequential but also critical in shaping the future of those countries. In their research, Collier and Collier look at eight Latin American countries and the changing relationships between labour movements and the state, which led to major changes in those movements' relations with both the state and the business class over time. Considering that most of Latin America was, at the time of the research, authoritarian, one could safely use their research design to extrapolate upon the changes of the relationship between public movements in several Arab countries and the state (Collier and Collier 1991).

Several components go into the creation of a 'critical juncture' as defined by Collier and Collier. First, the base line would be the antecedent conditions, or alternative explanation why the events occur, i.e. in this case Arab authoritarianism if looking at the region as whole, or kleptocratic militarism in the case of Egypt, Libya, or Sudan. Second, the crisis itself would be the events that followed Bouazizi's self-immolation and the publication of the WikiLeaks documents that showed the depth of corruption in Tunisia. Third, the three components of the legacy of the crisis: a), the mechanism of crisis production, b), the mechanism of re-production of the crisis and c), the stability of the core attributes of the legacy. If the legacy of the Arab Spring is a liberal democratic regime, which the only case this might be true is Tunisia, then the importance of the mass movements that produced the toppling of the Tunisian government would be most important, but the method by which the new institutions have been decided (aka reproduction), as well as the durability of the new institutions created would also be important.

Yet, as we see in most countries that experienced revolts following the Tunisian insurrection, the establishment of a critical juncture is difficult to begin with. Does a cleavage exist when it produces no discernible conflict? What would be the cleavages in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, etc. as opposed to Libya, Syria, and Yemen? Despite the shortcomings of the idea of a path dependent political transformation, clearly, there is a point in time at which certain countries may never return to status quo ante conditions and these are the countries, which have experienced particularly brutal civil wars in which the state itself has been dissolved. In these cases, it seems the cleavages have been well documented, both in the academic and popular presses and are: a) ethnic/tribal groups, b) religious groups, and c) a combination of a and b. In the countries with little change wherein consistency became the issue, such as in Saudi Arabia, primarily, as well as Kuwait and Sudan, the regime used the Dictator's Handbook very effectively. The Saudi King 'proving very flexible' basically allocated an enormous fortune towards public housing, raised salaries of public employees and consented to local/municipal elections in which, women could vote (Salih and Edin 2013).

Yet, despite design flaws, path dependence as a social science concept could prove a useful analytical tool in cases such as Jordan, Egypt, and Tunisia, as cases in which the Arab Spring as an event has produced variable results regarding the process of democratisation. Considering the variation of resulting political landscapes, all three of the authoritarian regimes had to adapt in the post-2010 world. Jordan is well positioned to use the relative responsiveness of the regime under King Abdullah and the existential threat of the war in Syria and the Palestinian conflict to avoid further concessions toward democratisation. Tunisia's case would be the textbook example of a critical juncture producing a legacy which would be reinforced and continue,

while Egypt would be the case in which the cleavage failed to produce a legacy. This comparative study would be most fascinating.

Exogenous Stimuli

The major flaw in the historical institutionalist account of democratisation would be the effects of major external stimuli. The idea of a critical juncture is thus an extremely useful correction in our thinking, which would allow us to address the above shortcoming. Specifically, was there external stimuli in the case of the Arab Spring? If so, what was it? The argument was advanced that in the age of globalised information, the publication of the internal communication of the US State Department regarding Tunisia became the catalyst for its critical juncture (Friedman 2011). Social media became the favourite mode of organisation in much of the world with the advances in the age of internet and so there is nothing surprising about using the technology to one's own advantage but in this case, the medium is also the principal actor.

Another more apparent exogenous stimulus is third country involvement during the time of crisis in most countries that experienced serious revolts following the Tunisian revolt. A cursory look suggests that in countries, in which third party involvement was greatest, the intensity of the conflict tended to magnify and thus conditions were created for an irreversible break with the past. Could the comparativist seeking to explain the process of change in the Arab world ignore the impact of American intervention or Russian assistance upon the institutional structure? Or for that matter the existence or not of a country? Not to exaggerate the impact of international relations on the process of democratisation in the Arab world, but great power intervention must be considered. The clearest example of third party action hijacking a revolution is the civil war in Syria which may in a sense be part of the larger Arab Spring revolutionary movement but which has quickly devolved into a proxy war between global and regional powers. First, the United States and Russia have different agendas and troops on the ground (Barnard and Shoumali 2015). Second, while jostling for power in Syria, regional powers, such as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states became involved, supporting their own interests in the region sometimes by direct force or by supplying weapons to groups they feel support their worldview (Gerges 2013).

Most importantly, once we disaggregate the citizens of the countries around the world, which have recently experienced increased violence due to political events, one should consider what the relationship between the main actors is. If Friedman is right and the internet partially caused the Arab world to revolt against authoritarian regimes, it would be important to know that economic

elites sided with the revolutionaries, denying help to the regimes, or that there was a definitive age factor in the mobilisation of the political activists which led the social movements that ended these regimes. What is the relationship between the youth of Egypt and the youth of Tunisia or Jordan? It is obviously similarly important to social science to examine the reverse relations of third party involvement in the creation of these crises, which in democratisation speak, would be a critical juncture in the political life of the countries in question. Are the processes in play the same in Tunisia, Jordan, and Egypt, or was there greater third party involvement in each and did such involvement change the events of the crisis? Especially when looking at revolts that have taken place after 2011, much will be said about the impact of involvement of third parties on the fate of the democratisation process.

Conclusion

The political crises that erupted following the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, since termed the Arab Spring, have led social scientists to several assumptions about the way political change happens in modern societies. Although structural and demographic factors have been consistently favoured as explanations for the change in the Arab world, more careful analysis and research points to the impact of national elites. The composition and behaviour of said elites, political, economic, military, and their interrelationship, as well as exogenous stimuli, are extremely important in mapping the trajectories of the revolts. It is my contention that the process of democratisation in each Arabic country will be a function of the composition of the winning coalition of domestic elites and the existence or absence of external stimuli.

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11

Human Rights Movements in the Middle East: Global Norms and Regional Particularities

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The Middle East is often portrayed as an outlier when it comes to human rights, but rights are an important part of the political, diplomatic, and social fabric of the region. This chapter summarises regional trends in human rights advocacy at both the international and domestic levels. Popular movements for independence, equality for women, and protections for workers have deep roots in the region. When the United Nations began to enshrine these values into law after World War II, representatives from the Middle East were at the centre of the debates. In the following two decades, human rights largely played out in the international political realm. Middle Eastern governments contributed to diplomatic efforts to shape emerging treaties and norms and often mobilised human rights rhetoric against colonialism.

In the 1970s, however, the locus of human rights shifted to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that used human rights to pressure their own governments for change. Activists created organisations promoting the rights of prisoners, leftists, Islamists, dissidents, women, and the poor. Human rights became more threatening to Middle Eastern regimes that were overwhelmingly undemocratic. States had little tolerance for institutions that could challenge them and often responded violently.

Even though widespread violations continue, human rights have become an important framework across the region. Most states now address human rights concerns in response to domestic and international pressure. Rights have increasingly become the language of popular protest and were one of several ways that people articulated grievances before and during the uprisings in several Arab countries in 2011.

Treaties in International and Domestic Politics

Middle Eastern diplomats played key roles in the codification of human rights. Charles Malik, a Lebanese diplomat, was one of the architects of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the foundational document of human rights law. Along with Peng-chun Chang of China, Malik was considered the intellectual force behind the document (Glendon 2001, 44). The UDHR established baseline protections for individual rights. It was adopted as a resolution of the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948 with support from 48 countries. Eight countries abstained, including the Soviet bloc, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa. At the time of its signing, many current-day countries were not represented because they were occupied by foreign powers, presenting an obvious challenge to the idea that the values enshrined in the UDHR are universal. Since 1948, most states, including those that are former colonies, have signed treaties agreeing to implement the Declaration.

Middle Eastern participation in drafting and advocating for early treaties went beyond Malik (Waltz 2004, 801). Arab and Asian representatives to the UN advocated for both self-determination and human rights as part of their struggle against colonialism (Burke 2010, 41). For many of these smaller states, human rights and anti-colonialism were mutually reinforcing concepts. With strong support from Egypt and other delegations from the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and opposition from Great Britain and other imperial powers, Article 2 of the UDHR contains a strong statement that the rights enshrined therein apply to individuals living under colonial rule: 'Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty'.

Though it was a formative document of the United Nations with broad support, the UDHR was not a binding treaty. After its adoption, negotiators began to draft treaties that would implement the values of the UDHR with the force of law. These resulted in two covenants, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Like the UDHR, both covenants contained strong language against imperialism that was included with the support of delegations from non-imperial powers, including Middle Eastern countries. Many Middle Eastern countries were also among the early signatories of these two treaties. Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, and Tunisia all signed both treaties in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Morocco followed in 1977. Merely signing a treaty is, of course, no

indication that a state actually changed its practices, particularly as the enforcement mechanisms of human rights treaties are weak. Many of the states listed above had abysmal human rights records. However, the widespread acceptance of these treaties across the region, with the exception of the Gulf States, illustrates at least the surface endorsement of the concept of human rights across the diplomatic sphere.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, human rights became divisive across developing countries and within Middle Eastern politics. By 1968, when the first UN International Conference on Human Rights was held in Tehran, some government officials expressed open animosity towards the emerging rights regime. This contrasts notably with statements made at the Bandung Conference in 1955, where representatives from Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and Jordan, and no less a figure than President Nasser of Egypt, expressed support for human rights (Burke 2010, 13–34). The short Proclamation issued from the conference included little substance and revealed declining governmental interest in engaging with individual human rights beyond criticising Israel and apartheid South Africa. States that had already achieved national liberation from colonialism were focused on economic development, not individual liberties that could threaten their grip on power. As state interest decreased, private individuals and organisations became the main actors in the human rights sphere.

Human rights advocacy increasingly shifted from the United Nations and diplomatic channels to NGOs (Moyn 2010, 129). The opening for ratification of the ICCPR and the ICESCR in 1966 and their entry into force in 1976 meant that these tools were now widely available and could be used to generate negative publicity for states that violated their principles. NGOs increasingly used these treaties and other human rights laws to call for change within their own societies. As more states gained independence and colonial regimes were replaced with domestic rulers, many of them autocratic, human rights increasingly became a tool of citizens to use against domestic governments.

This shift on the international stage coincided with a time of evolving ideologies and increasing repression of opposition politics in the Middle East. In Egypt, the marginalisation of leftists and Nasserists under Anwar Sadat (1970 – 1981), the re-introduction of torture under Hosni Mubarak (1981 – 2011), and the increasing violence against secularists, Copts, and foreigners prompted some elements of the left to re-organise under the banner of human rights (Hassan 2006, 43). In Morocco, dissension against the monarchy was brutally suppressed from the 1960s to the 1980s during what became known as the Years of Lead, when as many as 50,000 people were victimised

(Loudly 2014, 73). The regime of King Hassan II (1961 – 1999) used disappearances, torture, and imprisonment to discourage opposition political parties, trade unions, coups, and rebellions. At the same time, across the region, secular Arab nationalism was declining after the loss of the 1967 war with Israel (Dawisha 2002, 253–4). Socialism became less salient through the 1980s as power shifted away from the Soviet Union. The wake of these ideologies provided fertile ground for new approaches to cope with the social and economic changes brought about by state violence, neoliberal economic policies, and a surge in oil revenues in the 1970s (Beinin 2005, 112). Intellectuals and others were increasingly looking for alternative modes of organisation. Human rights advocacy provided an avenue that appealed primarily to leftist opposition activists because it reflected many of their values while avoiding the risks and downsides of overt partisan politics.

The Age of NGOs

The contemporary era of human rights organising in the Middle East, marked by its reliance on international treaty law and claims of universal standards, began in this milieu in the 1970s and accelerated into the 1980s and 1990s. Lawyers, political partisans, and intellectuals across the region created new organisations devoted to human rights advocacy. While many of these NGOs expressed support for the Palestinian struggle or other issues abroad, their primary focus was domestic reform. Whether their audience was domestic, international, or both, their goal was to generate change within their own governments and societies. Many early activists were motivated by personal experiences of repression, and international law gave them a common language with which to challenge state action.

The earliest human rights NGOs emerged in countries with histories of contentious nationalist politics and strong communal institutions, such as political parties and labour unions. Activists in Tunisia, Morocco, Palestine, and Egypt were among the first to form national NGOs focused broadly on human rights. The Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH) was founded in 1976 and officially registered with the government the following year. LTDH (like many North African NGOs, it is known by the acronym for its French name) immediately began working on prisoners' rights and advocating for the right of association, the right to a fair trial, and press freedom. These civil and political rights were key to carving out space for political opposition, which was marginalised and then outright banned as Habib Bourguiba (1957 – 1987), nationalist leader turned president, consolidated power. By the early 1980s, LTDH had thousands of members and local branches around the country (Waltz 1995, 137). LTDH cultivated a reputation for independence, both from the state and from various political groups. Its early leadership was

politically prominent, providing some protection from state intervention. Like many secular human rights groups, LTDH faced the tricky question of if and how to advocate for the rights of Islamists, who were often seen as political enemies of human rights but were also persecuted by the state. LTDH eventually took prominent stances in favour of releasing Islamist political prisoners. The organisation also faced internal disagreement over its positions on sensitive issues, such as the right of Muslims to convert to another religion and the right of Muslim women to marry non-Muslims. LTDH weathered criticism from both Islamists and Arab nationalists that human rights were foreign, and it suffered from a general government crackdown on civil society, though it was protected by Tunisia's international commitments to human rights to a certain extent (Garon 2003, 35–6).

Early efforts to start a human rights NGO in Morocco were stymied by state repression. A division of the Istiqlal (Independence) Party known as the Human Rights League took stances on government action, observed trials, and published reports, but its actions were limited (Sater 2007, 42–3). In the early 1970s, a number of different unions and professional syndicates created a committee against repression, but many of its members were arrested and imprisoned (Amine 2015). In 1979, members of a wing of the Social Union of Popular Forces (USFP) party and others formed the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) as an alternative form of civic organising. AMDH was not created as a wing of the USFP, but the makeup of its early supporters tied it to the party organisation. Interconnections with political parties were an ongoing struggle for Moroccan human rights organisations. They tried to demonstrate independence not only from the monarchy but also from partisan politics. Their level of independence fluctuated (Sater 2007, 48) but the greatest barrier at this time was state repression.

The end of the 1980s brought a new era of activity for human rights NGOs in Morocco with the creation of the Moroccan Organisation for Human Rights (OMDH) and the revival of both the League and AMDH. Though OMDH was initially barred from holding an opening meeting, it was able to formally launch in December 1988 and began advocating for political prisoners (Waltz 1995, 148). The organisation won an early success in 1989 when several prisoners were released. Its activities paved the way for the League and AMDH to begin operations again, and the three organisations worked together, along with lawyers' associations and with support from international groups, to create a common National Charter of Human Rights in 1990 (Granzer 1999, 122). Though they collaborated on the Charter and other communiqués, AMDH and OMDH operated quite differently. AMDH grew into a mass, membership-based organisation that pursued direct confrontation with the state. OMDH was perceived as less partisan and less threatening (Sater 2007, 56).

In the same year as the creation of AMDH, three young professionals in Ramallah formed the first human rights organisation in Palestine, a non-profit corporation called Law in the Service of Man, later known as Al Haq. The founders wanted to oppose the Israeli occupation non-violently, and law was a natural avenue as two of them were lawyers. Rather than focus on a particular issue, such as political prisoners, Al Haq had the dual aim of inculcating respect for human rights among Palestinians while working to end the Israeli occupation. Al Haq became known for the high quality of its research and fieldwork, which it used to author dozens of reports and pamphlets for both domestic and international audiences. The organisation was an international leader in documenting rights abuses and its reports were widely respected. By its nature as a Palestinian organisation documenting Israeli action, Al Haq operated in a more international sphere than many other Middle Eastern NGOs. It pursued a number of local educational and service programs, but its advocacy work was largely directed at foreign governments and NGOs, as well as international organisations. Al Haq had close relationships with both the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and the Ford Foundation. Perhaps due to its international profile, Al Haq was able to operate for a number of years without significant retaliation; however, this changed during the Palestinian intifada in the late 1980s when Al Haq's fieldworkers were detained.

The first regional association of Arab human rights activists was formed shortly after these early groups, at a gathering of dissidents and human rights supporters in Hammamet, Tunisia in 1983. Egyptian intellectual Saad Eddin Ibrahim, one of the founders, attributed the timing of the meeting to the release of political prisoners in Egypt. These men spanned the spectrum of political beliefs but had all been detained in the waning years of Sadat's presidency (Crystal 1994, 437). With their release under President Mubarak in 1982, they found common ground in support for political and civil rights, particularly those related to political participation. Their Declaration, agreed to at the initial meeting, proclaimed: 'Democracy and the fundamental freedoms it implies are not merely means of achieving vital goals, but constitute a fundamental goal in themselves'. At its second meeting, held in Cyprus because no Arab government would permit it, this group formed the Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) (Crystal 1994, 439). Egypt eventually permitted the AOHR to open an office in Cairo, though its position there was insecure. The AOHR began publishing annual country reports, receiving complaints, and launching international campaigns. It eventually established chapters in eight Arab countries as well as in several European nations and the United States (Crystal 1994, 443).

These NGOs were merely the vanguard. Over the next two decades, dozens of other organisations joined the human rights landscape. Some were

offshoots of these early pioneers. Both the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR) and the Kuwait Society for Human Rights (KSHR) began as chapters of AOHR. Egypt soon had a diverse collection of groups working on the rights of children, women, victims of torture, and others. Even in Gaza, where working conditions were quite difficult, a new human rights NGO formed in 1995 with support from Al Haq and the Ford Foundation. Other NGOs began in Algeria (Waltz 1995, 140) and Jordan in the 1980s and early 1990s (Crystal 1994, 436). Turkey had a long history of human rights NGOs, but the late 1980s and 1990s brought a much larger field of activism (Çalı 2007, 223). Human rights even eventually had a limited presence in Gulf States, which largely did not have a history of organised contentious politics, with KSHR and the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights.

Human rights advocacy was not limited to NGOs that identified as part of the international human rights movement. Labour unions, professional syndicates, journalists, and political parties also pushed for rights-based social change, whether using the language of international law or not. Women's organisations were often at the forefront of efforts to secure full legal citizenship for women, though not all of them fully endorsed international law on women's rights. Many women's organisations combined social services or development work with advocacy. For example, the Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women in Egypt and the Women's Cultural and Social Society in Kuwait are both service organisations that also advocate for women's rights. Similarly, supporters of the environment, children, prisoners, and other marginalised groups formed NGOs that mixed advocacy with social services. This wide array of activity, only some of it explicitly focused on human rights, contributed to the growth of NGOs across the region (see Norton 1995).

Regional Human Rights Regimes

As non-governmental advocacy increased and human rights became the dominant way of conceptualising individuals' interactions with the state, governments increasingly embraced rights language, irrespective of whether this was accompanied by changes in practice. There were several efforts within Arab and Muslim states to develop a regional or religious human rights document, analogous to the treaties governing human rights in Europe and the Americas. Those agreements, however, impose stricter requirements on states and create more robust enforcement mechanisms. The agreements adopted by Arab and Muslim states did not. The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights, endorsed in 1990 by every nation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, neglected to mention a number of rights enshrined in international treaties, including freedom from torture and the right to a fair trial

(Masud 2012, 114). The Arab League adopted a Charter on Human Rights in 1994 that contained no provisions for enforcement and was not ratified by any state. A decade later, the League adopted a revised Charter that came into force in 2008 when seven member states ratified it. The updated Charter guaranteed a number of key rights, including equality between men and women, though there was still no enforcement mechanism such as a court. In addition to these regional efforts, national governments increasingly created offices of human rights, though these often provided more window-dressing than true accountability.

Challenges for Human Rights Advocates

Despite the proliferation of NGOs, human rights activists faced a number of challenges from both within and outside the movement. The influx of foreign funding, the prospect of government co-optation, and in-fighting among organisations generated disillusionment with human rights networks. This was particularly pronounced in Palestine, where an explosion of NGOs in the 1990s became associated with the decline of the Palestinian nationalist movement (Allen 2013, 65). Palestine is perhaps emblematic of the perceived failed promise of human rights; while NGOs were successful in changing the discourse around the Israeli occupation, particularly internationally, the occupation itself persisted. Around the region, rights violations continued unabated even as awareness increased.

Human rights activists were also criticised for retreating from partisan political life and arguably backing away from calls for systemic change (Browers 2004). Many NGOs were also susceptible to allegations that they represented foreign interests because they accepted foreign funding or had close relationships with foreign and international NGOs. The Ford Foundation was particularly active in funding and developing human rights initiatives throughout the Middle East, including Al Haq and AOHR, in addition to organising conferences and trainings (Crystal 1994, 444). Amnesty International, the International Federation for Human Rights, and the ICJ all partnered with and supported Arab NGOs. Participating in foreign and international networks opened Middle Eastern NGOs to criticism because human rights were associated with foreign interests and neo-imperialism. At the same time, these networks provided a degree of protection from local governments, which were less likely to crack down on NGOs that could mobilise the international press and foreign governments.

Associations with foreigners also opened human rights to criticism for being un-Islamic. The relationships between political Islam and human rights vary widely, but all human right activists had to navigate political spectrums that

included Islamist elements (Hassan 2006, 42). Some Islamists rejected the substance of human rights law and its subordination of religion to international law. Conflicts were often political as well as ideological – Islamists and human rights activists were generally associated with different bases of political support. Even so, Islamists and human rights activists have aligned over shared values, such as support for prisoners' rights. Islamists and human rights activists were also both frequent targets of state repression, creating shared experiences and overlapping interests. Many Islamist political parties and organisations embraced human rights and created their own rights organisations (Hicks 2002, 372, 378; Slyomovics 2005, 187–192). Some, such as Mazlumder in Turkey, advocated for the religious rights of Muslims as part of a broader framework in solidarity with more leftist human rights groups (Çalı 2007, 226).

Despite these challenges, state repression remained the greatest threat to human rights NGOs. Most active organisations faced sustained and significant efforts to curtail their work when they raised issues that threatened the state – torture and citizens' bodily autonomy, the legitimacy of the ruler, and the legality of state operations. AMDH in Morocco, for example, was prevented from operating for several years in the mid-1980s after it inspired calls for changes in the treatment of prisoners (Waltz 1995, 145). Even when organisations were permitted to operate, they faced bureaucratic delays, harassment, intimidation, and smear campaigns. State repression, often violent, was commonplace throughout the region. All of Al Haq's fieldworkers were arrested and detained during the first intifada in the 1980s. In the 1990s, the Tunisian government tried to effectively dismantle LTDH by criticising its leader in the press and requiring the NGO to allow anyone to join, which would open it to infiltration by security forces. International pressure eventually secured LTDH's survival, but its efficacy was severely compromised because it was unable to access the domestic press (Garon 2003, 37). The Egyptian government refused to register EOHR, meaning it had to operate outside the law. In 1989, several of its board members were arrested and tortured after they monitored the security forces' violent response to a strike at a state-owned company (Stork 2011, 91–2). Across the region, state violence limited the scope of human rights activism.

Rights and Popular Uprisings

Popular demonstrations in the 2000s and 2010s called for respect for human rights despite their complicated and compromised position. In 2009, Iran witnessed the largest protests since the 1979 revolution following complaints of voting irregularities in the presidential election (Adelkhan 2012, 17). This Green Movement brought together disparate social movements seeking

government reform. Some reformers had increasingly used rights language in the 2000s and even created human rights NGOs advocating for prisoners and an end to the death penalty (Navabi 2012). In Egypt, women, students, judges, and leftists organised protests against sexual harassment and in favour of more political openness throughout the 2000s (El-Mahdy 2009).

In both Egypt and Tunisia, workers mobilised throughout the decade. In Egypt alone, there were more than 3000 collective actions involving hundreds of thousands of workers (Beinin 2016, 66). Though distinct, the Arab uprisings in 2011 built on these earlier protest movements and succeeded in toppling regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, forcing constitutional reform in Morocco, and sparking ongoing violent conflict in Syria, Yemen, and Libya. Though human rights were central to the desired social changes, rights NGOs were not at the forefront of the uprisings (El Naggar 2012). In general, the organisations had not built a substantial social base. This was due to a number of factors, including foreign funding, violent suppression at the hands of unsympathetic states, reliance on elite lawyers and technocrats, and popular sentiment that human rights advanced Western interests over Islamic or other values. Though some organisations, like AMDH, explicitly embraced mass action, others were simply too small to take on this role or did not see it as part of their mission. Nevertheless, rights language was common among protesters. In Egypt, popular protest slogans called for the end of the state of emergency and eliminating military trials for civilians, fairly technical demands that echoed concerns of human rights organisations (Morayef 2015, 9–13). In Tunisia, the slogan 'A job is a right, you pack of thieves' (Beinin 2016, 4) highlighted both the centrality of economic injustice and rights to demands for social change. The prevalence of rights language demonstrates the extent to which human rights framing had permeated public discourse.

The Future of Human Rights

The shifting role of human rights in Middle Eastern politics illustrates how dramatically both the discourse and practice of human rights have changed throughout the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. After decades of activism and the recent protest movements, there has been little progress in changing state action to comply with international human rights law. There is little enforcement at the regional level, and widespread repression of domestic rights NGOs continues. The prospects for human rights NGOs in Turkey, Iran, and most Arab countries are bleak as states continue to suppress their activities and activists languish in jails. As the legitimacy of human rights frameworks declines and they are increasingly associated with Western imperialism, even domestic calls for respect for human rights are less resonant. Nevertheless, activists in every Middle East

country continue to advance their platform of social change through governmental reform, public education, international pressure, and domestic advocacy.

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Note on Indexing

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Employing the comprehensive approach to security, Regional Security in the Middle East:
Sectors, Variables and Issues provides an insightful and up to date analysis of security
issues in a region that continues to be conflict prone and challenged by factors both
regional and global. In this volume, the contributors not only explore regional security
dynamics and the barriers to cooperation and integration in the Middle East – but also
scenarios for near future security developments in one of the most politically volatile world
region. In so doing, the book contextualises the historical and current causes for the
divisive reality that characterises the region.

Edited by

Bettina Koch and Yannis A. Stivachtis

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