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## METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPT PAPERS

# RE-CONCEPTUALIZING ORDERS IN THE MENA REGION

THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK  
OF THE MENARA PROJECT

Edited by **Eduard Soler i Lecha** (coordinator),  
**Silvia Colombo**, **Lorenzo Kamel** and **Jordi Quero**



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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this work is to set the conceptual architecture for the MENARA Project. It is articulated in five thematic sections. The first one traces back the major historical junctures in which key powers shaped the defining features of the present-day MENA region. Section 2 sets the geographical scope of the project, maps the distribution of power and defines regional order and its main features. Section 3 focuses on the domestic orders in a changing region by gauging and tracing the evolution of four trends, namely the erosion of state capacity; the securitization of regime policies; the militarization of contention; and the pluralization of collective identities. Section 4 links developments in the global order to their impact on the region in terms of power, ideas, norms and identities. The last section focuses on foresight studies and proposes a methodology to project trends and build scenarios. All sections, as well as the conclusion, formulate specific research questions that should help us understand the emerging geopolitical order in the MENA.

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## INTRODUCTION

Lorenzo Kamel and Eduard Soler i Lecha

The states and societies of the Middle East and North Africa are the scenario of profound geopolitical shifts, prompting extraordinary levels of unpredictability and instability. The Arab uprisings in 2011 and, before that, the effects of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, have catalysed dynamics that will have a long-term impact over domestic, regional and global orders. Among others, this region is witnessing the growing importance of non-state actors, the proliferation of fragile states, the (re)emergence of sectarian politics and communal strife, unstable alliances and overlapping and somehow reinforcing regional cleavages, as well as the waning influence of the US and of Europe in this part of the world.

The *Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture: mapping geopolitical shifts, regional order and domestic transformations* (MENARA) will contribute to a better understanding of those features and the geopolitical order in the making. MENARA is a three-year collaborative research project, bringing together 14 research centres from the EU, Turkey, the Maghreb, the Mashreq and the Gulf and financed by the European Commission. The acronym refers to the Arabic word *menara*, which means “lighthouse”. Like any lighthouse, the MENARA Project aims to shed light on what is in front of us but which may be difficult to see, helping us to anticipate what is to come and guiding us along challenging pathways. A lighthouse also evokes the sea, in our case the Mediterranean Sea, and thus a reminder that the EU is deeply connected to this region. All these messages are further encapsulated in the logo of the project, inspired by the Lighthouse of Alexandria, a milestone in human history that for centuries aided navigation between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

To put it in a nutshell, MENARA will provide answers to whether the Middle East and North Africa will be composed of more conflict-ridden or more cohesive societies, whether this is becoming a more fragmented or a more integrated region and how peripheral or how embedded this region and its components are in global dynamics. All this can be summarized in an overarching research question: will the geopolitical future of this region be marked by either centrifugal or centripetal dynamics or by a combination of both?

To do so, a first step is to conceptualize the notions of “order” and “region” in view of the geopolitical shifts under way in this part of the world. The project will describe the main features of the regional geopolitical order (norms, values, institutions and actors) in place before 2011, its origins and evolution and then the extent to which all the ongoing changes have modified, or have the potential to modify, the traditional normative and structural features of the regional geopolitical order. This concept paper is a critical step in that respect.

The aim of the paper is to help our research team in identifying and mapping the domestic, regional and global dynamics and trends that shape the regional order. These include ideational factors (identities, ideas and values – comprising, among others: political ideology, religion, culture, gender relations and trans-boundary solidarity) as well as material ones (power and interdependence,

including flows of goods, capital, energy and people). We will not only look at dynamics but also at the key actors. Thus, MENARA will pinpoint who is who amid these geopolitical shifts and will assess the objectives and capabilities of both well-established and (re)emerging actors, paying specific attention to interdependence relations, fault lines and conflicts between them.

This information is needed to build future scenarios for mid-term (2025) and long-term (2050) timeframes. Once the complexity of the ongoing changes is decoded, the project will offer a research-based, thorough assessment of the region's future, identifying the key actors who may be able to shift ongoing dynamics and under what circumstances. This will include discerning who among them is willing to consolidate the current order, who will advocate for a change of its features and who will question the order outright. All this will help us inform EU policies and strategies through policy-relevant analysis and the production of targeted policy recommendations.

As expected from a Horizon2020 project, this is a complex and ambitious endeavour. MENARA combines explanatory, prospective and prescriptive dimensions. It also analyses ongoing dynamics at three different levels (domestic, regional and global). The project offers not only interdisciplinary expertise (bringing together political scientists, sociologists, economists, geographers, historians, area experts and international relations scholars) but also a cross-temporal approach to our subject of study. It combines a grasp of the past, an understanding of present dynamics, and imagines possible futures for the region.

The scope and structure of this concept paper reflects this pluralistic approach to the emerging regional order in the Middle East and North Africa. The contributions to this edited volume are a first but critical step in fulfilling our goals, in providing a clearer picture of the scope and ambition of the project and in proposing a shared conceptual guide to collectively analyse a moving target. The concept paper is articulated in five thematic sections all connected to a central thread: the driving forces behind the regional order in the making, and the implications of these transformations in and outside the region.

Despite its primary focus on a relatively distant past, the historical section (no. 1) speaks to and sheds light on the present. In doing so, it traces back the major historical junctures in which key powers shaped the defining features of the present-day MENA, and shows how these dynamics resulted in a process of "simplification". The process of simplification is about the tendency to define, indeed rationalise, the other in terms more suitable, comprehensible and useful to the self. In line with this, the historical section, largely focuses also on dynamics from within the region, shows how a number of key ideas and concepts have been understood, imposed and/or adopted in different cultural and geographical contexts, and explains why "the burden of history" matters in understanding the present and the future of the regional (section 2), domestic (section 3) and global (section 4) dimensions.

Section 2 provides a conceptual bridge that connects the past to the contemporary regional order and sets the ground for a comprehensive definition and understanding of the term region and the agency within. This section frames a number of geographical and theoretical key-concepts adopted in MENARA, defines a geographical scope that fully includes non-Arab regional players, maps the distribution of novel poles of power, and defines international order as a formal or informal

arrangement that sustains rule-governed interactions among different units within a system in their pursuit of individual and collective goals. This section also elaborates on changing amity/enmity patterns, how transnational actors are challenging the regional order and the implications for conflict duration and intensity.

Section 3 focuses on the domestic orders in a changing Middle East and North Africa. It unpacks the concept of domestic orders by gauging and tracing the evolution of their constitutive dynamics since 2011: erosion of state capacity; securitization of regime policies; militarization of contention; and pluralization of collective identities. The conclusions rely on three pillars of interrogation: an empirical description and analysis of each of the above-mentioned trends; a theoretical modelling of the interrelation between the four above-mentioned factors in the formation and transformation of domestic orders; finally, an analysis of the interrelation between the making of domestic orders and the making of the regional order in the MENA.

Section 4 completes the three-dimensional perspective through a conceptual framework linking developments in the global order with their impact on the MENA. Taking advantage of a number of theoretical developments in International Relations, the analysis of global order elucidates the effects over the region of changes in the global distribution of power, ideas, norms and identities. This section connects with the existing literature on whether this region is a penetrated system and on the level of autonomy of its main actors.

Each of the four outlined sections look towards the future, placing particular emphasis on how the past and the present will affect the region's dynamics and generations, and, through the region, the global perspective. In this respect, the last (fifth) section focuses on foresight studies, representing a sort of analytical umbrella of the project, in as much it aims to find a "reduction of complexity" of all themes and ideas analysed by MENARA. In order to maximize this, and to detect the major ongoing trends in foresight studies, the authors collected and analysed a total of 40 such studies conducted by international experts and institutions. It emerges that most of these focus on climate change, migration and energy issues, with only very few concentrating explicitly on political, economic and societal issues. This is a scientific gap that MENARA is striving to fill through the analysis of the structures, dynamics, challenges and potential of all the relevant actors in and outside the region. Focusing on their agency can indeed be a powerful tool to "de-simplify" the reading of what the region is experiencing, to reshape the paradigmatic schemes through which to look at this part of the world, and to realize Eric Hobsbawm's wish to rescue not only what is often perceived as "the stockinger and the peasant [i.e. the region], but also the nobleman and the king" (Hobsbawm 1997:184-85).

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# 1. THE PAST: TERMINOLOGY, CONCEPTS AND HISTORICAL JUNCTURES

Lorenzo Kamel, Karim Makdisi, Waleed Hazbun and Tariq Tell<sup>1</sup>

*All history is contemporary history*  
Benedetto Croce

In the early 19th century, when the Ottoman authorities increasingly lost their grip on power, a large part of the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean experienced the end of an old order and the rise of new powers and long-lasting dynasties (Osman 2014).<sup>2</sup> Today, many of the countries in the region are witnessing a similar process, and old and new powers are struggling for supremacy, potentially triggering new and transformative conditions. The current historical conjuncture has been interpreted as “the emergence of a post-American Middle East in which no broker has the power, or the will, to contain the region’s sectarian hatreds” (Hubbard et al. 2014; see also Kaplan 2015), but it would be perhaps more accurate to refer to it as the fulfilment of a prediction by Janet Abu-Lughod in 1989, namely that the era of European/Western hegemony would probably be superseded by “a return to the relative balance of multiple centers exhibited in the thirteenth-century world system” (Abu-Lughod 1989:371).

While it might be too early to assess to what extent Abu-Lughod’s predictions hold true, any attempt to imagine the region’s future must start from an analysis of its past and the key turning points and concepts that shaped this order. To do so, the first part of this section contextualizes a number of concepts commonly adopted for approaching and understanding the region. It shows how different ideas and assumptions have been understood, imposed and/or adopted in different cultural and geographical contexts. The second part, by contrast, traces the major historical junctures in which key powers shaped the defining features of the present-day MENA region. The conclusions touch on why history matters and suggest three research questions that will inform the remainder of the MENARA Project.

## 1.1 DECONSTRUCTING CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY

Providing a historical framework can be a powerful tool for deconstructing a number of terms and concepts generally adopted in discussing the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Concepts such as state, capital, border, citizenship, private property, sectarianism (or *Tā’ifiya*, a neologism introduced in Arabic in the 19th century), which will also be widely used in the course of the MENARA

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1 Lorenzo Kamel wrote the section on terminology, concepts and historical junctures up to the interwar period (from page 7 to 16). Karim Makdisi, Waleed Hazbun and Tariq Tell wrote the section from the interwar period to the present (from page 16 to 23). The authors would like to thank Djallil Lounnas, Nizar Messari, Driss Maghroui and Douaa Zazouli for a number of insights and inputs on North Africa, and Eduard Soler i Lecha for several useful comments.

2 Nader Kadhim (2013) argued that the Arab Spring is the result of three waves of unfulfilled hopes. The first of the three, he contends, dates back to the early 19th century, when Arab intellectuals were persuaded that the region did not need violence or revolution in order to develop, but rather education and science.



Project, held a secondary meaning in pre-First World War MENA and were largely irrelevant until protestant missionaries and others first contributed to disseminating these and other ideas in the region.<sup>3</sup> Their limited adoption was confirmed by the absence of Arabic terms to express those same concepts.

The common claim that Jerusalem has never served as the capital (from the Latin *caput*, head) of any Arab or Muslim entity, for instance, neglects the fact that the notion of *ʿāšima* itself, which in modern Arabic refers to the capital of a state,<sup>4</sup> was unknown in classical Arabic, at least in its contemporary political-administrative meaning. This is even truer for citizenship, the concept that commonly indicates political belonging in the West and recalls the Greek *polites* (citizen) and Latin *cives*. Until a relatively recent past, Semitic idioms offered no word to indicate such concepts. If in modern Arabic, in order to fill up this void, the term *jinsīya* has been adopted (from the root *j-n-s*, which in classical Arabic indicated gender, race and class, depending on the case), this may be linked to the need to introduce an idea that would help outsiders to interpret the locals.

This does not imply that in the Middle East notions for expressing one's own identity were non-existent, or that the particular importance of a certain city was not recognized (not only Baghdad or Damascus, but also Jerusalem, in the first period of Islam, played a role comparable with that of a "capital") (see *ʿAthâmina* 2000). Concepts such as *ʿašabīya* (reciprocal solidarity),<sup>5</sup> developed by Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) and based primarily on blood ties (the *šilat al-rahīm*), *qawmīya*, which may be interpreted as loyalty to a community held together through cultural and linguistic bonds, and *watanīya*, that is loyalty to a community residing in a particular region, demonstrate a linguistic and cultural articulation that is worth noting. None of these, however, represented the priority of expressing one's political being. None of them carried meanings comparable to those which, especially in Europe and the USA, were relevant identity elements.

The absence of such terms was also the mirror of a fluid reality in which self-versus-other constructions were less expressed or needed. The relatively recent introduction in the region of concepts such as refugee, smuggler, contraband or the minority/majority dichotomy, so fraught with meaning today, are very much the result of newly created mental and physical divisions. As noted by Benjamin White (2011:209), "the nation-state form creates the objective conditions in which people begin to consider themselves as minorities and majorities: however these remain subjective categories."<sup>6</sup> The "millet system," today often misrepresented as a static and rigid top-

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3 The Syrian Protestant University of Beirut, founded by American missionaries in 1866 and later known as the American University of Beirut, played a meaningful role in this process.

4 *Al-ʿāšima* (singular form of *al-ʿawāšim*, defences, fortifications), literally "the protector," indicated originally the line between southern Turkey, Iraq and northern Syria, which divided the Byzantine Empire from the caliphates.

5 The concept of *ʿašabīya* was introduced by Ibn Khaldūn in the *Muqaddima*. It may be linked to what Said Nursî (1878-1960) defined as "positive nationalism," a predisposition that "arises from an inner need of social life and is the cause of mutual assistance and solidarity; it ensures a beneficial strength" (Nursî 1993:381). *ʿAšabīya* is not, then, a concept comparable to nationalism. Baron De Slane (1801-78) translated it as "*esprit de corps*," while Hellmut Ritter (1892-1971) interpreted it with a more convincing "solidarity feeling."

6 As noted by White (2011:45), "The communities that emerged as 'minorities' during the mandate cannot simply be mapped back onto the millets or Christian and Jewish communities of the Ottoman period. A minority is a modern phenomenon, a millet pre-modern [...] Even those religious communities that did previously exist as millets saw their



down structure implemented for organizing the life of “Ottoman minorities,” was in reality hardly a “system,”<sup>7</sup> and had indeed very little in common with the “process of minorization” started in the late 19th century. As noted by Aron Rodrigue (1996), “nothing in the political system of the Ottoman Empire called for different groups to merge into one [...] That particular arrangement, therefore, renders invalid all our terms for debate about minority/majority, which are all extraordinarily Europe-centered.” Indeed, before the first decades of the 20th century, neither the local populations nor the Western powers used the term “minority,”<sup>8</sup> or “majority,” to describe the ethno-religious composition of the region.<sup>9</sup>

This also applies to the concept of nationalism, whose largely disruptive influence reached the Eastern Mediterranean at a relatively late stage in comparison to the North African context. Countries such as Egypt and Tunisia in fact had been nearly independent political units since the 19th century. In this respect the “colonial” division of North Africa has been tendentially the result of a less “alienating” and disruptive process than that occurred in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In a number of primary sources produced by peoples in the region in the 18th and 19th centuries it is possible to detect a distinction between *ibn ‘Arab* (Arab son) and *ibn Turk* (Turkish son). This means that the local populations often considered the non-Arabic-speaking Turks as foreigners. At the same time, the origin from a certain village, the *hamūla* (clan) of belonging and the local customs were all factors which marked a certain distinction between the proto-nations present in the region. And yet external dangers, which are very often the basis of the need of a people to define itself in a clear-cut way, were largely secondary until the growing Western encroachment on the region.

This is even more pertinent given that the idea individuals could assemble and be organized in accordance with non-religious criteria was largely perceived as inherently opposed to the Islamic concept of community. The influential Iranian-born philosopher Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī contended, for instance, that Islam provided a far superior means of socio-political organization. Such claims

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relationship to the state and the wider society alter significantly as they became minorities in the new Syrian nation-state.” It should be added that the so-called “millet system” was neither unitary, nor static. In Latif Tas’s words: “It was also not a ‘system’, which implies something structured to come top-down from the centre as part of a representation of authority, but rather something that emerged bottom-up in different ways from the various communities” (Tas 2014:498).

7 The “millet practice” (“system” implies a top-down structure from the centre as part of a representation of authority) emerged as a bottom-up process from the various communities, representing their ways of life. This practice, often highly localized and unevenly applied, registered a process of institutionalization and centralization in the second half of the 19th century. Laura Robson (2016:3) noted that “the idea of minorities (and, for that matter, majorities) arose outside the Middle East, in a post-Enlightenment Europe,” while Aron Rodrigue (1996) reminded us that “it is fundamentally wrong to conceptualize the Ottoman Empire, and the Middle East more generally, before the modern period in terms of majorities and minorities.” For a comprehensive deconstruction of the assumption that a *millet* was equal or similar to a “minority” see Peter Sluglett (2016).

8 According to Peter Sluglett (2016:37), “the main difference between a millet and a ‘religious minority’ in the Arab world is that the first is a feature of the multiethnic Ottoman state that disappeared after the First World War, and the second is an often problematic component of the modern national state.”

9 Stephen Hemsley Longrigg (1893-1979) pointed out that “the oft-drawn picture of Syria as a ‘mosaic of minorities’ can be misleading, and this is not only by ignoring the immense preponderance of the Sunni Muslim population, but also by unduly emphasizing the elements which separated this majority from the rest, and minimizing the wide common ground which all shared” (Longrigg 1958:11).

were echoed by many other thinkers and followers of Al-Afghānī, including the Egyptian jurist Muḥammad ʿAbduh, one of the key funding figures of Islamic modernism and a direct witness of the British occupation of Egypt in 1882.

Religion proved to be a useful tool for Western powers in their attempts to pre-empt the formation of multi-religious nationalist movements. In the British Raj, for instance, London helped to construct a new version of the caste system, assigning social and political meanings to caste and enshrining these meanings in legal and political structures. The promotion of Muslim communal identity was considered by London as a powerful tool to appease Muslim opinion throughout the empire,<sup>10</sup> thus as a way of preventing the emergence of a pan-Islamic rebellion – in Malaysia, India and later in Egypt and Palestine – against the British authority. Muslim communal institutions were thus used, particularly in the Middle East, to confine Muslim political expression to religious issues (Robson 2011).<sup>11</sup>

The successful attempts of pre-empting the formation of indigenous multi-religious nationalist movements did not necessarily imply a will to divide the region by ethnicity into sub-autonomous areas. For a long time, the British authorities in fact tried to avert any possible territorial partition: they did not have any interest in sharing frontiers with powers with large armies. The British approach aimed to create friendly buffer states by means of influence, exercised through trade treaties, loans and friendly advice. The situation began to change with Germany's increasing influence, and the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894, the Fashoda Crisis (1898) and the British military frailty that was displayed during the Boer War (1899-1902). From then, and more precisely beginning with the agreement ("Entente Cordiale") that in 1904 granted freedom of action to Britain in Egypt in exchange of a free hand accorded to Paris in Morocco, the phenomenon of partitions among the major powers became increasingly common.

## 1.2 ORDERS AND BORDERS: IMPERIAL LEGACIES

While the first part of this section has aimed to deconstruct and contextualize a number of concepts and terms, this part turns to the current geopolitical order, and more precisely to the major historical turning points and the role of key powers in it, which helped to shape the region as we know it today.

### GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS

In his book *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Albert Hourani chose the first major conquest of an Arab-speaking country, Algeria, by France (1830-47) as the first key turning point of his analysis of the

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10 Britain understood the Middle East as tendentially fragmented in religions and confessions. In the African context, on the contrary, Western powers perceived ethnicity as the primary category of social and political divisions among their colonial subjects. These approaches had a strong influence in shaping the ways in which the two contexts developed in later times.

11 These kinds of "communal political" institutions and identities found a particularly successful expression under the authority of the Consul-General of Egypt, Lord Cromer (1841-1917), who promoted religious affiliation as a political category in the colonial context of Egypt. The tendency of seeing political implications in ethnic, religious and cultural differences has had repercussions visible up to the present day.

“age of European empires.” From then on, Hourani contended, Muslim states and societies could no longer live in a self-sufficient system of inherited culture: “Their need was now to generate the strength to survive in a world dominated by others” (Hourani 1991:263). The historical context that paved the way for this epochal outcome was nonetheless rooted in earlier imperial dynamics, that had in Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt (1798) – the first modern incursion by the West into the Middle East – its most celebrated example.

Napoleon, like most of the major statesmen of his time, aimed to take advantage of the growing instability of the Ottoman Empire, whose initial regression has been traced back to a number of causes, including the abolition of the Timar,<sup>12</sup> and the outcomes of cold and drought during the Little Ice Age, when the rising population pressure and resource shortages created the conditions for the outbreak of the Celali Rebellion (1595-1610): a turning point in Ottoman fortunes, particularly in its agriculture and economy (Fagan 2000).

Since then, the Empire had gradually transformed itself into a sort of land of conquest for the increasingly aggressive European powers: “This is an odd Country,” observed John Bidwell in 1809 from Istanbul, “where every foreign minister enjoys, from the Porte, absolute power over the Subjects of this Sovereign [...] His house is a sanctuary, the violation of which by the Turks would instantly produce a war between the two Countries.”<sup>13</sup>

It was not Napoleon’s incursion, however, but the rivalry with Russia, exacerbated in the last decade of the 18th century, that prompted the final arbiter of the region’s fate before the First World War – Britain – to intervene more directly in the Eastern Mediterranean. The presence of a powerful Ottoman state was considered by Tsarist Russia as an obstacle for accessing Black Sea and Mediterranean water ports. Britain, on the other hand, perceived Tsarist policies in the Balkans and Asia as a threat to its trade routes to the Far East and took it as a priority to preserve the territorial integrity of the “sick man of Europe.” As for France, it supported the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and aimed to establish an independent Arab state in the area, under its direct influence, that could hinder British trade routes to India. The latter was indeed the cornerstone of Britain’s imperial strategies toward the region, and owing to geopolitics, history and its unique status within the Empire had a decisive influence on a chain of overseas agencies that stretched from southern Persia to eastern Africa.

## **A NEW ORDER IN THE MAKING**

The Crimean War (1853-6) played a particularly influential role in shaping the features of the geopolitical order that concerned large parts of the MENA up until the First World War. It forced Ottomans to fall into debt with European powers, pushed the region into the world economy,<sup>14</sup> and

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12 The Timar system, almost abandoned in the 17th century and formally abolished in 1831, foresaw that the conquered territories be distributed among the participants of the military campaigns in the form of temporary rights over the land. See Lewis (1958).

13 British Library and Manuscript Collection (BLMC) - EP - v. IV - Add. 41315. John Bidwell to “Miss Sally”. Istanbul, 28 Sep. 1809.

14 In many cases the “encounter with the West” did not change but instead strengthened local customs and traditions.

served as a watershed in the history of several Mediterranean countries. It can be associated with the first proto-democratic reforms to be introduced in some countries with Muslim majorities (in 1861 the *bey* of Tunis introduced for the first time in the Islamic world a written constitution; five years later the first elections were held in Egypt; in 1876 the first Ottoman constitution was enacted) (Kamel 2015).

On top of this, it was the first war in which Ottoman and European soldiers fought side by side against a common enemy; for the first time, in fact, a Protestant power (Britain) sided with a Muslim empire (Ottoman) in fighting a Christian empire (Russia). Furthermore, it represented the first major armed clash in which news from the fronts was communicated by telegraph and printed in newspapers almost in real time: a novelty that, thanks also to the first photographs taken on the battlefields, gave an unprecedented echo to the victories of the Western powers against the despotic Russian Empire. In the more limited context of Palestine, the Crimean War constituted a no less relevant turning point. It was from that moment on that the idea of a “Jewish client state” in Palestine became increasingly established;<sup>15</sup> a client state that was “vital to British colonial interests, particularly [to] India” (Levine 2003:48).

The year that marked the beginning of the Crimean War was particularly meaningful for the Persian Gulf: the local Arab sheikhdoms signed the Perpetual Maritime Truce, recognizing Britain as the dominant power in the Gulf (oil in the Persian Gulf was discovered in 1908 and acquired a central role for Western powers in the 1930s, when major finds were made). The year that ended the conflict, on the other hand, coincided with the second reformist phase, inaugurated by the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* in 1856, when the Ottoman authorities, under the direct influence of the two powers that had fought alongside the Porte during the Crimean War (Britain and France), introduced the concept of patriotism or compatriotism, as a link between the subjects of the Empire: a decisive step towards the secular, Western concept of nationality.<sup>16</sup>

Just a few months after the conclusion of the Crimean War, a second major turning point occurred. The outbreak of the Indian Revolt against the rule of the British East India Company pushed London to reorganize its naval communications to India. The opening of the Suez Canal by France on 17 November 1869 significantly increased the international importance of the land bordering the naval corridor between India and Europe. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli – who secured a large percentage of the Suez Canal’s shares in 1876 – signed an epochal agreement with Istanbul in which, in exchange for control over Cyprus, London pledged to guarantee protection to the “territories in Asia of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan” (House of Commons 1878:ii).

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Moreover, a number of innovations introduced in this historical period went to accelerate processes that were already ongoing and did not succeed to alter the rhythms of life of most of the local populations (particularly in rural areas). Yet, in the medium and long term the penetration of Western ideas and practices went to shatter a number of well-established equilibria.

15 Clayton (1986:138) defined it as a “key link (and a buffer against the French) in the Middle Eastern chain.”

16 The failure of the reform process exacerbated the sense of alienation of “minorities” in the Empire and drove local people to put an increasingly strong emphasis on the different dialects spoken by the various communities.

The agreement, signed on 4 June 1878, followed four years later by London's occupation of Egypt and Sudan, the two areas that together with Palestine represented the strategic banks of the Suez Canal, marked the historic phase in which London realized that, if needed, the region was worth fighting a war for. More specifically, the entry of Cyprus into London's sphere of influence marked the moment at which Disraeli felt that sooner or later "the step would bring Palestine and Syria within the orbit of British control" (Storrs 1940:49).

The purchasing of the Suez Canal – 80 per cent of the traffic in the Canal occurred on British boats – ushered in "a quarter-century of imperial expansion unequalled since the conquests of Alexander the Great" (Tuchman 1956:161). During this period ("New Imperialism"), between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Afghanistan, Burma, the Transvaal, Egypt and a number of other strategic regions fell under British influence, and Germany replaced Russia as London's main imperial rival.

The German Reich, shaped during the long years of Otto von Bismarck's ascendancy, existed from the unification of Germany (1871) until the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II (1918). It appeared to Sultan Abdul-Hamid II (1842-1918) as a potentially less dangerous ally than Britain, whose ambitions, even more so after the Cyprus Convention and the occupation of Egypt, alerted the Turkish authorities. Berlin, on the other hand, had no historical precedent in the region and the prestige of the Second Reich was clearly on the rise, as the Berlin Congress of 1878 confirmed. These and other factors led the Porte to choose what would later turn out to be the wrong horse: the Ottoman and German empires collapsed one after the other against the backdrop of the disastrous effects of the First World War.

The years that preceded the "Great War" witnessed a revival of nationalism, and this had direct repercussions also on Persia – where the Constitutional Revolution ignited in 1905 sought to oppose the encroachment of imperial powers and, at the same time, replace arbitrary power with representative government and social justice – and the Ottoman Empire, which witnessed a few epoch-making episodes destined to shape the region's future. In this respect one of the major turning points can be detected in 1908, when the Young Turks seized power and implemented their "Turkification" and centralization policies. When Muslims in the Eastern Mediterranean felt alienated by Istanbul's new policies, they embraced the nationalist discourse their Christian counterparts had been championing for some time.

In this same period, London and Paris increasingly defined local realities and dissent as expressions of primitive religious cleavages and placed their newly crafted communal institutions (for instance the Supreme Muslim Council in Palestine) as modern systems above the "medieval fray" (Robson 2011:54). These kinds of "communal political identities," largely inspired by the approach adopted by the Consul-General of Egypt, Lord Cromer (1841-1917), promoted religious affiliation as a political category. Communal and judicial structures envisioned and implemented in the first part of the last century, in other words, succeeded in legally enshrining religious differences: one of the most consequential and long-lasting outcomes of the Sykes-Picot *Zeitgeist*, not of the 1915-16 agreement (never implemented) that bears their names.

## A NORTH-AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

The French and Spanish colonization of North Africa had a long-lasting impact on state formation and borders, which, in turn, affected the regional post-independences era. Indeed, the French colonization of Algeria, its subsequent annexation of the country as a French *département* and the imposition of the French administrative model, in the context of an extremely violent colonization, led to the destruction of all the indigenous administrative apparatus and to that of all the traditional elites, without being replaced by new ones. Indeed, revolts such as those led by Emir Abdelkader (1832-47), Lalla Fatma Nssoumer and Boubeghla (1850-7), and the 1870-1 general uprising, were conducted by traditional leaders.

On the other hand, Morocco and Tunisia remained as existing political units with important traditional centres of power (sultan in Morocco and *bey* in Tunisia), the survival of important traditional centres of authority such as the *ulemas* and the emergence of an important educated bourgeoisie led to a somewhat less conflictual, yet violent, process of decolonization.

This era also played a major role in terms of setting the borders and on the subsequent post independence conflicts. Indeed, during the pre-French colonization and the Ottoman ruling, the borders between Tunisia, Algeria and Libya did not exist per se, since they were all part of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, regarding the Ottoman-Moroccan territorial delimitation, it essentially existed only in the north, and to that extent the border was the city of Oujda; the major problem came from the French and Spanish conquest of the Sahara. Before the colonial era, there were no definite borders. In such a situation, the ruling patterns were based on “tribal allegiance”: the Sultan of Morocco received the allegiance of tribes coming from various parts of the Sahara regions. Yet the French and Spanish colonization resulted in the establishment of clear formal borders regardless of any historical local pre-existing factors and without any consultation with the local populations, which finally led to major sources of unrest. Regarding the setting of the Algerian-Libyan-Tunisian borders, it did not eventually led to major tensions. In Western North Africa, on the other hand, it led to major sources of tensions and conflicts between Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania.

On the basis of the situation prevailing before the French and Spanish colonizations, Morocco claimed sovereignty over Mauritania as well as over Spanish Sahara, which led, until today, to the Western Sahara conflict and to the territorial claims over the cities of Bechar and Tinduf which are today parts of Algeria.

## THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE MANDATES SYSTEM

The First World War claimed a total of 9 million soldiers and around 7 million civilians. Many, while the war was still ongoing, began to explore which new tools could be developed to prevent such disasters from happening again. The decision to establish a League of Nations was rooted in previous times, but became official during the peace conferences that followed the war. This organization, precursor of the United Nations (UN), played a meaningful role in shaping the region,



and its charter is still today used to foster some political and territorial claims.<sup>17</sup>

Three distinct categories of Mandate were envisioned in the League of Nations' Charter (class A, B, C), depending on how much the population under examination was believed to be "able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world" (Art. 22). The official purpose of these Mandates was to prepare the various populations for self-determination and self-government. In practical terms, however, the victorious powers used it to legitimize their own "rights of conquest" in order to divide the spoils of former empires, or of areas belonging to the defeated nations. This aim was pursued through a paternalistic approach that, on the one hand, supported the idea that there was a hierarchy among "races" and, on the other, put an exaggerated emphasis on the need to establish well-defined borders based on ethnic principles. In other words, the Mandate system represented, in Mahmoud Cherif Bassiouni and Shlomo Ben Ami's words (2009:16), "a new form of colonialism that had the appearance of international legitimacy."

Such an appearance of legitimacy was perceived by many as precarious, not least in consideration of the fact that in the peace conferences that followed the First World War the opinions of almost any representatives of the peoples subject to the Mandates were not taken into consideration (Kamel 2015:ch.7). Nonetheless, Efraim Karsh and a number of other scholars have stressed the importance of abandoning "the self-righteous victimization paradigm that has informed Western scholarship for so long," contending that, for instance, Iraq was established "on behalf of Emir Faisal of Mecca and at his instigation, while Jordan was established to satisfy the ambitions of Faisal's older brother Abdullah" (Karsh 2015). In his opinion, many of the states in the region "were established pretty much as a result of local exertions" (Karsh 2015).

Overlooking or downplaying the agency of the colonized is indeed problematic. Their efforts to shape a different course must be highlighted, and the same applies to the disappointment that local representatives expressed when these efforts were unsuccessful.<sup>18</sup> Writing about the current struggles for self-assertion by the many peoples of the Pacific, Arif Dirlik (1998:6) pointed out that "there is in these efforts not a negation of the history of colonialism and conquest, but its remembrance in rewriting history in keeping with Pacific people's historical experiences." His words apply in the best possible way also to the present, and most likely to the future, of the MENA, and this is why "thinking postcolonially" (Bilgin 2016)<sup>19</sup> is in many respects a way of getting the region *back* into history (Kamel 2012).

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17 This applies to plenty of conflictual areas in the region, and particularly to the Israeli-Palestinian context. International lawyer Eugene Kontorovich, for instance, pointed out (erroneously) that "up to 1948 all this area [present-day Israel and the Palestinian territories] was Palestine reserved as a Jewish State by the League of Nations Mandate [...] the legality of the Mandate jurisprudence cannot be changed." Eugene Kontorovich, *The Legal Case for Israel*, lecture given at the seventh annual National Jewish Retreat, Fort Lauderdale, 2 August 2012 (video), <http://www.torahcafe.com/jewishvideo.php?vid=33fb484b5>.

18 "The present administration of Palestine," lamented for instance the representatives of the Palestine Arab Delegation in a letter to British public opinion in 1930, "is appointed by His Majesty's Government and governs the country through an autocratic system in which the population has no say." Israel State Archives (ISA) – RG65 1054/1-P. Protest signed by the Palestine Arab Delegation, 19 May 1930.

19 Hamid Dabashi (2012:xvii) noted that the "postcolonial did not overcome the colonial; it exacerbated it by negation."



Yet to portray the region after the First World War as largely the result of local exertions, and to choose Emir Faysal as a symbol of this, is ahistorical. Faysal, chosen as King of Iraq by the British authorities in August 1921, had never set foot in Mesopotamia before that moment, spoke a different dialect from the local Arabs and was a Sunni in a Shia-majority country. It is true that some of the most persistent advocates of Faysal's kingship were the Shia tribes of the mid-Euphrates region who were in full-scale rebellion in 1920, but the fact remains that a "large proportion" of Faysal's subjects "did not recognize his authority" and that the new king politicized "sectarianism to obfuscate the state's failures" (Al-Ali 2014:19, 21). Particularly meaningful is that Faysal was chosen by London to officially represent the Palestinian Arabs in the post-First World War peace conferences, despite the fact that, as Chaim Weizman witnessed, he (Faysal) was "contemptuous of the Palestinian Arabs whom he doesn't even regard as Arabs."<sup>20</sup>

## THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Despite much Wilsonian rhetoric about national self-determination, the territorial pretensions of the "Arab Movement" that coalesced under Hashemite leadership after the launching of the Great Arab Revolt in July 1916, and the claims of nationalist elites in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent to represent the region's peoples were largely ignored during the diplomatic machinations that followed the First World War (see Kamel 2015: ch. 7). The result was that the Mandates over Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Trans-Jordan and Iraq that emerged from the Anglo-French agreements at St Remo (1920) and Lausanne (1923) lacked even a modicum of nationalist legitimacy. This combined with the social dislocation and dearth bequeathed by wartime exactions to spark anti-colonial uprisings in Egypt in 1919 (Goldberg 1992, Kazemi and Waterbury 1991: ch. 9); in Iraq in 1920 (Vinogradov 1972, MacFie 1999) and in Syria in 1921-2 and 1925-7 (Provence 2005). The cost of suppressing these uprisings, combined with the menace of the Wahhabi *ikhwan* along the Arabian frontiers of Britain's "undeclared empire" in the Arab East (Darwin 1999), served to harden imperial strategists' commitment to indirect rule. Therefore, as Britain's "moment" in the Middle East dawned at the Cairo Conference of 1921, imperial overstretch tipped the balance in favour of T.E. Lawrence and Winston Churchill's "Sharifian Solution" rather than the more direct model of control advocated by Sir Percy Cox, Arnold Wilson and the other "Indians" in Mesopotamia (Paris 2003).

In Syria and Lebanon, popular hostility to colonial rule outside Mount Lebanon obliged the French to attempt a similar approach. Even after their military hold on Syria had been secured with the final defeat of the Great Syrian Revolt in the summer of 1927, the colonial authorities in Beirut were forced to pursue different constitutional power-sharing formulas in order to broker a reconciliation with the notables of the National Bloc (Neep 2012, Khoury 1987). Meanwhile, the Palestinian national movement's struggle against the settler colonialism of Zionism during the British Mandate period was lost following successive British interventions that culminated in the great uprisings of 1936-9. Palestinian leaders were exiled and their proto-institutions weakened or dismantled.

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<sup>20</sup> Excerpt from a letter written by Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952) to his wife on 17 July 1918, a few days after the private meeting that took place in Aqaba between the Zionist leader and Faysal. Cited in Weizmann (1982:209).

For colonial administrators still concerned with order rather than progress, the legacy of fifty years of late Ottoman centralization recommended the legal and administrative legacy of the *Tanzimat* as the most appropriate instrument for colonial governance.<sup>21</sup> The modernist cast of Mandatory rule that resulted in restricted tribal trusteeship – a key element in indirect rule in British Africa and in Morocco under Lyautey – to isolated pockets such as the Desert Area in Trans-Jordan or the *Controlle Bedouin* in Syria. Instead of decentralized despotisms under favoured chiefs, communitarian colonialism in the Fertile Crescent took the form of a politics of minorities (as exemplified in Britain’s maintenance of Sunni dominance in Iraq and in her facilitation of Zionist colonization in Palestine; but also apparent in French favouritism towards the Maronites in Lebanon or her dalliance with Alawite and Druse entities in Syria in the 1920s) aimed at facilitating Western control by means of a policy of *divide et impera*.

These forms of colonial communalism in practice preserved anti-statist ethnic, tribal and sectarian *assabiyyahs* in more toxic forms than those that resulted from the “ideology of tribalism” in Africa. Coupled to the eccentricities of Mandatory map making (a “Greater” Lebanon that annexed the Muslim Biqaa and Jabal ‘Amil; a Kurdish majority Mosul in an Arabizing Iraq; France’s ceding of partly Alawite Iskanderun to Turkey in 1939; the partitions of Palestine in 1937 and 1947-8), and the “ethnic security maps” (Enloe 1980: ch. 1-2) of colonial security forces, the legacy of Mandatory minority policy would be overextended sectarian authoritarianisms even more inimical to democratic state-building than the “de-centralized despotisms” of Sub-Saharan Africa (White 2011).<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the interwar Arab east, the mechanics of indirect rule under League of Nations auspices forced the new Mandatory powers to invest in a spectrum of collaborators thrown up by late Ottoman reform,<sup>23</sup> an urban notability transformed by the 1858 Ottoman land code into a class of rural magnates, the Sharifian elite that gathered around Faysal in Baghdad and the imported administrative elite foisted upon his brother Abdullah in Amman. To these beneficiaries of British power could be added a bevy of allied Arabian rulers bound by Trucial agreement to the “Empire of the Raj” since the early 19th century (Onley 2004, 2005).

## **THE SECOND WORLD WAR, OIL, AND THE DECLINE OF EUROPEAN HEGEMONY**

With the colonial carve up of the Arab east, Ibn Saud emerged as the most powerful of this constellation of Arabian sultans. Between 1902 and 1932 he successfully deployed Wahhabi zeal and long-standing connections with Great Britain to bring Najd, al-Hasa, al-Hijaz and Asir under his rule. Having built his power with British support, Ibn Saud now exploited his relative autonomy to extract favourable agreements over Arabian borders given new strategic significance by the development of air transport routes and the discovery of oil in 1937. During the following decade

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21 For an overview of the origins and workings of all the Near Eastern Mandates by a leading imperial historian, see Fieldhouse (2006). For other approaches, see the studies collected in Méouchy and Sluglett (2004) and in Schayegh and Arsan (2015).

22 For the notion of decentralized despotisms as a key feature of “late colonialism” in Africa, see Mamdani (1996).

23 For the connection between indirect rule, the politics of collaborating elites and “excentric” histories of the “non-European foundations of imperial rule” see Robinson (1972, 1986) and Doyle (1986:25-6).

oil wealth transformed Saudi Arabia's eastern province into an ARAMCO-dominated oil frontier. Oil rents and Western technical assistance supplied Ibn Saud with the means to consolidate a centralized state and forge a more useful alliance – consecrated by a base agreement on Dahrán in 1943 – with the rising US imperium.

The social basis of colonial control in the Arab East combined with the Wilsonian cast of Mandatory institution-building to create a landlord-dominated system of parliamentary rule. In southern Iraq and on the plains around Aleppo and Hama, as well as in 'Akkar, the Shouf, Jabal 'Amil and the Biqa', the collaborating elites who buttressed colonial control were able to either acquire or consolidate vast landed wealth, the old Ottoman nobility allying with the tribal aristocracy (its great *shaykhs* now transformed into quasi-feudal landlords) and a commercial elite enriched by a century of dependent economic development to form a class of landed Pashas invested in the imperial connection (Gerber 1987). However, during the decade after the Second World War the stability of an imperial system already weakened by lingering Arabist hostility to the Mandatory partition of the Fertile Crescent was undermined further by an upsurge in class antagonisms in the countryside, and by the post-war Labour government's failure to effect a developmental shift from "pashas to peasants."<sup>24</sup>

The escalating conflict in Palestine drove the last nail into the coffin of "Britain's moment in the Middle East." Arab opinion cast Britain and her local collaborators as the chief authors of the Arab defeat in 1948.<sup>25</sup> The savagery of the ethnic cleansing that accompanied the Palestinian Nakbah, and the brutality of the Israeli border wars that followed, stoked the fires of a radical Arabism that gelled into a region-wide anti-colonial revolt under the leadership of Gamal Abd al-Nasser. Even before the debacle at Suez in 1956 sounded the death knell of British hegemony in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, the waning of Whitehall's power had become apparent in its failure to push such client regimes as Hashemite Jordan into the Baghdad Pact in 1955, or to resolve its differences with Saudi Arabia over the Buraimi oasis.<sup>26</sup>

In the wake of Suez, a combination of US pressure and popular upheaval forced Britain to redeploy to South Arabia and the Persian Gulf, where a "last stand of the Raj" was attempted in order to defend oil interests and sterling balances vital to the solvency of the post war welfare state.<sup>27</sup> However, by the late 1960s even this limited engagement was abandoned in the face of armed revolutionary insurrections in Aden and Dhofar. Britain's last Arabian dependencies were ushered to formal independence in 1971, bringing to an end nearly two centuries of overt imperial intervention in Arab affairs.<sup>28</sup>

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24 For the first Labour government's attempt to reboot Britain's colonial empire in the region after the Second World War, see Louis (1984).

25 For the interaction between the politics of "collusion" with Zionism and British strategy, see Bradshaw (2007, 2012), Morris (2002) and Pappé (1992). For Israel's border wars, see Morris (1993).

26 For a recent assessment of the Suez affair and its consequences, see the studies collected in Smith (2008).

27 The term is taken from Takriti (2013: ch. 6).

28 The whole period of British retreat in Arabia and its continuing neo-colonial presence thereafter has been classically surveyed by Halliday (1974) and by Zahlan (1989).

### 1.3 THE DYNAMICS OF, AND STRUGGLE OVER, THE CONTEMPORARY REGIONAL ORDER: TURNING POINTS

Following the Second World War the European colonial structure of the Mandate system and other forms of direct colonial rule gradually declined, with Arab states (with the notable exception of Palestine) gaining formal independence by 1970 (the Gulf States being the last). As the Arab states, and to some extent the non-Arab neighbouring states, came to form a regional system, a broad struggle to shape regional order persisted as Arab states sought to challenge (or exploit) European and then American intervention in the region (Hinnebusch 2014). At the heart of this ongoing struggle, as well as the scholarly literature about regional order in the Middle East, is the question to what degree the Arab states form their own system, based on shared history, language and identity, and what role the often more powerful non-Arab states of the Middle East are understood to be actors within the system rather than external to it (Noble 1984, 2008). A related issue is to what degree we should view regional political dynamics as defined by various local sub-systems, such as one around the Persian Gulf, consisting of the Arab Gulf States and Iran (Gause 2010). To a large degree these systems are historically constructed and change over time, reflecting shifting balances of material and ideological power.

In any case, the regional system should not be viewed as an autonomous object, but one subject to the power struggles between and interventions from external “great” powers (see the next section on this). In the mid-1980s diplomatic historian L. Carl Brown (1984: 4) observed that “the Middle East is the most penetrated international relations subsystem in today’s world.” By “penetrated” Brown means, on the one hand, “the Middle East has been more consistently and more thoroughly ensnared in great power politics than any other part of the non-Western world,” while, on the other hand, no outside power has ever been able to attain hegemonic control or successfully order the region (Brown 1984:3). At the same time, external powers have also consistently intervened to prevent the emergence of a regional power or hegemon from within the region (Lustick 1997).<sup>29</sup> While external intervention has continued into the current era, the legacies of past interventions have had a profound impact on the position of the region within global hierarchies of political and economic power (Hinnebusch 2011; see also Dawn 1991). Moreover, many of the political elites who held power within the independent Arab states of the region continued to serve as clients for external powers, with interests more aligned with them rather than the masses of their domestic populations.

While the struggle for regional order in the Middle East has been defined by the intervention of external powers and the geopolitical competition between states, international relations scholars have suggested that dynamics in the regional politics have their own particular characteristics. While the “classic” neo-realist reading of regional politics, sought to view the patterns of alliances as defined by rational state actors (Walt 1987), most scholars of the region reject the view that politics at the “system level” can be understood without understanding the permeability of the regional system where domestic, regional and global politics are often interconnected (Salloukh

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<sup>29</sup> F. Gregory Gause III (1992), however, notes that during periods of multipolarity, when many regional powers competed for regional influence, external powers have helped to protect the sovereignty of states from regional rivals and defeat the rise of expansionist regional hegemons, such as Egypt in the 1950s-60s and Iraq in the 1990s.

and Brynen 2004). On a related note, F. Gregory Gause III (2004:274) concludes that Arab states have “overwhelmingly identified ideological and political threats emanating from abroad to the domestic stability of their ruling regimes as more salient than threats based upon aggregate power, geographic proximity and offensive capabilities.” This system has helped maintain external penetration, as regional elites often rely on external resources and aid to maintain power, which, in turn, continues to foster domestic opposition, regional rivalries and interstate conflicts.

Another particular feature of the system is that Arab societies, along with transnational movements and ideologies, often defined their political interests and understandings of the sources of insecurity in ways that conflicted with those of Arab regimes (Hazbun 2015). Throughout the contemporary era revisionist and revolutionary states, as well as powerful oppositional political movement have continued to view regional security in terms of an Arab or Islamic world threatened primarily by external political, economic and cultural forces (Niva 1999).

This section outlines the major phases and turning points in the history of the struggle to define the regional order. The first post-Second World War phase was defined by the rise of radical Arab nationalism, efforts to rid the regional of its external dependence and Egypt’s effort to order the regional along its own Arab nationalist lines. While conservative Arab states were able to contain the influence of the Arab nationalist and leftist movements by the 1970s and welcome an increased role of the USA in the region, the experience of occupations and the rise of political Islam gave rise to a new wave of (often armed) sub-state and non-state actors that have come to play a major role in the contemporary struggle over the regional order, in which the leverage of the USA to shape the regional system declined following the 2003 Iraq war (Mogdad 2013).

### **ARAB NATIONALISM AND EGYPT’S EFFORT TO ORDER THE REGION, 1950s-60s**

Regional Middle East politics in the 1950s and 1960s was dominated by the efforts of rising Arab nationalist movements to rid the region of their geopolitical subordination to the former colonial powers; as well as the efforts of Arab regimes to build state institutions and political order within their often externally defined sovereign territorial spaces (Hatem 1957). Egypt, the largest Arab state, was the first to consolidate state power under a militarily dominated Arab nationalist regime. Under the charismatic leader of President Gamal Abd al-Nasser, Egypt projected its ideological power regionally at a time that radical Arab nationalism came to dominate political discourse and mobilization across the region. Arab nationalists sought to rid the regional of its dependence on former colonial powers and sought to promote political unity across the Arab world. Nasser’s challenge to the US Cold War Baghdad Pact alliance, nationalization of the Suez Canal and unification with Syria (to form the United Arab Republic) represented the high point of this effort in the late 1950s. In the process, the non-Arab states with closer Western ties – Turkey, Iran and Israel – remained at the margins of the Arab regional system, as Arab states maintained a rejection of Israel’s control over Palestine and Turkey and Iran were more willing to join pro-Western cold war alliances.

While the USA opposed the British, French and Israeli invasion of Egypt in 1956, American efforts to accommodate Egypt ended in the early 1960s as rivalry between Arab republics against the Western-backed conservative monarchies and Israel contained Nasir’s efforts. Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the USA came to more strongly back and arm Israel and its other non-Arab

ally, Iran. Meanwhile, in the Arab world, the 1967 war had a profound impact on reshaping Arab politics. It marked the decline of Arab nationalism as the most powerful political force, leading to the rise of new radical leftist movements and an autonomous Palestinian nationalist movement committed to armed struggle (Al-Azm 2011). State elites sought to define their national interests in more territorial *raison d'état* terms, rather than Arab nationalist ones, leading to new contests for regional influence (Ajami 1978).

### **STATE POWER AND GEOPOLITICAL RIVALRIES, 1970s-80s**

Israel's occupation over Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian territory resulting from the 1967 war led to a new polarization of regional politics along an Arab-Israeli axis that became intersected with the US-Soviet cold war (see, for example, Shlaim 2014). Egypt and Syria moved closer to the USSR who backed their military build-ups in the face of US military support for Israel, while Saudi Arabia and other Arab oil-exporting states organized within the OPEC cartel as they sought to assert natural resource sovereignty by nationalizing foreign own oil assets in their territories. The initially coordinated effort of Egypt and Syria, with the support of the Gulf States, to regain Israeli-occupied territories in the 1973 war marked a shift in the US approach to the region. The USA sought to shift Egypt, now ruled by Anwar Sadat, away from the Soviet orbit.

With the decline of radical Arab nationalist movements and access to economic resources (oil receipts and aid), most Arab regimes came to consolidate their state structures and authority enabling a new phase of fragmentation and geopolitical rivalries between revisionist Middle East states (as well as new dynamics of inequality across the Arab world and closer interdependence between oil rich states and their Western allies) (Kerr and Yassin 1982, Crom 1988).

As Egypt moved closer to the USA and opened US-sponsored negotiations with Israel, other Middle East states saw an opening for a new hegemonic leader. Iran under the Shah sought to gain influence and appeal within the divided Arab region and project power across the Gulf in the decade after Britain granted independence to the smaller Gulf States (Parsi 2006). In the mid-1970s, Iraq under Saddam Hussein had a similar plan, based on building the country's national strength while developing closer ties to global middle powers such as France and China (Hussein 1979). Meanwhile, Syria and Israel each sought control over the strategic geography of the Levant (Rabil 2003, Hirst 2010). Israel expanded its control over the West Bank and Gaza while it invaded and later occupied southern Lebanon (Sayigh 1997, Norton 1987). Syrian forces had entered Lebanon following the outbreak of its civil war in the mid-1970s and would stay for another thirty years (Salloukh 2005).

By the end of the 1970s, the regional order was moving toward increasing US influence as Egypt was brought in to negotiate a peace treaty with Israel and the Palestinian nationalist movement was neutralized (Said 1994, Al-Hour 2015). However, this shift was disrupted by the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran and the moving of Soviet troops into Afghanistan. Both events would lead the USA to engage more directly in the region and face unexpected challenges (Freedman 2008).

In 1980 Iraq invaded post-revolutionary Iran and maintained an eight-year war with the backing of the Arab Gulf States and eventually the USA. Iran emerged as the major rival to US Gulf allies, Saudi Arabia in particular, while supporting the rise of what would become the resistance



movement Hezbollah, which fought US influence and Israel occupation in Lebanon (Norton 2007, Saad-Ghorayeb 2012). These conflicts led to expanded US intervention in the region, especially in the Gulf, where American forces would establish a series of naval and air bases.

In North Africa, after the Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi had risen to power, the regional patterns of conflicts were mostly dominated by the competition between Morocco, Algeria and Libya. Conflicts and competition centred first on the border issues, as in the 1963 “Sand wars” between Morocco and Algeria over the cities of Tinduf and Bechar. The border issue was solved by the treaty of Ifrane in 1969, when Morocco officially renounced any claim of sovereignty on those two cities. Moreover, further to this settlement of the borders issue, King Hassan II agreed in 1970 to renounce any territorial claim over Mauritania, thus recognizing Mauritania as an independent state. Intra-Maghreb dynamics were also shaped by Gaddafi’s attempt to assert his leadership over the region, which culminated in January 1974 with the fusion of Tunisia and Libya. This fusion was rejected by Algiers, which saw it as a threat. A major regional crisis erupted between Algiers and Tunis/Tripoli, resulting in the dissolution of this union on that very same January 1974. However, until today, the most important enduring conflict has opposed Algeria and Morocco over Western Sahara, at times at the expense of the local inhabitants who do not necessarily feel bound to the political strategies implemented by Rabat or Algiers. The Western Sahara will remain a major turning point in regional dynamics, since this competition between Morocco and Algeria, the most powerful actors in North Africa, has structured the regional system and the patterns of their rivalry.

### **THE RISE AND DECLINE OF THE AMERICAN ERA, 1990s-2000s**

In the 1990s, the USA came to play a major political, economic and military role in the region in an effort to impose a pro-US regional order (Indyk 1993, Shlaim 1995). With the end of the Cold War and following the 1990-1 US-led war against Iraq and its occupation of Kuwait, the USA maintained considerable political leverage and military capacity. As the Arab world remained divided about how best to face this new environment (Karawan 1994, Barnett 1996), the USA, unrivalled and with European support, helped foster multilateral and bilateral negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbours that helped lead to a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel (1994) and the Oslo peace process between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). In effect, these agreements solidified Israel’s power in the region, legitimized its occupation of Palestinian territories and crushed Palestinian (and pan-Arab) popular movements (Al-Hour 2015). At the same time, the USA backed efforts to promote neo-liberal economic reforms across the region and the integration of regional economies into global markets. Lastly, with its massive military presence in the Gulf region following the war in Iraq, the USA maintained a policy of “dual containment” that included economic sanctions, military operations, covert action and diplomatic manoeuvring in its efforts to promote policy if not regime change in these two states that opposed US designs for a pro-US regional order based on an alignment with Israel and Turkey (El-Shazly and Hinnebusch 2002).

The effort to build a *Pax Americana* was eclipsed by 2000 with the failure of the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian peace processes, with popular Arab opposition to the normalization of ties to Israel and neo-liberal economic policies that seemed only to benefit a narrow elite while plunging the vast majority into poverty, food insecurity and unemployment (Hanieh 2013, Hazbun 2015).



Following the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, the USA launched a global “war on terror” and a militarized project for regional transformation that included the disastrous 2003 invasion of Iraq; so-called “democracy promotion” policies; and the strong backing of Israel in its 2006 war against the Hezbollah that, with Iranian support, led a popular resistance movement to liberate southern Lebanon from a two-decade Israeli occupation. By the late 2000s, in large part owing to these policies, the greater Middle East was in a new phase of turmoil and popular insecurity (Haass 2006, Cole 2006, Ehteshami 2009). At the regional level, with the decline of US leadership, there was a geopolitical rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran that helped spawn sectarian-based mobilization and conflict across the region (Valbjørn and Bank 2007). Regional division and the decline of US leverage opened the door for other regional and external powers, such as Qatar and Turkey, to play an increased role in the region (Sadowski 2008). Most ambitiously, Turkey under an Islamist-oriented government promoted a new strategic vision in which, with its rising economic and political power and historical connections to the Muslim world, could play a role in helping to define a post-cold war order in the region (Murinson 2006, Davutoglu 2010).

After having destroyed the Iraqi state and security forces, the US presence and the Shia sectarian forces empowered within the new Iraqi state helped foster diverse armed insurgent movements, militias and jihadists including foreign fighters and Iranian-backed forces (Rosen 2010). From the Egyptian Sinai to Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, armed non-state actors challenged occupying forces and the authority of central government to carve out their own spaces of quasi-sovereignty, beginning a process of territorial fragmentation between political authorities (LeVine 2006).

#### **1.4 LEGACIES OF THE PAST AND THE FUTURE OF REGIONAL ORDER**

While the Arab uprisings are often viewed as sparked by domestic issues, they also reflect the failings of the “US era,” which helped foster greater divergence between the interests of regimes and the insecurities of their broader populations (Mahdi and Yasien 2014). The Arab world would witness a process of state erosion that would undo the consolidation of state power established in the 1970s. Thus two of the key lessons of the past for understanding the politics of regional order is to look beyond the shifting balance of power between regional states to the critical, often destructive role played by outside powers, as well as the important role of societal and non-state actors, which are increasingly powerful in the current era of state erosion and fragmentation.

While Qatar and Turkey attempted to exploit the fall of US-backed regimes and rise of governments in Egypt and Tunisia with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, a Saudi-led counter-revolution disrupted efforts to establish popular “Islamic democracies” with strong regional ties. This counter-revolution included suppressing protests in Bahrain, the backing of a military coup in Egypt in 2013, promoting divisions in Yemen and Libya, and the arming of rebels in the conflict over Syria. It has only hardened Iran, Syria and its allies in their efforts to defeat the armed Syrian opposition no matter the human costs. By the mid 2010s, most Arab states would face domestic political conflicts, while wars in Yemen, Libya, Syria and Iraq, compounded by the rise of the Islamic State, would generate some of the worst humanitarian crises and desperate refugee flows the world has seen since the end of the Second World War.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How might historicizing key concepts such “state,” “sectarianism,” “citizenship,” “minority,” “private property” and “borders” as they have been understood in the region (and perceiving them as dynamic, fluid and often contested) influence the ways “we” tend to approach the contemporary order?
- How has the long history of external interventions shaped successive regional orders in the MENA region, and what is the importance of this history during the most recent Arab uprisings? How should we think about the equally long history of resistance to these interventions?
- To what extent does path dependency threaten the achievement of a new regional order shaped from within the region, and how can we think about regional “autonomy” when viewed from a historical perspective?

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## 2. THE CONTEMPORARY REGIONAL ORDER

Helle Malmvig, Jordi Quero and Eduard Soler i Lecha<sup>30</sup>

### 2.1 THE REGION

#### WHAT IS A REGION? UNDERSTANDING A CHALLENGING NOTION

The definition of what a region is and what it is not, and who is part of a set region and who is not, is of paramount importance for a project such as MENARA that will be studying “regional dynamics,” “regional orders,” “regional powers” and “regional security complexes.” There is no standard definition of what a region is. Yet, most authors refer to a set of states and territories bounded to each other through geographic proximity and some level of interdependence, interaction and commonality (Russett 1967, Nye 1968, Fawcett and Hurrell 1995, Lake and Morgan 1997). The concept of region and the geographical limits of such are not given facts. From that perspective, regions are social constructions shaped by various political processes and both the meaning and the scope of a region can evolve over time (Katzenstein 2000, Hartshorne 1939). In that process, it is particularly relevant whether the governments and societies of those territories have a sense of belonging to a particular region and whether this corresponds to the dominant perception of other international actors.

In view of this discussion, one of the assumptions of MENARA is that regions are geographical units made up of territorially based political entities, tied together by high and persistent levels of political, economic, security-based and/or cultural interaction among them (objective factors) and/or by a shared sense of belonging (subjective factors). As both objective and subjective factors can change over time, the existence and limits of a set region may evolve accordingly. A region can comprise one or more subregions, understood as narrower groupings whose members have more intense interactions and/or a deeper sense of belonging among them than with the broader group. Similarly, a region can be qualified functionally as a cultural, historical, security, political, economic or ecological unit depending of the variables analysed.

#### THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: SETTING THE PROJECT’S GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

There is no common agreement on the limits and the name of the region studied by the MENARA Project. The MENARA research consortium members have opted for “Middle East and North Africa” (MENA),<sup>31</sup> understanding that this term meets the criteria of being inclusive and relevant

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30 The authors would like to thank Djallil Lounnas (AUI) and Lorenzo Kamel (IAI) for their valuable insights.

31 Contrary to what is often claimed, the expression Middle East is one of the most ancient ways of referring to the region. We have premodern sources, both European and Islamic, in which it is used (see, e.g., Orosius’s *Historiae Adversum Paganos*, in 416). Yet this expression was rapidly popularized starting from the early twentieth century – when it increasingly assumed colonial connotations – and was soon adopted by some regional actors. Most of the literature on regional politics and international relations has used the concept Middle East expansively to incorporate the countries of North Africa too, albeit as a periphery of a regional system whose core is in the Levant (Lenczowski 1952, Ismael 1986, Hinnebusch 2003, Halliday 2005, Fawcett 2013). However, the term North Africa is being incorporated

and is the one that best encompasses the actors and dynamics that may shape a new regional order in this part of the world. The scope of MENARA will thus include the countries of the so-called Arab core (Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen) as well as three non-Arab countries (Turkey, Israel and Iran).

Thus, our conceptualization of the region goes beyond alternative approaches focusing exclusively on the Arab countries that refer to the “Arab world” or “Arab region” (Barnett 1998, Ferabolli 2015, Korany and Dessouki 2010, Khader 2009, among others). MENARA does not assume that attachment to a specific language and culture is the only criterion for being part of a region, nor is belonging to an intergovernmental organization – in that case the League of Arab States would qualify as a particular territory of the studied region. This definition would also include countries like Somalia, Djibouti and Comoros that, despite being part of the League of Arab States, are more deeply embedded in other regional dynamics. More importantly it would exclude Turkey, Israel and Iran, which are critical to the understanding of regional politics.

The project considers that the terms “West Asia” and “Southern and Eastern Mediterranean” do not fully fit the project scope either since they leave out some parts of the region (North Africa for the former and the Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq for the latter).<sup>32</sup> Similarly, other definitions such as “Broader Middle East” or “Arab and Muslim world” that include Pakistan and Afghanistan and in some cases other countries from South East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are also problematic, in this case because they are too broad. Having clarified the geographical scope of MENARA and why the conceptualization of Middle East and North Africa seems the most adequate (or at least appropriate) in terms of relevance and inclusiveness, it may be useful to take into account some terms that will be used to refer to parts of the studied region and that correspond, largely, to the idea of subregions. Traditionally, the Arab world is divided into three subregions: the “Maghreb” (the land where the sun sets, basically, all the territories west of Egypt); the “Mashreq” (which literally means “the East” in Arabic and Persian and which – like “*Bilad al Sham*” and contrary to all other expressions used to refer to the Eastern Mediterranean – emerged from within the region); and the “*Jazeera*” (the Arabian Peninsula). Interestingly, Egypt is in an ambiguous position: narrow definitions of Mashreq exclude it, although its links with this subregional system are unquestionable. Sudan’s place in this tripartite structure also poses problems as it does not belong to any of the three subregions. In this case the links to Egypt and, more broadly, to the Nile basin are often emphasized. It is also worth noting that the concept of the “*Jazeera*” coexists with that of the “Gulf,” commonly referred to as the Persian Gulf in Western literature and Gulf in most of the Arab-speaking literature.

Some subregional terms can encompass non-Arab countries as well. In fact, the “Gulf” is one of them as some may include Iran in it.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the case of Israel may be seen as part of the

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quite systematically into this traditional definition.

32 The EU traditionally approaches the region through its Mediterranean lens. There is a wide literature on the origins and uses of the European conceptualization of the Mediterranean. See, among others, Ruel (1991), Henry and Groc (2000), Bilgin (2004), Holm (2005) and Pace (2006).

33 The Gulf as well is a contested concept for political reasons: there is an ongoing discursive struggle over whether to

“Levant” but not of the “Arab Mashreq.”<sup>34</sup> Finally, Iran, Turkey and Israel are seen as part of the Middle East (understood as the core subregion of a broader MENA region). In a similar vein, some of the countries of this region are considered to belong to more than one region. This is the case of Mauritania and Sudan, which are sometimes considered to be part of the Sahel, or Turkey, which is also part of Europe.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that regions can be seen through the lenses of particular disciplines. Thus, we could speak of historical, political, economic, cultural or environmental regions and, depending on the focus, the geographical scope of the region may vary. As mentioned above, MENARA is an interdisciplinary project and, thus, has opted for a terminology and regional scope that is inclusive and relevant in the light of the project’s goals. Notwithstanding this, we should acknowledge the centrality of security studies in any project dealing with issues related to geopolitical dynamics, and in this respect the contribution of the Copenhagen School in the understanding of regional security complexes is of great use. Those complexes are defined as a “set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another” (Buzan and Wæver 2003:44). This school considers the Middle East “a near perfect example of a classical, state-centric, military-political type RSC [regional security complex]” (Buzan and Wæver 2003:217) and divides the region into three regional sub-complexes: the Maghreb, the Levant and the Gulf. They also identify three key “insulators” (the Sahel, Turkey and Afghanistan), that is, bordering states or regions “where larger regional security dynamics stand back to back” (Buzan and Wæver 2003:41).

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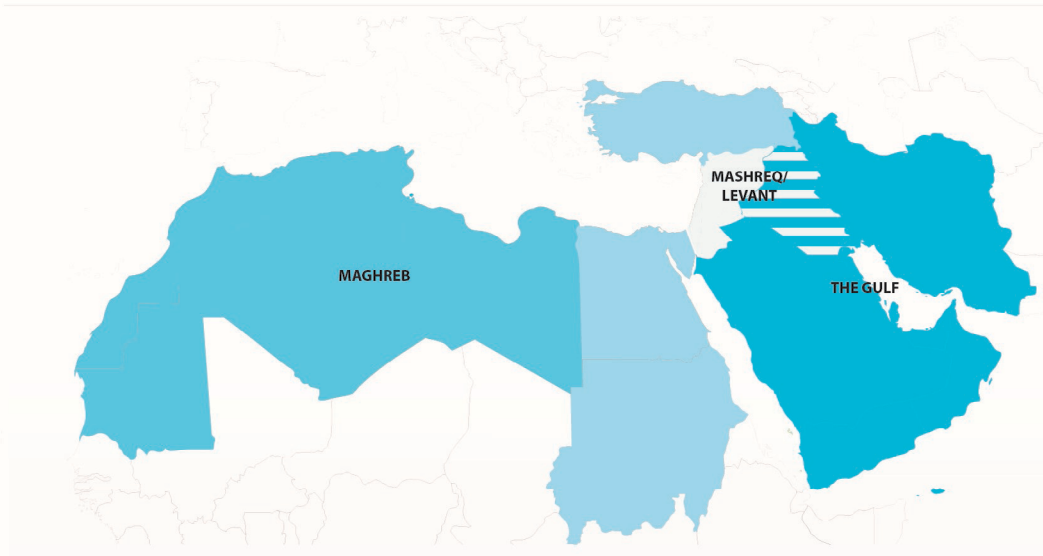
name it the “Persian Gulf” or simply the “Gulf” which mainly reflects the Saudi-Iranian struggle for regional hegemony.

34 The origin of this term dates back to the prominent Venetian role in the Eastern Mediterranean and was used to refer to the countries east of Italy. Yet, more recently it gained a more precise meaning to designate the lands (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Jordan) and islands (Cyprus) of the Eastern Mediterranean. For more details, see Gagarin (2010:247-8).

## One Region, Many Definitions

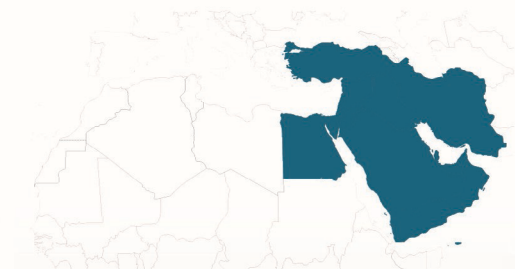
The map below depicts the regional framework that will be analysed by this project, acknowledging that a core goal of MENARA's research is to analyse and describe the main dynamics/transformations occurring at the regional level or having a relevant impact on the three main existing sub-systems (Maghreb, Mashreq and The Gulf).

### MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

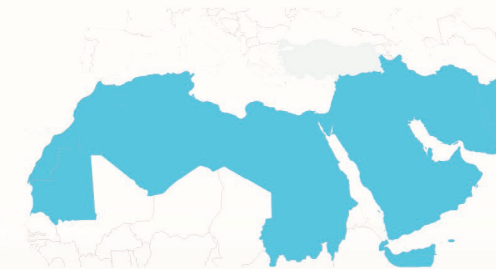


### ALTERNATIVE VISIONS OF THE REGION

#### Middle East



#### Broader Middle-East North Africa



#### Arab Countries



#### Southern-Eastern Mediterranean Countries



MENARA Project. September 2016. More information at [www.menaraproject.eu/](http://www.menaraproject.eu/)



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## 2.2 REGIONAL POWERS

### THE DISTRIBUTION OF POWER: THE EVOLUTION OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE MENA SUB-SYSTEM

There are many historical accounts describing how international affairs took shape in the MENA region following the end of colonialism in the first half of the twentieth century, but not many do so from a purely International Relations perspective, focusing on the evolution of the sub-system. While Stephen Walt (1987) focused on balance of power, Raymond Hinnebusch (2003) focused on power distribution. He identifies how regional polarity evolved over time and characterized the main features of the order in place for each phase.

Firstly, Hinnebusch claims the regional system per se was brought into existence after the end of the Second World War – a turning point when many of the states in the region gained independence. He labels this first period as the “oligarchic multipolarity” (1945-1955), recognizing Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria as poles in confrontation with a Hashemite axis in Iraq and Jordan – commonly identified as together representing another pole in the system – in the purely Arab scenario. The rising power of Turkey, Iran and the newly created state of Israel needs to be added to the equation to have a full picture of the oligarchic multipolarity. This period was marked by a high level of penetration by foreign powers (especially the United Kingdom, as explained in detail in Section 2.1); tension between Arabism and the consolidation of sovereign states; and the impact of the 1948 war between Israel and the Arab countries.

The second period (1956-1970) was marked by the rise and fall of an Egypt-centric pan-Arab system. The logic of pan-Arabism under Nasser underpinned Cairo’s hegemonic drive which over this period of time consolidated Egypt’s leadership in regional politics. This quasi-hegemonic position, backed by alliances with and bandwagoning movements by countries like Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, saw in the pre-1958 Iraq and the Baghdad Pact countries its principal potential contender. This phase saw an increase in intra-Arab solidarity and a reduction in Western control over regional politics.

This was followed by the period of the Arab Triangle (1970s). At this point, three Arab countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria) articulated an alliance to face the rising power of Israel following the 1967 Six Day War. Additionally, Iran represented a stronghold of power in the region, principally as a result of the Shah’s privileged relationship with the United States. This period was also marked by the inception of a renewed interdependence among the Arab states in the region: the new wealth of the oil-rich states was transferred to their allies through a variety of channels of cooperation, while the latter turned into a net labour force exporter towards the former. The end of the Arab Triangle came as result of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Egypt re-approached the United States after the war and shifted its approach towards Israel through the signature of the Camp David Agreements in 1979, which ultimately consolidated the so-called “qualitative military edge” for Israel over any and all potential adversaries in the region. This last event resulted in the exclusion of Egypt not only from the tripartite alliance but also from broader regional politics as its peace agreement with Israel was quasi-unanimously condemned by the rest of the Arab states.

A centreless fragmented multipolarity followed in the 1980s. Initially, the decade saw a decline in pan-Arabism in favour of state consolidation dynamics, pan-Islamism and communalism. Five poles of power seemed to compete for regional leadership: Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the newly formed Islamic Republic of Iran. Generally speaking, two blocs were formed, one pulling together so-called moderate pro-West countries (Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council countries, North Yemen and Jordan) and the other comprised of the so-called “Steadfastness Front” (Libya, South Yemen, Algeria, Syria and Iran). This broader split lived side by side with intra-alliance rebalancing movements in the face of revisionist efforts by Israel, Iran and Iraq.

A new period began with the Gulf War, launched in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The main poles of power were Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Iran, Israel and Turkey. Although all of these countries felt challenged by Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, they nevertheless did not feel compelled to articulate fully fledged alliance mechanisms among them. The United States’ penetration of the sub-system was primarily the result of the end of the Cold War and the global bipolar system, in what has been described as the “American hegemonic moment” in the region.

The structure of this system, at least since 2003, has usually been defined as multipolar, comprised of five medium-sized or regional powers, each with different power capabilities: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and Israel (Buzan and Wæver 2003). The invasion of Iraq in 2003 caused the effective disappearance in terms of power of one of the traditional poles of the sub-system. This coincided with the Iranian and Turkish “return” to regional politics in the turn of the new century. More recently, Kristina Kausch (2014:11) has characterized the regional system emerging after the 2011 uprisings as competitive multipolarity where “[r]ather than forming cohesive blocs and entering long-term alignments, a range of regional and external players of different sizes and weights are likely to compete in shifting, overlapping alliances.”

MENARA goes one step further by characterizing the structure of the sub-system in terms of *regional heteropolarity*. The concept of “heteropolarity” as used by Daryl Copeland (2013) and James Der Derian (2009), besides recognizing the diffuse nature of power and its distribution within a system, circumvents the problem of limiting the discussion on the structure to considering only state units. It gives analytical room to include non-state actors in the examination of the distribution of power beyond conceptualizing them as mere instruments of state units. In line with this, MENARA will question the impact of non-state actors in the structure of the sub-system, while aiming at identifying novel poles of power that are indispensable to fully grasp how regional politics work.

## 2.3 REGIONAL ORDER

### APPROXIMATIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF REGIONAL ORDER

The notion of order is extensively used in International Relations scholarship, although often it is merely equated with international reality. Any discussion about order in International Relations (IR) necessarily starts with the conceptualization proposed by the founding fathers of the English School of IR, but most precisely by Hedley Bull. In his masterwork *The Anarchical Society*, Bull

(1977:8) defines order as “a pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society.” This definition includes two constitutive elements that are worth examining in detail. Firstly, the “international society” is defined as a group of states, conscious of their shared interests and values, who recognize that they are bounded by common norms ruling their relations (Bull 1977:13). Secondly, he conceptualizes those shared interests as (a) preserving the international society itself; (b) avoiding the “elimination” of any of the actors within the system; (c) safeguarding actors’ independence and states’ external sovereignty; (d) maintaining peace among all the actors within the system; (e) respecting the *pacta sunt servanda* principle; and (f) preserving property (Bull 1977:18-21). From this perspective order does not replace anarchy, generally defined in IR as the absence of a supranational authority with the capacity to impose its will over all the units of the system – a sort of worldwide Leviathan. Instead, order lives together with the anarchical condition of the international system, palliating some of its potential negative effects on actors’ behaviour.

Since the inception of the English School some alternative definitions of order have been offered, most of them challenging Bull’s conception of the goals any order is willing to attain. For Joseph Parent and Emily Erikson (2009), for instance, order is defined as a pattern of activity that limits the frequency and intensity of violence among the units within an international system, thus limiting the objective of any international order to the security dimension and, more narrowly, to a decrease in levels of hostility.<sup>35</sup> David Armstrong (1993) focuses on the regularity and continuity of a certain web of rules, practices and assumptions which are accepted among the members of any society as legitimate and affect how changes are operationalized within that society. This definition, alternatively, underscores the idea that any order ultimately aims at setting the acceptable margins of potential change in how the units of the system relate to each other and how these might be translated into reality. For Muthiah Alagappa (2003:39), order is understood as “a formal or informal arrangement that sustains rule-governed interactions among sovereign states in their pursuit of individual and collective goals,” broadening the scope of the concept by not setting in stone the objectives of any international order.<sup>36</sup> Christian Reus-Smit (1997) suggests that the international society comprises a set of international institutions divided hierarchically into three different layers: the “constitutional structure,” its “fundamental institutions” and the “international regimes” in place. By doing so, he opts for an operative definition of order as he focuses on the patterns of activity that constitute any order – hierarchizing them – without assuming that there is any goal underpinning that construction.

For the MENARA Project, this discussion of the definition of regional order is key. One of the original foundational concepts of the English School of International Relations was that of the “expansion of the international society,” a process in which the MENA region has been critical. In an effort to grasp the inception of the international society at the global level, authors like Hedley Bull or Adam Watson (1984) proposed that the international society as we know it nowadays, and some of

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35 Additionally, this definition does not require the existence of an international society – as defined by the English School of IR – but rather the mere presence of an international system is enough. Hence, it detangles the notion of order from that of international society and recognizes that there might even be some form of order in the systems.

36 For other definitions of international order, see Hall (1996), Paul and Hall (1999), Lake and Morgan (1997) and Solingen (1998).

its fundamental institutions, arose on the European continent and from there expanded worldwide. This process took place in a context marked by European imperialism and, consequently, the expansion of this order is contingent with structural violence and domination. It is also worth mentioning Thomas Naff's (1984) contribution in describing the process of the expansion of the European international society towards the Ottoman Empire – and, consequently, a great part of the MENA region – through the study of the transformations of diplomatic practices and the shifting conceptualizations of sovereignty in the region.<sup>37</sup> All of this scholarship represented the point of departure for the analysis of autochthonous orders in place in regional sub-systems. Bull himself recognized the existence of regional orders by acknowledging the reality of some institutions of order which only operate in some regional sub-systems. Yet, as pointed out by Richard Little (2000, 2007), Bull did not discuss how these institutions worked nor what the relation between the global order and the regional ones were.

In the wake of this initial effort, some authors have continued to explore the possibility of using this approach to scrutinize regional rather than global dynamics. With the end of the Cold War, the study of regional systems reached one of its zeniths. A new interest in the explanatory power of regions – understood as something more than just “subordinate[d] components of a global international system” (Gause 1999:12) – prompted a plethora of new studies that placed the region at the very centre (Fawcett and Hurrell 1995, Lake and Morgan 1997). Scholars like Keene (2002), Alagappa (2003), Fawcett and Hurrell (1995), Lake and Morgan (1997) and Godehart and Nabers (2011), among others, have explored the explanatory capacity of the concept of regional order either generically or applied to the study of a concrete region. The Middle East itself has been the focus of analysis by Ayoob (1999), Binder (1958), Barnett (1995), Hinnebusch (2003, 2009), Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez (2009), Halliday (2009), Dessouki (1983) and Brown (1984) in describing and analysing the reality of the whole sub-system, while others like Gause (2010) or Potter and Sick (2002) have opted to undertake parallel endeavours for the cases of subregional systems like the Persian Gulf. A key feature of this project will be to apply the concept of order not to the global state system or the so-called “world society” (Buzan 2004) but at the regional level.

MENARA will use as its operative definition of international order – and, consequently, of regional order – a modified version of the definition suggested by Alagappa (2003:39). The project defines international order as *a formal or informal arrangement that sustains rule-governed interactions among different units within a system in their pursuit of individual and collective goals*. This characterization of order offers some comparative advantages over the definitions outlined above.

Firstly, and probably most importantly, it does not impose any limit in relation to the objective behind the patterns of activity observed by the international actors participating in this order. Unlike many of the definitions seen above, ours does not determine from the beginning what the aim of this order is. By doing so, it allows for the possibility of inquiring what the objectives of any order(s) in the Middle East and North Africa have been/are, whether they have changed over time or even if different actors within the system understand these goals differently. Furthermore, it does stick with a security-centred approach by acknowledging that the aims of any order might not

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37 This last aspect encapsulates the idea that regional actors embraced Westphalian versions of sovereignty, following Stephen Krasner's (1999) terminology.

necessarily be restricted to survival or the reduction of violence, but alternatively socio-economic considerations might also play a role.

Secondly, the definition takes as its starting point the existence of a system, not narrowing our scope to the international system but alternatively making it possible to use the term when discussing regional systems such as the Middle East and North Africa. It also does not take for granted that ordering arrangements are exclusive to an international society and not international systems. Thus, the project avoids defining the region as one or the other before carrying out its research.

The modification we have introduced gives MENARA room to not limit its research agenda to the role of state actors vis-à-vis the international order. By appealing to the “units within a system,” the definition enables the project to further investigate the role of non-state actors in the construction, maintenance and evolution of any international order, in line with some of the objectives of this research endeavour.

In parallel, MENARA attempts to provide an answer to a critical question: what is the difference between a change of order and a change within order? The project considers that a change of order certainly occurs if the elements of the constitutional structure of the order, as defined by Reus-Smit (1997), are modified. The constitutional structure is made up of

coherent ensembles of intersubjective beliefs, principles, and norms that perform two functions in ordering international societies: they define what constitutes a legitimate actor, entitled to all the rights and privileges of statehood; and they define the basic parameters of rightful state action (Reus-Smit 1997:566).

A change within order occurs when a primary institution or an international regime is replaced by a new one. Primary institutions are “deep and relatively durable social practices [...] shared among the members of international society but also [...] seen among them as legitimate behaviour” (Buzan 2014:16-17). Issue-specific international regimes “enact basic institutional practices in particular realms of interstate relations” (Reus-Smit 1997:558). Still, the pending question to answer is whether a change in a significant number of primary institutions and/or issue-specific regimes might also be considered a change of order. In the light of this discussion MENARA aims at underlining the changes the region has undergone since 2003 – paying specific attention to those unfolding since 2011 – and defining them in terms of change within order or, alternatively, changes of order.

## **THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE REGIONAL ORDER IN THE MENA SUB-SYSTEM**

In accordance with well-established literature (Ismael 1986, Hinnebusch 2003, Halliday 2005, Fawcett 2013), one of the research hypotheses of MENARA is that the Middle East and North Africa region constitutes a “system” or a “regional sub-system.” Stemming from this premise, it is reasonable to question what its regional order looks like and what institutions are in place. A number of authors have theorized about the scope, size and characteristics of the different regional orders (Fawcett and Hurrell 1995, Lake and Morgan 1997, Ayoob 1999, among others). MENARA aims to contribute to already existing efforts to focus on the MENA sub-system and its regional order.

An important milestone in that respect has been Michael Barnett's (1998) contribution. His main claim is that the Arab world constitutes a distinct supra-state community or order, which shares a belief in their common bonds and distinctiveness as an Arab nation. Within this order there are certain norms or rules of acceptable behaviour that must be followed in order to count as "Arab," and Arab state leaders have indeed, Barnett asserts, mainly fought with symbolic – rather than military – instruments of power over the meaning of being a true Arab and acting in the interests of the Arabs. Identifying how this community and its associated norms came about and how they have changed over time, Barnett detects five distinct periods of heightened Arab debates over what it means to be Arab and what the core Arab interest is: from 1920 to the 1945 establishment of the Arab League; from 1945 to 1955 over the Baghdad Pact; from the 1956 Suez war to the 1967 war; from 1967 to the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; and the 1990s post-Gulf war period. Barnett shows how interactions and "negotiations" between Arab states over core Arab interests gradually gave rise to three shared concerns and norms: (1) how to relate to the West? Here the so-called positive neutrality spearheaded by Nasser became the winning interpretation in the wake of discursive battles over the Baghdad Pact; (2) how to deal with Zionism and Israel? Here resistance and solidarity with the Palestinians became the shared norm; and (3) how to reconcile Arab Unity with state formation and state sovereignty. Here unification in several loose forms initially held sway, but after the failed unity attempts in the 1950s it gradually lost ground to the norm of state sovereignty.

A complementary analysis of the institutions of the regional order in the MENA region is provided in the edited volume by Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez (2009) entitled *International Society and the Middle East: English School Theory at the Regional Level*. This reference work first analyses the expansion of international society to the Middle East, and examines the institutions governing the current sub-system's order as well as the impact of pan-Arabism, Islam and revolutionary narratives and agendas. The authors conclude that there are a total of nine primary institutions in place in the region. Those that will be key in the MENARA research agenda include sovereignty, which in turn integrates the secondary institutions of non-intervention and international law; territoriality; and great-powers management, which in turn integrates the secondary institutions of alliances and balance of power (Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez 2009:92-116, 226-49).

## **2.4 AN INTEGRATED REGION? REGIONAL COOPERATION INITIATIVES**

As explained in the introduction to this paper, when looking at the regional level, MENARA aims at elucidating which drivers or constellations of drivers push towards fragmentation or integration dynamics in this region. One way of looking at levels of integration is through the analysis of existing cooperation initiatives. There is no shortage of regional cooperation initiatives in the region, although none of them includes all the countries that are part of the Middle East and North Africa. There are organizations with a regional scope, such as the League of Arab States (created in 1945), and others that are of subregional nature such as the Union for the Arab Maghreb (1989) or the Gulf Cooperation Council (1981). There are other organizations in which a significant number of countries in the Middle East and North Africa participate but which include countries from other regions as well, such as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (1969) and the Union for the Mediterranean (2008). Finally, some of the countries covered by the MENARA Project participate



in other regional endeavours. Turkey, as a candidate country for accession to the EU and as a member of the Council of Europe since 1950, is the clearest example, but it is also worth noting the active participation of several countries in the African Union.

The Middle East and North Africa has drawn attention not because of the proliferation of regional initiatives, but because of its low levels of performance (Harders and Legrenzi 2008). Taking into account the broad consensus that there has been a global wave of regionalism (Fawcett and Hurrell 1995), some authors have framed the relative failure of regional cooperation endeavours within the broader trend, according to which this region would be immune to the trends affecting other parts of the world (Aarts 1999:911). One of the explanations points to domestic political conditions, as

it became clear from the moment of their inception that regional organizations, if taken seriously as mechanisms for collective decision-making, would provide a threat to these same regimes as radical as that of the various forms of menace to which they were ostensibly a response (Tripp 1995:306).

Precisely because a significant part of the literature on regionalism has focused on the domestic obstacles to its success, there was great interest in observing whether the Arab Spring would modify those conditions and thus create an environment more conducive to regional cooperation endeavours (Fawcett 2013:201). In 2011 and early 2012 there was still a widespread belief in the potential for more regional integration and cooperative security mechanisms (Malmvig 2013:30). In fact, the active role of the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) when the crises erupted in Libya, Syria and Yemen, as well as the calls to revitalize the Arab Maghreb Union, seemed to indicate that this was happening. However, those expectations were soon dashed, as all those organizations remain hostage to rivalries among different regional and subregional powers as well as to dysfunctional institutional settings. Therefore, the MENARA Project looks at the factors undermining frameworks of cooperation and integration and explores which elements could create a more conducive environment.

## 2.5 A FRAGMENTED REGION? AMITY AND ENMITY PATTERNS

In the work of Barry Buzan et al. on regional security complexes, patterns of amity/enmity are key defining features. Conflicts and security dynamics, they argue, cannot be predicted by material power distribution alone; one must also consider historical constellations of hatred and friendship and the specific issues that trigger conflict or cooperation (Buzan and Wæver 2003:50). *Amity refers to relations that range from friendship to expectations of protection and support, and conversely enmity refers to relations of fear and distrust.* These can revolve around a whole range of issues, for example border disputes, ethnicity, ideology or religion, but the issues must be determined empirically rather than theoretically (Buzan 1991:190). In the MENA region one might argue that some of the main cleavages that have guided the region's amity/enmity relations are the Arab-Israeli conflict, divisions between Arabs and non-Arabs, between Sunni and Shia, between pro-Western and anti-Western, and between status quo and revisionist states.



In terms of the latter, the region has since the 1950s been split between so-called status quo states and revisionist or revolutionary states. This cleavage initially revolved around differences in regime type and relations with Western powers. Thus from the 1950s to the 1970s the region was divided between the status quo powers (the Gulf monarchies, Jordan and Morocco) and Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Algeria, which constituted the revolutionary powers. From the 1980s the region saw a shift in this dynamic, partly due to Egypt's peace agreement with Israel and partly due to the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The two regional powers changed positions, as it were, as Iran came to spearhead the revolutionary anti-Western camp and Egypt the pro-Western status quo powers. Concurrently the region also witnessed the rise of Islamist or non-state actors as contenders in the regional order. The Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and Hezbollah, for instance, all challenged the status quo regimes' legitimacy and alliances with the West, just as political Islam in many ways came to substitute for Arab nationalism as the most effective mobilizing ideology and collective identity marker in the regional arena.

While relations of amity/enmity may reinforce one another – as is the case, for instance, in the competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which runs alongside and amplifies Sunni-Shia, Arab-non-Arab and pro-Western-anti-Western enmity relations – they may also run counter to one another, for instance as in the case of Hamas. The degree to which present cleavages strengthen or weaken one another in the present regional order will in itself be an important question for the MENARA Project to investigate, as will the consequences of such reinforcing cleavages on the region's patterns of conflict and cooperation.

Moreover, the MENARA Project aims at softening the somewhat binary logic that is built into the concept of amity/enmity, firstly by emphasizing that amity/enmity relations in the MENA region are highly complex, often cross-cutting and conflicting. For instance, Turkey enjoys relatively amicable relations with the West, is a NATO member and is predominantly Sunni. Yet it is not an Arab state and has entertained relatively good relations with both Iran and Israel. Similarly, Hamas has long been part of the so-called Resistance Axis together with Iran, Hezbollah and Syria, yet it is a Sunni Arab actor that moreover parts ways with the Resistance Axis's policies on the Syrian conflict. Secondly, the project introduces some insights from social constructivist work, which can help to open up the concept of enmity/amity relations and identify how these relations are derived from specific regional norms and identities. As Buzan and Wæver themselves point out, the concept of enmity/amity is in many ways close to that of social constructivists' notions of how social structures (norms) and social roles (enemy, rival, friend)<sup>38</sup> work in international and regional systems (Buzan and Wæver 2003:50). Indeed, Barnett's (1998) book on the emergence of and changes in key Arab norms and institutions from the 1920s to the late 1990s provides an empirically rich social constructivist analysis of the main Arab issues that have compelled Arab states "to work in concert and to identify with each other" and yet at the same time have "represented a source of conflict and competition" (Barnett 1998:255). In other words, we suggest that Barnett's study of Arab norms is a complementary way to study amity/enmity relations, insofar as it allows us to probe how enmity/amity relations arise from symbolic battles over meaning in the regional arena and the key issues over which states have respectively competed and connected with each other.

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38 For instance, see the contribution by Wendt (1999).

While MENARA takes inspiration from Barnett's analytical concepts, the focus on the regional Arab order is too narrow for the project. As discussed above, this project has a wider understanding of the MENA region which includes non-Arab state actors such as Israel, Iran and Turkey as well as transnational and societal actors. Moreover, Barnett as well as Buzan and Wæver end their analyses at the turn of the millennium. This has led those authors to rather similar conclusions about the Middle East/Arab order as state-centric, with strong norms of state sovereignty, resilient authoritarian regimes with predominantly pro-Western outlooks, a decline in Arabism and an increasing trend towards normalization with Israel. However, some of these conclusions today seem obsolete. Later work on the regional order by, for instance, Valbjørn and Volpi (2014), Lynch (2006, 2016), and Phillips (2014) has pointed out how the meaning of "Arab community" has been re-invented and has re-emerged in regional politics, thereby challenging the statist order from above, just as identity politics and non-state actors have put pressure on states and regimes from below. We will turn to these aspects below.

## **CHALLENGES TO REGIMES AND STATE ORDERS AND THE RISE OF IDENTITY POLITICS**

In Marc Lynch's (2006) book on a new Arab public sphere, the author shows how transnational Arab media – Arab broadcasting media and social media platforms – have recreated a type of new transnational Arab community, where key Arab issues and regional events are debated and tied together in a common Arab narrative, for instance Palestine, the Iraq war or the Arab uprisings, and how these regional or foreign policy issues have not only constituted a new Arab Public Sphere, but also served as a relatively safe or indirect means to criticize incumbent authoritarian regimes and the growing disconnect between authoritarian regimes and their societies. Drawing on the work by Lynch (2006) and Barnett (1998), Valbjørn and Bank (2012) have similarly concluded that key regional events – such as the 2006 war in Lebanon and the Gaza war in 2009 – were debated within an "Arab" framework, even by non-Arab actors such as Iran, and how societal Islamist actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah successfully questioned the legitimacy of authoritarian regimes in the regional arena. Valbjørn and Bank (2012), for instance, analyse how Hezbollah and Hamas effectively appropriated the de-link between autocratic regimes and their societies to challenge the regional order, and how they gained immense popular regional support in much the same way as Nasser's pan-Arabism was able to mobilize popular support in the 1950s and 1960s, where it constituted the "radical" or "revolutionary" position that challenged the "*status quo* monarchies." In the wake of the Arab uprising, the fluidity of domestic-regional dynamics have only accelerated, and we thus suggest that the de-link between autocratic regimes and societies – and regimes' quests for survival – should be studied as one of the issues or cleavages that give rise to amity/enmity relations and shape the regional order.

Moreover, it is not only the incumbent authoritarian regimes that are being challenged by transnational and non-state actors, it is also the very Arab state system itself and its borders that are being questioned – and sometimes eroded – by militarized actors. The most obvious example of this is of course the organization "Islamic State," which has declared a caliphate that crosses the borders between Iraq and Syria. But we also see signs of territorial disintegration in, for instance, Libya, Egypt, Syria and Iraq.

Similarly, in the emerging regional order we also see a resurgence of ethnic and sectarian identity politics. In the wake of the Iraq war in 2003, the collapsing state orders and ongoing wars in Syria,

Yemen and elsewhere in the region, sectarian dynamics appear once again to be holding sway. Some authors even suggest that the Sunni-Shia schism now constitutes the main conflict line in the Middle East, having supplanted the Arab-Israeli conflict (Nasr 2007, Susser 2007, Abdo 2013). While a number of scholars dispute the rise of Sunni-Shia sectarianism, there is no agreement on how significant this cleavage is, or how it is to be theoretically approached. Simply put, one might argue that there are three divergent approaches to the study of sectarianism in regional and international politics: primordialism, instrumentalism and post-structuralism.<sup>39</sup>

The primordial account analyses the Sunni-Shia division as a primary identity and core conflict in the region that reaches back to the seventh century and continues to drive the politics of the region today. Sectarianism is seen as a kind of natural community and inevitable conflict between two clearly defined religious sects (rather than between, e.g., state actors), very similar to the way ethnicity was commonly analysed in relation to the conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s (see, among others, Nasr 2007, Abdo 2013). Although primordialists acknowledge that sectarianism has varied historically, and thus that it is not a constant in Middle East politics, this is largely interpreted as a type of overlay or repression that has kept latent sectarian identities in check.

In contrast, the second approach, instrumentalism, is deeply sceptical about using a sectarian framework to explain the causes of the region's present struggles and rivalries. Sectarian identities are primarily seen as superficial political constructs, open to manipulation and exploitation by political elites, who use sectarian fearmongering to garner vested patron-client relationships, as gateways to mass mobilization or as powerful levers in regional rivalries. To understand why sectarianism has risen over recent decades, instrumentalists primarily look to the way that authoritarian states have exacerbated sectarian divisions both domestically and regionally in order to prop up their regimes and remain in power. Precisely because sectarianism is exacerbated by, and plays into the hands of, authoritarian regimes, instrumentalists caution that the primordialist approach may lead to dangerous political prescriptions (Gause 2014, Lynch 2013). Thus to instrumentalists, sectarianism is foremost an ideology that state actors conveniently employ either regionally in a classic realist balance of power, or domestically to hold on to state power (Gause 2014, Lynch 2013, Ayub 2013).

Instrumentalists importantly point to the power and politics involved in sectarian identity politics, and to the analytical and political consequences of operating with an underlying assumption of essentialist identities. However, to instrumentalists sectarianism is precisely an "ism," a form of ideology up for grabs alongside other ideologies in the region. Insofar as sectarianism is assumed to be just another ideology cynically used by power-holders, instrumentalists may be less well equipped to explain why sectarian identity politics has become so prominent over the last decade, or what has made it so effective compared to other ideologies available in the region.

Other scholars inspired by historical sociology therefore emphasize instead those historical path dependencies that have led to the recent surge in sectarian identity politics (see Hinnebusch 2014, Dodge 2016, Heydemann 2013, among others). Dodge, for instance, argues that it is foremost the gradual weakening of state structures, the army, the police force, and the ability to deliver protection

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39 The description of the three approaches to sectarianism are taken in large part from Malmvig (2014, 2016).

and services that creates conditions that are conducive to sectarianism.<sup>40</sup> When state institutions are eroding – because of sanctions, conflict or foreign invasion – people turn to “whatever grouping, militia or identity offers them the best chance of survival” (Dodge 2007:88). Analysing the gradual breakdown of state order in Iraq, Dodge (2016) points out how the withering of the state’s monopoly on collective violence, its civilian institutional capacity and its infrastructural power all meant that Iraqis had to seek protection and services on a local and regional level instead. So-called “ethnic-religious entrepreneurs” were ready to jump in and supply these goods, and they legitimized their role predominantly in terms of communalistic identities. With the Arab uprisings and the subsequent conflicts and weak/collapsing state structures, sectarian identity politics has gained further traction. Heydemann emphasizes how the deepening sectarianization of politics from the domestic sphere to the regional level is now a two-way street: local conflicts have led to sectarian spillover to neighbouring states and have drawn in major regional actors along sectarian lines. Regional politics have become locked into a strategic culture of sectarianism, just as regional actors have exacerbated local sectarian dynamics by establishing patron-client support structures based on sectarian affinities (Heydemann 2013:11).

To scholars inspired by historical sociology, the rise of sectarian identity politics is thus primarily a question of sufficient strong state structures (or the lack thereof) at the domestic level prompting communities to seek protection with either sub-state actors or regional patrons. In contrast to instrumentalists, historical sociologists do, to a certain extent, analyse these identities as different from ideologies. Sectarian identities are seen as more entrenched than mere ideology and more difficult to change or reverse once they have become established in popular discourse and practices. However, as in the case of instrumentalism, sectarian identity itself is withdrawn from the explanation by making it a function of something else. Sectarian identifications constitute a type of fallback position ready to be used in situations of heightened insecurity and state collapse, in which individuals or groups, out of rational self-interest, seek safety, goods and order. Thus, as in the case of the instrumentalist approach, sectarianism is implicitly presumed to be a tool for self-preservation and a form of passive undercurrent available to sub-state elites when state structures collapse. Moreover, historical sociologists primarily focus on sectarian identity politics in the domestic arena and tend to ignore regional dynamics.

One of the aims of MENARA should therefore be to complement and further develop the instrumentalist and historical sociology approaches with insights from the Copenhagen School and Securitization theory. Securitization theory and the Copenhagen School may enable us to probe how sectarian identities are produced and securitized, while at the same time taking the character of the sectarian referent seriously. Directing the analytical focus to securitization allows for a study of how prevalent sectarian narratives are not only instrumentalized to prop up the power of local actors, but are also employed to legitimize the use of extraordinary means by regional powers, the very move of securitization enabling the use of military means and creating a sense heightened insecurity.

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40 A similar argument has been made by Guazzone and Pioppi (2009) with respect to the effects of globalization. While the state is retreating from certain functions (such as social services) as a consequence of privatization and liberalization, it still maintains control over the economy and the distribution of wealth through its informal patronage networks, redrawing the borders between the public and the private. As social services are outsourced, other lines of attachment such as religion, ethnicity and the tribe again become more important as sources of help.

## 2.6 THE MENA REGION IN RELATION TO THE GLOBAL ORDER: JUST A PASSIVE PERIPHERY?

The MENARA Project includes in its research agenda the study of the role played by the actors of the region vis-à-vis the configuration of the constitutive elements of the global order. Scholarship has placed a greater emphasis on how the reality of the region – domestically and internationally – has been fashioned by global dynamics (see Section 2.4). It is a commonplace to assume the MENA region is a net receiver of changing norms, institutions and values diffused from the global level,<sup>41</sup> yet the reverse effect is not often studied.

In the MENA region we can observe a generalized conception of formal and informal norms, institutions and values encapsulated in the global order alongside several important examples of intense questioning and contestation of them. It could be argued that the region has not been at the core of the emergence of any norm or institution constitutive of the global order.<sup>42</sup> Yet the challenges may on some occasions have tinged the norms; in very few instances they may have introduced important modifications; but the region offers several examples of resistance points to some of the core values, norms and institutions of the global order that have emanated from the West.

One major example is the historical discussion about the principle of sovereignty and its realization in the region (see Section 2.1). Many actors have challenged the monopoly of the state as the sole legitimate political actor to be part of the international society's management mechanisms, as well as territoriality and current delimitations of the borders. This contestation is important not only from a broader theoretical perspective but additionally because it is closely linked with challenges to others norms and institutions like the principle of non-interference, the principle of sovereign equality and the principle of non-use of force. Even if the actors of the region have not been able to introduce modifications, their challenge has had an impact on how the international society configures enforcement measures. This element is also related to the challenge posed by the crucial role of non-state actors in the regional subsystem. The global order is fundamentally a state-centred one: it ostracizes any alternative actor to states and it does not cope well with the interests and behaviours of non-state actors. The MENA subsystem cannot be coped with fully without paying attention to these types of international actors, but this is also true for the impact of the region over the global order.

In many instances, actors from the Middle East and North Africa have offered alternative views of some of the global order's values, norms and institutions. The discussion about the particularism or universalism of the international human rights protection regime (in the light of the normative reality of the region), the debates about the appeal of the principles of global economic liberalism

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41 Hinnebusch (2003:14) begins a chapter devoted to the relations between the international and the regional MENA systems (*Core and Periphery: The International System and the Middle East*) by stating that "the Middle East has been profoundly shaped by the international system, or more precisely, the great powers, which dominate its developed 'core'" while neglecting to mention any major reverse impact.

42 For a discussion on the "norm life cycle" – emergence, spread and internationalization of an international norm – see Finnemore and Sikkink (1998).

(e.g., Islamic finance and the global economy) or the decolonization/post-colonial ideologies arising in the MENA are just three of the most important examples.

The MENA region also offers net contesters of the global order.<sup>43</sup> The Non-Aligned Movement, closely connected with Nasserist post-colonial pan-Arabism narratives, first posed a challenge to the bipolar system and now challenges the international economic order underpinning the global order. Most recently, states like Iraq under Ba'athist rule or the Islamic Republic of Iran since its foundation in 1979 have repeatedly challenged different values, norms and institutions of the global order as they recognized them to be instead corollaries of American hegemony – the international human rights regime, post-Second World War multilateral global institutions, international law, liberal economic principles and so forth.<sup>44</sup> A paradoxical example to conduct further research on in the framework of MENARA is the organization Islamic State.

The region has been employed as a laboratory for testing the limits of some global norms and institutions on the rise as well, thus playing an important role in their unfolding and consolidation. For instance, the MENA was brought into, and played a significant role in, the discussion over the applicability and bounds of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine in the light of the wars in Libya (2011) and Syria (ongoing). Similarly, experiences in the Middle East – mainly the invasion of Iraq in 2003 – severely impinged on potential emerging institutions like those related with humanitarian interventions and regime change/democratic promotion. In the field of international political economy, the region became a test centre for International Monetary Fund/World Bank recovery policies from the 1980s and of the liberal peace building dogmas applied in international reconstruction efforts.

Finally, the Middle East and North Africa has also had an important impact on the global distribution of power.<sup>45</sup> The MENA has traditionally been pointed to as a tester for global hegemony (for example, the debates on the British Empire and the Suez Crisis or the United States' hegemony and the war in Iraq). But, beyond this rule of thumb, the region is sitting on top of the world's largest reserves of hydrocarbons and securing access to them has been, and still is, of great importance for any superpower with hegemonic aspirations. The Middle East and North Africa, and its resources, then become central to the global distribution of power.

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43 For a discussion on the contestation of the global order by “emerging actors,” the MENARA Project draws from the scholarship produced in the framework of the “Contested World Orders” research project carried out by the German Institute of Global and Area Studies Hamburg (GIGA), the Berlin Social Science Center (WZB) and the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF).

44 There is room to argue that the Iranian challenge to the existing order did not start in 1979 but rather under Mossadeq. Yet, it can also be argued that the institutions of the order were not challenged, but rather how they were applied (i.e., sovereignty and great power management).

45 Even if the structure of the system is not an integrative element in our definition of international order, any order might ultimately be the reflection of the interests of the most powerful units in the system. Thus, recognizing the impact of the MENA region on the structure of the international system is recognizing its impact on the global order.



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Is the geographical scope of the Middle East and North Africa regional system still valid to fully comprehend the dynamics shaping the regional order? Are there alternative or complementary visions of the boundaries of the region that better encapsulate the norms, values and institutions constitutive of the regional order? Is Europe becoming part of this regional system?
- Is the region undergoing a change of order or changes within order? What were the impacts of the 2003 invasion of Iraq and 2011 Arab uprisings in these transformations? What are the features of the emerging regional order? Do those changes have the capacity to challenge the global order?
- Are new regional cleavages emerging or are traditional ones changing in nature and intensity? To what extent are cleavages cross-cutting or reinforcing one another? And what are the consequences of this in terms of cooperation and conflict dynamics in the Middle East and North Africa?

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### 3. DOMESTIC ORDERS

Rasmus Alenius Boserup<sup>46</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

The popular uprisings that broke out in the winter of 2010 and spring of 2011 and then unfolded in the following years unravelled long-established power balances in the MENA region. These processes started out at local and domestic levels. In Tunisia's Gafsa and at Avenue Bourgiba, in Egypt's Mahalla al-Kubra and at Midan al-Tahrir, in Libya's Benghazi province and in the main square in Tripoli, and in Syria's Deraa governorate and in Damascus' suburbs as well as other places in the MENA region, millions of people mobilized along pre-existing conflict lines that pitted them against political decision-makers belonging to authoritarian regimes. This process of mass mobilization fundamentally reinvigorated national politics. Although protestors from a myriad of different places borrowed, adopted and localized a repertoire of symbols, slogans and actions developed thousands of kilometres away, the political demands they presented to those whom they were capable of influencing in respect of political decision-making were neither subnational, transnational, international nor global. They were national. And they primarily addressed well-known domestic conflicts between autocratic regimes and representatives of a broad variety of the groups and segments in the various societies: Tunisian protestors thus addressed Tunisian issues. Egyptians mobilized around demands made of Egyptian political decision-makers. Libyans addressed Libyan issues and Syrians addressed Syrian conflicts. In some cases, they requested the removal of their own head of state; reform of their own repressive legislation; increased redistribution of their own national public goods and finances; social dignity for their own national populations; cultural development and so forth, leaving an impression of a strongly reinvigorated national political arena (Boserup and Tassinari 2013).

As the protests spread from country to country, the autocratic regimes observed, learned and developed counter-mobilization policies, which aimed to ensure their own survival (Heydemann and Leenders 2013, Lynch 2016). Only as the states gradually exhausted their capacities to tame the domestic conflict with increasingly militarized contentious actors, did international and transnational actors and dynamics gradually come to dominate the conflict dynamics through armed proxies, through economic investment politics or through direct military interventions, which reflected regional and international rivalry and alignment rather than domestic conflict patterns (Boserup 2016).

This development of the conflicts that currently transform power balances in the MENA region from the domestic level towards the regional (and not vice versa) makes any attempt to analyse their dynamics and causes contingent on an understanding of domestic conflict patterns and the attempts to make and remake political order at domestic level (Boserup 2016). The development

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from the domestic towards the regional and international levels furthermore emphasizes the importance of mapping and analysing the empirical developments of each of the dynamics within the domestic conflicts. And it raises the question of how the interrelationship between order-making efforts at the domestic level influences and is influenced by international and transnational processes of order-making.

The first part proposes an analytical framework for conceptualizing and analysing the attempts to make such domestic orders (in the plural) in the contemporary MENA region. In contrast to concepts such as “regional order” and “global order,” there is no generally agreed-upon definition of the concept of “domestic order.” In the present section I therefore suggest conceptualizing the domestic political orders in the MENA region by drawing on key insights into the process of domestic order-making in the region that have been generated within four distinct scholarly traditions and debates about the nature and dynamics of domestic politics in the modern Middle East and North Africa. These scholarly debates include studies of the formation and development of post-colonial states; studies of the emergence, transformation and endurance of authoritarian regimes; studies of the emergence and transformation of contentious political movements and groups; and studies of the composition and development of political and social identities in the region. Taking stock of the major empirical trends in the region since 2011, this section hypothetically suggests that a study of the current transformation of the political order in the region should pay particular attention to a specific dynamic within each of these areas of interest, each of which has yielded particular influence on the remaking of domestic political orders in the MENA region since 2011. These are the erosion of state capacities; the securitization of regime policies; the militarization of contentious politics; and the pluralization of collective identities.

This section concludes, first, by deducing a flexible concept of domestic order in the MENA region from this analytical overview of the literature and the main trends in empirical developments since 2011; and second, by identifying a research agenda for the study of transformations of the region’s domestic political orders since 2011 that will be undertaken by the MENARA Project.

### 3.1 EROSION OF STATE CAPACITIES

Since the emergence of the MENA states in the second half of the twentieth century in tandem with European decolonization, their capacity been a disputed question among scholars. In the early decades after European decolonization numerous scholars viewed the MENA states as weak and artificial (e.g. Halpern 1963, Hudson 1977). In an influential text from 1968, the political scientist J.P. Nettl pointed out that the acquisition of statehood by a large number of former colonized territories in the Third World, and their recognition within the international society of states that had existed since the Peace of Westphalia, would produce something completely different from the ideal type of the European nation state. While the European states were, according to Nettl, products of a historical process in which political sovereignty over time had been narrowed down to cover territories occupied by ethnically homogeneous people, the Third World states were, he argued, products of a process in which central authority was extended “across ethnic boundaries and [...] hitherto ‘sovereign’ communities” by an external and powerful colonial administration (Nettl 1968:590-1). Similar ideas were found within the field of Middle East Studies in the 1960s and 1970s. Scholars such as Manfred Halpern (1963) and Michael Hudson (1977) argued that



MENA states had an “artificial” and “weak” character because the political boundaries drawn and imposed by the colonial powers did not reflect pre-existing communities, which could have given way to the emergence of strong nation states. Rather, they saw these communities as being affiliated with much broader transnational communities conceptualized in the ideas of the “Arab nation” or the “Islamic *Umma*.”

From the mid-1980s scholars of the Middle East began to question this presumed weakness of the MENA states. The failed attempts in the 1960s to create the idea of the “Arab nation state” through the endeavours to integrate Nasser’s Egypt with Assad’s Syria or with Gaddafi’s Libya, as well as the apparent consolidation of the political frontiers and administrative and institutional apparatuses of each of the individual nation states in the region, challenged the idea of “weak” and “artificial” states. In 1990, for instance, Giacomo Luciani concluded in an important research effort into the formation of the Arab states that the post-colonial nation states, after an initial period of “turbulence,” had become stabilized and consolidated political units, of such importance that they could no longer be excluded from any analysis of political processes in the Middle East (Luciani 1990:xvii). And a few years earlier Lisa Anderson had called for what she, inspired by the work of Theda Skocpol (1985), called “state-centred studies of politics” to take root in Middle East studies, in a recognition of the overwhelming importance that the nation states had acquired as frameworks for political, economic and social life in the region (Anderson 1987). During the late 1980s and early 1990s this coalesced in particular in the theory of rentier states – entities that used resource ownership and rent distribution to buy popular support and cater to client networks (Luciani 1990, Henry and Springborg 2010). In these resource-rich states, the oil rents give states considerable independence from tax revenues, thereby making the rulers relatively autonomous from society. Rather than supporting the state via tax revenue, society is supported by the state via redistribution of oil rents. The unwritten ruling bargain is “no taxation and no representation.” Instead of political participation, transfers such as welfare payments, subsidies and public sector jobs buy loyalty. From a more historical perspective, scholars such as Iliya Harik (1990) argued that the post-colonial Arab nation states were less artificial than previously assumed and were, in contrast, based on pre-colonial economic, political or cultural power centres. During the 1990s these insights became a dominating tendency within Middle East studies, emphasizing the importance of the state in the analysis of politics in the Middle East and North Africa (e.g. Anderson 1987, Yapp 1991, Ayubi 1995); and, in contrast to the early studies of Middle East societies (Halpern 1963, Hudson 1977), suggested that societies in the region were repressed and weakened by state bureaucratic and institutional apparatuses (e.g. Norton 1993).

Over the past two decades a number of scholars have challenged this notion of the strong state in the Middle East and North Africa. First, the social contract in several of the region’s rentier states has come under pressure with population growth, volatile commodity markets and exposure to global trends of political liberalization. Middle classes and business communities were becoming more assertive even before the Arab Spring, and some regimes embarked on a course of liberalization from above (Luciani 2005, Ehteshami and Wright 2008). Furthermore, long-term international and regional intervention subduing the sovereignty of individual states in countries such as Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen and from 2003 Iraq has indicated that some states in the region are, indeed, highly penetrated (Fürting 2016). In other parts of the region, however, this has looked different. In Algeria, for instance, the virtual collapse of the state’s internal sovereignty and its ability to uphold

a monopoly of the legitimate use of violence during the so-called civil war in the 1990s did not lead to significant international and regional intervention. It remained internationally isolated, shielded from the international interventionism and regional meddling by the great powers that is known from the Levant to the Gulf regions (Martinez 2010, Martinez and Boserup 2016).

In the wake of the uprisings in 2011, several states in the MENA region have seen the capacity of their institutional and administrative apparatuses considerably eroded. In Syria, Yemen, Libya, Iraq and parts of Egypt power vacuums have emerged and parts of their territories have fallen outside the control of the state institution, allowing domestic and transnational non-state bodies to take control over chunks of territory and, in a few but significant cases, annul international border-drawing. As F. Gregory Gause III (2015) observed, it is this erosion of state capacities that has generated the current political turmoil in the region. Hence, whether we analyse cases of relatively capable or relatively eroded MENA states, an appreciation of the current transformation of the domestic orders must start with a description and analysis of the recent erosion of the capacity of the bureaucratic, institutional and coercive apparatus in selected MENA states, as well as the capacity of those states to provide basic services and goods for their inhabitants.

### 3.2 SECURITIZATION OF REGIME POLICIES

Inspired by the study of political regimes within comparative politics, a new body of literature about domestic political scenes in the MENA region emerged in the 2000s with a focus on the “hybrid” or “upgraded” forms of authoritarian rule. In contrast to studies of the MENA states that put focus on the institutional, bureaucratic and coercive capacities of the state apparatus, regime studies focused on how political elites operated, how they formed alliances and what types of policies vis-à-vis domestic (and international) contenders these forms of alliance-building produced. While some scholars such as Heydemann (2007), Schlumberger (2007) and Bozarслан (2011) produced comparative studies of the government practices of several authoritarian regimes in the region, most scholars approached the subject by examining particular nation-states and exploring the refined mechanisms of authoritarian dominance within a specific domestic setting (e.g. Bellin 2004, Kienle 2001, Wedeen 1999). A common insight derived from these studies was the ambiguous and hybrid nature of the authoritarian regimes. While allowing a variety of forms of competition and contestation, for instance through multi-party elections (Lust-Okar 2006, Lust-Okar and Zerhouni 2008) and a plural media scene (Sakr 2013), the elites that constituted the autocratic regimes were able to maintain control of political decision-making. Partially in response to the hype around “democratization” in the MENA region in the 1990s (e.g. O’Donnell et al. 1986, Linz and Stepan 1996, Pridham 2000), these studies argued that the regimes ensured their own survival by mobilizing mass repression enacted by state bodies and directed against potential or actual challengers to the authority of the regime.

The unravelling of the Tunisian, Egyptian, Yemenite and other regimes, under the pressure of mass mobilization and uprisings during the winter of 2010 and the spring of 2011, challenged the idea inherent in much of the writing about autocratic regimes that it was these regimes alone that, through their policies, set the course of political developments in the region. It also challenged the idea that the regimes were capable of evolving out of the challenges they faced as they avoided sharing political power. Yet, as individual regimes and ad hoc coalitions proved capable

of countering the spread of revolutionary mobilization in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Algeria and other places in the region, a new pattern gradually emerged which provided evidence that some autocratic regimes were learning from the successes and failures of other autocratic regimes in the region (Heydemann and Leenders 2013, Lynch 2016). And the core lesson was that mass repression worked. This unleashed a process in which a number of MENA regimes and heads of state, from Assad's Syria to Egypt's al-Sisi, actively framed their political opposition as "threats" against the survival of the nation-state.

With Buzan et al. (1998) we may conceptualize this strategy as "securitization," understood as the act of moving a challenge from the sphere of normal politics to the sphere of security. In securitization actors frame challenges (and eventually act upon them) as existential threats to a host of referent objects, thereby permitting themselves to make use of extraordinary means to handle the challenges that have now become threats. Securitization therefore makes conflict-resolving processes such as compromise, dialogue and negotiation less likely in normal politics.

An analysis of the transformation of contemporary domestic orders in the MENA region thus necessitates, as a second pillar of investigation, the documentation and analysis of how regimes' policies in the region in the wake of the Arab uprisings in 2011 have securitized contentious practices and opposition politics, thereby enabling the regimes to unleash unprecedented levels of police and military repression towards their domestic opposition.

### 3.3 MILITARIZATION OF CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

Within the domestic political arenas demarcated by the institutional apparatus of each individual MENA state that emerged during the twentieth century, authoritarian regimes have increasingly been opposed and challenged by a host of contentious non-state actors, movements and groups. These range from non-violent movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and a host of Socialist movements, which sought influence over the decision-making arena in each of the nation-states, to militant and terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida and Islamic State, which even challenged the legitimacy of the states themselves.

Scholars seeking to understand these forms of collective politics would from the 1990s onwards increasingly look for inspiration within the so-called New Social Movement theory, which emerged within American comparative sociology in the early 1980s (McAdam 1982, Tarrow 1994). In opposition to so-called "strain-based theory," which explained collective action as a socio-psychological reaction to societal grievances, New Social Movement scholars saw collective actions as rational and political. For scholars such as Hafez (2003) and to some extent Wiktorowicz (2004), the rationality of collective action pointed towards the collective violence of armed militant movements and groups as being a tool aimed at bidding for influence over domestic political decision-making and the creation of domestic orders. In parallel, scholars such as Wickham (2002) and Bayat (2013) analysed the operational forms of non-violent Islamist movements.

In the wake of the Arab uprisings in 2011, a new series of studies emerged that to a larger degree than the previous ones treated social movements and collective action as independent variables in their own right. In response to criticism of its "structurally dependent" explanatory model (e.g.

Goodwin and Jasper 1999), New Social Movement theory was during the 2000s replaced by the more dynamic explanatory model of “contentious politics” (McAdam et al. 2001, Tilly 2006 and 2008). This has also had a certain impact on Middle East studies, with scholars such as Joel Beinin and Frédérick Vairel (2011), on the basis of their analysis of workers’ and students’ movements, adopting this more post-structuralist twisted theoretical framework.

As popular mass mobilization unravelled the domestic orders in several MENA states during the spring of 2011, however, this perspective became all the more important as an analytical prism. It allowed increased room for the role of non-state actors, which emerged from society rather than the state and the regime, as drivers of change in the domestic sphere (Lynch 2014, Gerges 2015, Chalcraft 2016).

Initially the developments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain and Yemen called for an understanding of how repertoires of contention spread across community borders and nation-states. Today, however, an understanding of the contemporary transformation of the domestic political orders in the MENA region requires a refined understanding not only of the independent power of contention to change and transform domestic power balances, but also and increasingly an understanding of the dynamics behind and the consequences of the militarization of contentious politics in places such as Syria, Libya, Yemen and Egypt.

### **3.4 PLURALIZATION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES**

The role of collective identities in the transformation of domestic orders has long since been a key topic of debate among scholars of the Middle East and North Africa. The role of identities in order and policy-making has occupied a prominent place in the (constructivist) literature in general, in view of the sensitivities associated with often multiple and/or overlapping identity affiliations shaping the self and the way in which he/she defines his/her role as part of a community and of society at large (Telhami and Barnett 2002, Alcoff et al. 2006, Wiarda 2014). Whether these be ethnic, religious or, generally speaking, communitarian identities, the MENA region has always had to grapple with the question about how to deal with them from the institutional and societal points of view. Leaders and regimes in the region at large – not to mention regional and international players – have often played with and manipulated these identities, while attempting to craft alternative ones (Dam 1979, Anderson 2006, Wehrey 2014). External observers and scholars have also articulated a rather fixed and artificial image of the region and its identity make-up, drawing some forced parallels between this view and existing political and social dynamics (e.g. the lack of democratic polities has sometimes been correlated with the religious identity of the majority of the region’s population) (Esposito and Voll 1996).

In the wake of the uprisings in the winter of 2010 and spring of 2011, the MENA region has experienced a pluralization of collective identities at the domestic level. The increasing prominence of these identities and the associated claims for better representation and more inclusiveness can be explained by the general and, in some cases, short-lived sense of renewed freedom and opportunity that was experienced by some strata of the population in the wake of the uprisings. This is the case for age- and gender-based identities, for example. In particular, it is undeniable that young people were at the forefront of the popular protests and uprisings between 2011 and

2013 across the MENA region. As such, they proved to be a potential engine for long-needed change in the region. The rapid mass-mobilizations of youth, anticipated by the development over the last decade of youth-based activist groups and the spread of new communications technologies, could be described as the “bubbling up” of a phenomenon that had been in the making for some time: the coming to the scene of a new generation that was united by the shared experience of marginalization at political, economic and social levels and by new ways in which to protest and act (Paciello and Pioppi 2014). Turning to gender identities, the concepts of “gender order” and “gender regime” appear to be adequate tools for analysing the relationship between gender and domestic orders in the MENA region. Gender regime refers to the configurations of gender relations in a given domestic setting, such as the family, the school, the workplace and so forth, while gender order delineates the relationship between different gender regimes or the historical and current state of play in the macro-politics of gender. Some of these identities transcend national borders and contribute to the development of distinctive transnational identity and political cultures. Think, for example, of the impact of sectarian identities within Muslim communities and the way in which they have been increasingly politicized to shape distinctly sectarian, region-wide narratives of a Sunni versus Shi’a conflict.

An analysis of the current transformation of the domestic orders in the MENA region, therefore, must necessarily take into consideration how collective identities are formed and transformed first and foremost at national and sub-national levels, and how this influences in turn order-making domestically and, ultimately, regionally. In particular, it entails examining the actors and the processes through which identities are (either intentionally or unintentionally) shaped in the domestic context. More pointedly, it means assessing how the pluralization of collective identities is treated in the institutional and social domestic arenas, and the extent to which this gives rise to conflict-ridden versus cohesive state-society relations.

### 3.5 CONCEPTUALIZING DOMESTIC ORDERS

On the basis of the four scholarly literatures mentioned above we may conceptualize the domestic orders in the MENA region as the empirical outcomes of conflicts about influence over political decision-making within each of the region’s domestic arenas. This implies that there is no single domestic political order in the MENA region, but rather a series of constantly changing orders, and it also implies that these domestic orders are perpetually prone to further change. Put differently, the domestic political orders differ both across time within each specific state and within time between the individual states. In this conceptualization, “order” is not understood as a normative or positive category, but as a neutral descriptive category that reflects the periodic and temporal outcome of conflict and struggle, of rivalry, competition and violence, as well as negotiation, alliance-building and compliance between collective actors and regimes, all of which yields influence upon political decision-making within the domestic arena.

The domestic arenas within which these conflicts take place in the contemporary MENA region are defined primarily by the territories and political institutions established by modern nation-states. Hence the key actors involved in the conflict over establishing specific orders in the MENA region are primarily, on the one hand, the regimes which control the official and unofficial state apparatuses and its non-state client institutions and actors. On the other hand, it involves the contentious

political actors which mobilize primarily within the institutions and territorial frameworks of each individual MENA state.

These two key sets of actors, regimes and contentious actors, are pitted against one another in an ongoing conflict that may include both collaboration and confrontation. They are furthermore often pitted against other actors of the same type as themselves. Regime factions compete with other factions, and contentious movements and groups compete with other movements and groups with similar or conflicting aims, tactics and identities, seeking to mobilize overlapping constituencies.

Each of these two groups of domestic actors draw upon pre-existing or emerging social, cultural and political identities that they create, reshape and redefine in the process of mobilizing support bases, by identifying enemies and friends with whom to make alliances, bargains, confrontations or ruptures.

Besides this, the domestic orders in the MENA region are also influenced by external and non-domestic factors in the form of interventions undertaken by trans- and international actors positioned outside the domestic arena or (with regards to transnational actors) simultaneously within several domestic arenas. None of the four above-mentioned dynamics that influence the transformation of the domestic orders in the contemporary MENA region is isolated from outside influence. While some states in the region have never been able to shield their domestic arenas from external intervention and meddling, the current erosion of the capacities of a number of MENA states has increased the potential and actual interrelation between domestic and international dynamics of change. Understanding the transformation of domestic orders in the contemporary MENA region therefore requires an understanding of how such trans- and international actors influence each of the four key factors – state capacities, regime policies, forms of contentious politics and formation of collective identities.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How the erosion of state capacities, the securitization of regime policies, the militarization of contentious politics, and the pluralization of collective identities have manifested themselves since 2011?
- How the four abovementioned empirical dynamics interrelate with one another in the MENA region? And how do dynamics of change within state capacities, regime policies, forms of contentious politics and formation of collective identities constitute order-making?
- How do the four domestic dynamics relating to the reconfiguration of domestic orders in the MENA region interrelate with transnational and international dynamics? And how international and transnational interventions into domestic spheres interrelate with the efforts made by domestic actors to create and transform the orders that prevail in their domestic arenas?



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## 4. GLOBAL DYNAMICS IN THE MENA REGION

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### INTRODUCTION

The political and economic affairs of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region evolve inseparably from and interrelatedly with events of the contemporary global order. One cannot understand the dynamics on the ground without investigating the external environment of the region which constantly affects its conflicts, policies and social changes.

Despite the general commonplace, interactions between the regional and global orders essentially take place in a two-way process. While global players and global developments frame the leverage and the activities of state and non-state actors in the Middle East and North Africa, the regional order also has an impact on world politics through bilateral and multilateral relations, institutions and norms.

The exchange between the global and regional levels is being shaped by three general interrelated developments. First and foremost, it is taking place in the context of globalization, which constantly stimulates cross-border interactions. Secondly, the relations between actors ceased to be clearly unidirectional; they can be best described by the concept of complex interdependence (Keohane and Nye 2012), which includes reciprocal transactions in various fields that creates costs for the participating entities distributed in an asymmetrical way. Thirdly, this new framework has changed the role of states as primary shaping factors of politics and created leverage for new actors and factors (transnationalization) including non-governmental entities as well as norms and identities.

The dynamics between the two levels will be presented in three subsections based on the different manifestations of the global order vis-à-vis the regional one. Firstly, the balance of power and the competition between world powers and their foreign policies will be analysed in the light of their effect on the Middle East and North Africa. Secondly, the focus will be drawn to the classic non-state actors and their regional influence, including supranational and subnational entities. In the last subsection the role of external norms and identities will be examined.

### 4.1 THE RIVALRY OF STATE ACTORS AND THE GLOBAL SHIFT OF POWER

The existence of inter-state conflicts and the traditional involvement of external actors make the MENA region particularly well suited to test an understanding of international politics based on the struggle for power and the rivalry between states. Such analysis departs from a systemic perspective of world politics that refers to the study of the structure of the international system, taking as a starting point the neorealist accounts of international relations in which the distribution of power capabilities among the units of the system shapes the relations between them, under the

condition of anarchy (Waltz 1979, Keohane 1983, Mearsheimer 2001, Jervis 1997).<sup>47</sup> More recently, the dynamics of the distribution of power have focused on the changing nature of polarity in the international system, affecting the position of the MENA region within the global system.

Dominant forces of the prevailing global order – usually Western and European states – have traditionally been accused of penetrating the Middle Eastern and North African system only to pursue their own interests, thus shaping the destiny of regional politics and embedding the region in the dynamics of the global balance of power (Roberson 2002). This idea, as used by Carl Brown (1984) following Rosenau (1969), describes the Middle East regional system as the object of high and unparalleled intervention and control by actors from outside the region. Since Ottoman times, extra-regional powers have aimed at protecting their vital interests in the region by actively participating in local and regional politics and directing them toward the achievement of their goals.

This narrative was especially emphasized during the Cold War, a period characterized by the involvement of superpowers in the MENA, revealing the “strategic importance” of the region, with the United States making it a central part of its “global Cold War strategy” (Roberson 2002:57). Regional actors aligned themselves with either the United States or the USSR, transferring the bipolar order to regional politics, although not necessarily allowing for direct “control” of the politics of regional states (Roberson 2002:65). The MENA region became deeply embedded in the dynamics of global politics as states forged alliances around the two superpowers.

These circumstances reinforced the view of the Middle East and North Africa as a “penetrated system.” Extensive scholarship has been produced on the fundamental role of the United States (e.g., Little 2008, Lesch 2003, Yaqub 2004, Khalidi 2009, Fraser 1989), the Soviet Union and Russia (e.g., Nizameddin 1999, Freedman 1982, Heikal 1978, Glassman 1975, Klieman 1970, Laqueur 1959), the United Kingdom (e.g., Adelson 1995, Louis 1984, Kedourie 1956, Monroe 1963, Kyle 1991) and France (Fromkin 1989) in the regional order. This literature has taken the patron-client dynamic as a starting point to analyse interactions between global and regional actors, framing it as a relationship between weak states and great powers (Handel 1981) – between “puppeteers and regional puppets,” as coined by Carl L. Brown (1984).

Discussion of the “penetrated system” has transcended the Cold War era and has been used as a way to understand how extra-regional actors have played a critical role in shaping the socio-political reality of the MENA region through direct presence (colonialism/imperialism) or (in)direct influence (Brown 1984, Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2014, Hudson 2004). From the perspective of clients, debates have focused more on the degree of autonomy this regional subsystem and its actors have vis-à-vis external forces. In the post-Cold War era, clients are considered to have greater leverage to pursue their interests vis-à-vis global players on a bilateral basis (McLaughlin 1996), but there was no fundamental change in the viewpoint of the literature.

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47 This is not the only definition used in the IR discipline and is contested by, among others, structuralists and World-System theorists. For them, the structure generally refers to the critical organizing principles of the capitalist world economy. For a discussion on the shortcomings of these two approaches and their explanatory capacity regarding the international system’s reality, see Wendt (1987) and Buzan et al. (1993).

Nonetheless, evidence indicates that the extent to which MENA state actors are able to shape international politics and the global order is greater than ever. This is the result of globalization, deepening interdependencies and changes in the global distribution of power, namely polarity, a term which refers to the number of units of the system that might be considered as centres of power in a specific historical period, in the light of which we can speak about unipolar, bipolar or multipolar systems.<sup>48</sup> Regarding the global distribution of power and its impact on the MENA region, the end of the Cold War triggered many discussions on the changing nature of the global structure and the place of the region therein. Once one of the two poles of the bipolar system was out of the picture, many argued that the system had turned unipolar. The “American unipolar moment” (Krauthammer 1990, 2002) unfolded throughout the 1990s and an unparalleled power, the United States, took over leadership of the contemporary international system. In the Middle East, “no state, by itself or in concert with others in the region, was in a position to establish a Middle Eastern order independent of US influence” (Roberson 2002:60). The region provided evidence of the formation of a unipolar international system, with the United States aiming to maintain a balanced distribution of power in the MENA in line with its interests (above all, the protection of Israel’s security and a permanent military presence in the Gulf).

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, however, this period of US dominance seemed to end as the international structure began to take on a different form. Amid the post-9/11 developments, the hegemonic world power of the United States was perceived as declining (Layne 2006, Smith 2002, Boron 1994, Kupchan 1998), and the power of other states was increasing, to the extent that new poles seemed to be emerging. Fareed Zakaria (2009) summarized this trend with the expression “the rise of the rest”, while Kishore Mahbubani (2008) emphasized the fact that the rise of Japan, China, India, South Korea and other Asian nations had created a new centre of global power in Asia in terms of demography, economy, trade, technology and ideas.

Ever since the end of the unipolar moment, a discussion has been taking place on the proper description of the emerging international structure. Many terms have been coined in the last two decades to describe the current global distribution of power among the units of the international system. Some authors have suggested that we are witnessing the unfolding of a world with no poles. The notion of “apolarity” used by Niall Ferguson (2004b) and Daniel Drezner (2007),<sup>49</sup> “zero-polarity” coined by Simon Serfaty (2011, 2012), “G-zero” put forward by Ian Bremmer and Nouriel Roubini (2011)<sup>50</sup> or “nonpolarity” used by Richard Haass (2008) are fundamental examples of this approach.

Broadly speaking, all these concepts appeal to the idea that the end of the American “unipolar moment” prompted not a multipolar structure but rather a system where there is a “power vacuum,” as no single unit is willing or able to exercise command or leadership. According to some authors, the loss of gravity in the international system has been translated into the emergence

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48 A great amount of scholarship has been devoted to the study of each of these structures in terms of the number of poles; see, e.g., Finnemore (2009), Wohlforth (1999), Jervis (2009), Lake (1996) and Deutsch and Singer (1964).

49 See also Ferguson (2004a).

50 See also Bremmer (2012).

of “no one’s world” (Kupchan 2012), triggering power relations based on zero-sum dynamics. In a “zero-sum world” (Rachman 2010) no power is able to dominate the system and the lack of effective global governance schemes forces major powers to compete over national power. A zero-sum world would see external powers such as China, the United States, the EU or Russia competing for influence in the MENA region, although without the possibility of shaping its socio-economic and political reality entirely. Under this reading, the region would have gained autonomy vis-à-vis the world’s main powers.

Other scholarship alternatively indicates that the structure of the system is moving towards multipolarity, yet in a different form than has been seen before. For Samuel Huntington (1998, 1999), the situation can be better described as “uni-multipolarity,” stressing the dependency of other poles in the system vis-à-vis the hegemonic power (the United States) to maintain their privileged positions. “Asymmetric multipolarity,” proposed by Thomas Renard (2009) but extensively used by others, highlights the contemporary rise of alternative poles of power that can, in any case, balance the superpower.<sup>51</sup>

Besides multipolarity, other concepts have been suggested to describe the current global order. Giovanni Grevi (2009) also suggests the term “interpolarity,” which emphasizes the complex web of interdependencies among the different poles based on an asymmetric distribution of power but urging multilateral cooperation. Comprehensive notions willing to encompass different dimensions of the former concepts, for instance “complex multipolarity” (see, among others, Tsygankov 2009), have also been applied to describe the contemporary international system.<sup>52</sup>

A third alternative is the notion of “heteropolarity” as used by Daryl Copeland (2013) and James Der Derian (2009), which avoids state-centric analysis and integrates non-state actors into the discussion on the structure of the international system. The term also draws on the fundamental transformation of the nature of power (Nye 1990, Naim 2013), understanding that today’s international structure cannot be fully grasped on the basis of state-based power alone.<sup>53</sup>

For this reason, “the impact of the region’s position in the world system on the foreign policies of local states is by no means straightforward” (Hinnebusch 2014:9). Authors such as Halliday (2005), Khalidi (2009) and Yaqub (2004) suggest that the degree of leverage and actual independence of the MENA regional powers vis-à-vis extra-regional powers has generally been underestimated. According to this view, regional actors have developed over time the capacity to influence Western powers’ actions in the region. Buzan and Wæver (2003) suggest that the relation between regional

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51 This is particularly the case for the MENA region in relation to the interests of the US, which “has no intention of relinquishing the commercial opportunities [in the region] to Europeans or others” (Deeb quoted in Roberson 2012:64). The emergence of a “uni-multipolar” world would involve the US remaining the “sole arbiter” of regional politics in pursuit of its interests, although not necessarily capable of creating a lasting regional order (Roberson 2002:65).

52 Complex multipolarity would be perceived in the MENA region through the enduring influence of external powers to shape regional politics and conflicts, although these powers would also be conscious of the crucial role played by other state and non-state actors.

53 In their view, sticking with the restrictive idea of the prevalence of military power and taking out of the picture critical non-state actors which possess other fundamental resources of power (i.e., economic, social, cultural, etc.) harms any fair analysis of international reality.



and extra-regional Western powers has not been as asymmetric as the “penetrated system” view suggests.

Mutual interdependence enabled MENA countries to toy with Western powers in order to guarantee their collaboration in advancing individual state agendas. Hinnebusch (2003) even claims that the regional system provides a pathway to gain further autonomy from the interests of global powers. In this view, some argue that the concept of axes and alliances no longer makes sense with regard to the MENA region. Turner (2012) has analysed how, since the Arab Spring, great powers are not attempting to exploit regional rivalries to gain advantage over other powers, but are being manipulated by regional adversaries. Client states exploit their relationships with their patrons to favour their own interests by appealing to the fears and interests of their most powerful allies.

A clear case in point is the Syrian civil war. Whereas many have tried to identify the United States or Russia as primary players in the conflict (Christia 2014:10), evidence might suggest that their leverage is limited, even vis-à-vis their own allies (Lund 2015). After numerous failed attempts led by either the United States or Russia, it became clear that without the participation of regional and local actors, the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa in the twenty-first century cannot be dealt with solely on the basis of global power politics.

This also shows that within the framework of globalization, global powers are urged to tackle international challenges collectively. Besides using military power and coercion, states inside and outside the region can also dominate international politics through gaining or redistributing authority in the management of global affairs (Sending 2015), “negotiate new bargains, and generate collective leadership” (Ikenberry 2015:400). So-called peripheral states, including those of the MENA region, have somewhat more limited, but undoubtedly existing, leverage to do so by exerting influence in/by supra- and subnational organizations, attempting to “govern globalization” and shaping the global structure of interdependencies in prioritized policy areas (Ulrichsen 2012). This question leads us to the investigation of the new players in the international system.

## **4.2 THE ROLE OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN THE DYNAMICS BETWEEN THE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ORDERS**

The realization of the existence of complex interdependencies and the “societalization of foreign policy”<sup>54</sup> led governments to engage in cooperative multi-party endeavours to govern international affairs (multilateralism), which paved the way for the growing role of non-state actors. Due to the heterogeneous nature of these entities, it is difficult to provide a holistic overview of their activities; however, it is impossible to understand the dynamics between the regional and global orders without discussing such actors. In the following subsection we will concentrate on the role of the most important types of non-state actors (based on O’Brien et al. 2000, Mingst and Muldoon 2015, Josselin and Wallace 2001), primarily intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), multinational companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

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<sup>54</sup> The development according to which foreign policy-making ceased to be the prerogative of state structures, and different social and/or non-state actors started to play a role (Kiss 2009).

The states of the region have participated in the creation and the activities of numerous global IGOs. Membership in such entities, on the one hand, provides opportunities to shape policy outcomes and negotiation processes, while, on the other hand, it also imposes necessary limitations and requires additivity.<sup>55</sup> The MENA region is usually seen as an object, rather than the subject, of global politics, while its integration into worldwide institutions is perceived through the lens of unilateral dependence.

However, this narrative is only partly true, as the most important international organization, the United Nations (UN), was founded with the participation of several Middle Eastern states, including Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey, while others joined later. Until 1966, one elected seat in the Security Council (SC) was unofficially reserved for a member of the region; nonetheless, the reform on the basis of General Assembly Resolution 1993 (1963) changed the body dramatically. It increased the number of non-permanent members from six to ten and officially implemented the principle of “equitable geographical distribution” (Sievers and Daws 2014:127). Since then, MENA states have been divided into three different regional categories within the organization (the African Group, the Asia-Pacific Group, and the Western Europe and Others Group).<sup>56</sup> According to the seat distribution,<sup>57</sup> this allocation of MENA states means they are formally able to acquire zero to seven votes in the 15-member body simultaneously, which means the region is not particularly undervalued in comparison to other parts of the world (with the exception, naturally, of the permanent members).

On the other hand, the attention of the bodies of the United Nations has often been focused on the MENA region. About 16 percent of the 2,259 resolutions adopted by the Security Council between 1948 and 2015 dealt with the Middle East and North Africa. Naturally, the most frequently analysed questions in which the different bodies of the UN played an important role were the Palestinian-Israeli conflict,<sup>58</sup> the Gulf wars,<sup>59</sup> and the Iranian nuclear question.<sup>60</sup> These examples clearly show the reciprocal nature of the dynamics between the global and the regional order: while external actors and structures affect the outcome of local conflicts, the latter also have severe repercussions for how the former work and operate. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, had a huge effect on conceptions of statehood (Orakhelashvili 2008) and sovereignty, while the Gulf war of 1990-1991 (due to its timing) shaped the basic outlines of the “new world order” and how the UN and its members would see their role in it (like the United States’ unipolar moment). Last

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55 In this case, the small state literature can be useful since on the global stage, almost all MENA states can be regarded as qualitatively small. For their prospects in global institutions (like the UN and its Security Council), see Ó Súilleabháin (2014), Thorhallsson (2012).

56 All MENA states belong to these two groups except for Turkey and Israel, who joined the Western European and Others Group (WEOG). See the UN website: *United Nations Regional Groups of Member States*, last update 9 May 2014, <http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml>.

57 African and Asian states acquired five seats altogether; the chair of the Asian and the African group reached an understanding according to which three out of the five seats would belong to African states due to the presence of China as a permanent member. The WEOG was given two states only.

58 See, e.g., UN (2008) or Beinin and Hajjar (2014).

59 See, e.g., Dobbins et al. (2005), Şeker (1999), Yamashita (2005).

60 See, e.g., Fayazmanesh (2008).

but not least, the management of the Iranian nuclear crisis has contributed to the evolution of the international framework for non-proliferation (Kile 2005) and can serve as a precedent for global institutions in similar cases.

Apart from the UN, economic institutions have traditionally had greater impact on the MENA region than political ones (Beck 2014). The role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which was founded with the participation of Iraq and Egypt, should especially be highlighted in this regard (Beck 2014, Momani et al. 2008). The relationship between the IMF and regional actors can also be best described as a two-way process: on the one hand, almost all MENA states had to ask for financial, monetary or technical assistance from the IMF, which resulted in credits and reforms in the framework of the neoliberal agenda (see Cammett et al. 2015:ch. 8). Although these were not consistently implemented, they still altered Middle Eastern economies and societies to a great extent. On the other hand, by the twenty-first century, the region became a net creditor, giving more money to the IMF than it received (Momani et al. 2008), while some of the consequences of the previous, IMF-led reforms contributed to the debates surrounding the effectiveness of the so-called Washington consensus (Sharawy 2008).

The institutionalization of global politics also created opportunities for regional actors to affect global politics by creating international organizations themselves. Although the lower level of economic interdependence inside the MENA region (compared to other areas, such as Europe)<sup>61</sup> hampers the establishment of regional integration and thus the exertion of global influence (Baldwin et al. 1999), there have been several attempts to do so. In this regard the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) – originally created in 1960 in Baghdad by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela<sup>62</sup> – can be regarded as the most advanced.<sup>63</sup> OPEC recently proved its continuing ability to influence global markets by causing the historic drop in energy prices that began in 2014 (Husain et al. 2015).<sup>64</sup>

In the economic sector, the presence of external non-state actors has had a crucial effect on the history of the region. The role of Western oil companies, for example – especially that of the Seven Sisters – was significant in the process of state formation, and although their legal and practical presence was altered quite significantly in the 1970s, the competition between them in the MENA region (e.g., in Iraq after 2003,<sup>65</sup> or in Iran after the agreement of 2015) affects local institutions

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61 The pattern of formation of international bodies clearly shows the nature of regional interdependencies. Lacking severe economic ties, the states of the MENA region do not have enough incentive to create truly capable intra-regional economic unions or even free trade areas. On the other hand, their political and security interests are more interconnected, which is why the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) were able to be created.

62 See the OPEC website: *Brief History*, [http://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/about\\_us/24.htm](http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/24.htm).

63 Nonetheless, one can think of other examples as well. With 57 members in the Muslim world, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation is the second largest international organisation globally (Hakala and Kettis 2013:4). Moreover, as a predominantly political, but not economic, organization (Legrenzi 2011), the GCC has a degree of influence in international security, given the importance of its member states.

64 As a matter of fact, the use of the “oil weapon” in 1973 triggered the rise of the investigation of complex interdependencies in the first place (Keohane and Nye 2012:10), a term used frequently to describe the dynamics of today’s international system.

65 See Harvey (2005), Hinnebusch (2007) and Paul (2003).

and the foreign policies of global powers as well.

Apart from the oil industry, globalization in general has put pressure on regional governments to open up their economies to foreign companies and investments; however, the governments have been cautious to reform and to allow market competition to dominate in various sectors. Despite the fact that conditions in the MENA region are generally “unfavourable” due to the instability caused by armed conflicts and political tensions (Fiegenbaum et al. 1997:141), global competition is present and creates political, economic and social challenges for regimes and the existing regional and domestic order.

When it comes to the non-profit sector, subnational groups have always played an important role in the MENA region (Bayat 2000, Kamrava 2005, Valensi 2015). However, in recent decades two qualitative changes have been made to their presence. Firstly, the toolset provided by globalization has made it easier to organize locally, which is why we have seen a surge in their number; and secondly, external NGOs arrived in the Middle East and North Africa and started to take part in regional and domestic politics. These groups can play a cooperative, complementary or conflicting role vis-à-vis the state and, due to the mediatized nature of politics, can pose severe challenges for regimes – see, for example, the case of the campaign by Amnesty International (2013) regarding the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar – but one cannot generalize their role as either constructive or negative.

Grass-roots organizations and social movements are also affected by the global order, especially through the question of funding (Hawthorne 2004, Hamid 2010). Foreign donations have risen significantly in recent decades, especially after 2001, as Western actors consider local NGOs as primary tools in the effort to “spread democracy” in the region. This tendency has led to the emergence of “globalised elites” in the region, “tied more closely to the global actors [...] than to local constituencies” (Jad 2007:625).<sup>66</sup> The perception of Western dominance in the civil sector (e.g., in the case of the humanitarian assistance community) can cause distrust and inefficiency (Amiri 2011).

A third type of non-state actor (besides non-profit and for-profit NGOs) which should be taken into consideration is the different violent militias, terrorist groups and so forth which defy the monopoly of the state to use force in its territory. Their number has risen significantly since 2011 – by 2014, there were approximately 3,000 such organizations in Syria and Libya alone (Durac 2015:2-4) – and some of them have the potential to influence the global order through transnational networks, financing and recruitment. Their operations are considered by global powers as the primary threat coming from the region; thus, in this case these regional non-state actors are affecting the global order, triggering reactions from external powers and provoking them to intervene in regional and domestic affairs (i.e., the global war on terror since 2011).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See the case of the second intifada and the Palestinian globalized elite in Hanafi and Tabar (2002).

<sup>67</sup> For the ethical dilemmas of the global war on terror, see Webel and Arnaldi (2011).

### 4.3 IDEAS, NORMS AND IDENTITIES

Following the end of the Cold War the global order – generally defined up to that point by the primacy of hard security – started to change, and new elements shaping the new order came to the fore. The meaning of security has been transformed and has come to incorporate – visibly – several different dimensions that were present before but had been made invisible by the classical approaches to security. Among the newly surfacing elements defining and restructuring the new global order, ideas, norms and especially identities have started to play a dominant role and have created unexpected outcomes.

The end of the Cold War saw the emergence of two contradictory currents: cultural globalization on the one hand, and the renaissance of identities on the other hand. Convictions regarding which would be the stronger of the two developments shaped the foreign policy of global actors. Firstly, the formation of a series of newly independent – and in many cases new – nation states in the heart of Europe, which identified themselves with Europe, led on the one hand to the general assumption that the Western (European) ideal would spread across the whole world. The ideal of Western liberal democracy could be interpreted in the context of globalization, which seemed to face no further obstacles ahead. *The End of History and the Last Man* by Francis Fukuyama (1992) was in a way the expression of the globalization of the Western model. This narrative was present in the political programme for democratization of the Greater Middle East put forward by George W. Bush (White House 2009) in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which was, in a way, a continuation and implementation of this theory.<sup>68</sup>

Secondly, in contrast, Samuel Huntington (1993) claimed that following the end of realpolitik during the Cold War, including the military aspect of security being the main determining factor in international relations, future alliances would be made within civilizations, with future conflicts arising across the civilizational fault lines. Civilization as the broadest umbrella of identification would have a major role in the relations among nation states, which would remain the main actors.

Coincidentally, the 9/11 attacks were also considered as proof of the clash of civilizations, both by the political elites and by the public (Neumayer and Plümper 2009). And subsequent Western interference in the region – including both the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation initiatives (including the European Mediterranean Policy, the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean), which were perceived as European “dictates,” and the military missions in Iraq, Libya and Syria – strengthened these perceptions among local audiences. Recent developments in Europe (including the migration/refugee crisis and the activities of the Islamic State network) have again raised the clash of civilizations discourse.

All in all, both narratives emphasize the role of norms and identities in international relations and the global order, which, apart from the systematic changes caused by the end of the Cold War, was also fostered by the technological evolution in communication and IT (Pultar 2014, Niezen 2004). Such developments changed the rules of political struggle around the world by enhancing the politics of identity (Croucher 2004), namely the competition between political actors to shape and

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<sup>68</sup> And it was also based on the theory of the democratic peace first elaborated by Immanuel Kant (1991:93-130).

utilize social identities.

This change penetrated the regional order of the Middle East under special circumstances. MENA states have always had to “achieve a simultaneous balancing within the regional environment of material threats and competition over control of ideational movements (e.g. pan-Arabism, Islamist movements)” (Young 2015:6). Although regular media outlets have played a role in inter-state rivalry and intra-state dynamics, the spread of social media can be considered to represent a qualitative change in identity politics (e.g., during the Arab Spring).

Religious affiliation – at the core of civilizations – as opposed to Western secular norms has increasingly come to be a decisive element of identification and of narratives, yet this opposition of norms and values has proved to be “selective,” as religiously identified groups and movements have widely used all the technical devices of modernity, while at the same time totally rejecting social and political modernization. Religious identification has come to be of increasing importance within religions as well, giving way to sectarianism.<sup>69</sup> Rivalries in the region – primarily between Saudi Arabia and Iran (Matthiesen 2013) but also between Islamic State and others, the Syrian, Iraqi and Yemeni civil wars, and so forth – are constantly framed, by many of the actors involved and by global audiences, with the verbal elements of the politics of identity, which might play out for the transformation of global politics described above.

Ethnicity, or national identification, has emerged in parallel – sometimes in a complementary distribution – with religion. While it played an important role in Central Europe after the end of the Cold War, it was also strong enough to prevent any unification purely according to religious affiliation in the Middle East (most visibly in the Iraq-Iran war of 1980-1988). However, radical jihadist movements and their strict interpretations of Islam have so far seemed more or less immune to the influence of ethnic/national identity (e.g., al-Qaeda, Islamic State).

Besides religious, ethnic and national self-identifications, “imported” identities are also worth investigating. The start of the Cold War fostered political (or even normative) affiliations with either the Western or the Eastern world, but both choices were considered dangerous by the regimes (due to the general mistrust of Western powers on the one hand, and the fiercely anti-religious nature of communism on the other hand). Fearing the anger of the public over such affiliations, the offer of financial and military assistance by either superpower created a new kind of security dilemma for states, between external support and internal stability (Lawson 2011). For this reason the creation of and participation in the Non-Aligned Movement was a natural choice for MENA states.

Apart from the local and regional levels, “revolutionism” can be understood as a rejection of the world order and global identities as well. This affiliation has surfaced in numerous forms throughout history: it played a role in Arab nationalism and Islamism, and it has shaped fundamental events of regional politics, including the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the rise of al-Qaeda and Islamic

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<sup>69</sup> In parallel, however, old practices of a selective differentiation are also in use: Islamic State’s occupation of huge territories with a large population initiated the re-emergence of the *ahl ul-kitab* (peoples of the Book) concept of Islam, together with the discourse on the *umma* and the caliphate.



State. Revolutionism has its roots in history and the constant presence of external actors in the region (described in the first subsection) who, besides pursuing their own interests, also tried to create a new regional order (Salem 2008:19-20). Naturally, such attempts have always produced a counter-effect. After 2001, the United States also tried to recreate the Middle East, which resulted in broken solutions on the one hand and widespread rejection on the other, not just in the capitals of the adversaries but in those of Western allies as well.

These notions suggest that the global normative order has penetrated the region only to a limited degree. The investigation of the MENA states does not support the presumption that globalization unifies local identities and norms, since counter-effects to such attempts are always seen (e.g., the Non-Aligned Movement, revolutionism, etc.), which can have an effect outside the region as well. On the other hand, the global order has penetrated the MENA region in the realm of norms and identities in the form of globalization, which has brought a new toolkit for political struggles: almost every rivalry on the regional level is also fought within the politics of identity.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- To what extent is the MENA region a penetrated or an autonomous region with regards to global political dynamics? How can we best apply the concept of the client-patron relationship to describe the complex relations between regional states and their external allies? What role do MENA states play in global politics?
- How can we assess the impact of the growing quantity and leverage of non-state actors in the Middle East and North Africa? Should NGOs, multinational companies and intergovernmental organizations be considered as independent actors in the region, or do they serve as tools of regional and external states? How can MENA actors capitalize on globalization?
- Can MENA actors ascend to the global level as norm entrepreneurs? Which actors play the most important role in identity formation in the region? What leverage do external players have in (re)shaping existing normative and societal conflicts?

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## 5. THE FUTURE. FORESIGHT STUDIES ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Edgar Göll

### 5.1 THE CONCEPTUAL ARCHITECTURE OF FUTURE STUDIES

Imagining the long-term future is a challenge, but it can be supported by a whole spectrum of future research methods and tools which have been developed in recent decades (Bell 2003, Kosow and Gassner 2008, Popp and Schüll 2009). Modern, scientifically based future research can offer sound ways of future thinking and produce knowledge that decision-makers can use as a solid basis for their decision-making.<sup>70</sup>

Modern future research that is based on scientific concepts and methods, taking into account current theories and insights from social sciences about characteristics and changes in societies, can offer suggestions, images and paths for different future options and developments. However, it is necessary to understand that future studies do not offer prognoses or predictions. Yet beyond trying to understand causal relationships and past or present dynamics, and to learn from them, future studies are not able to “look into the future.” As one comprehensive definition states:

We cannot define the future but we can produce and use scientific future knowledge in order to comprehend (possible, probable and desirable) futures, in order to act by means of participatory-democratic processes on minimizing risks/catastrophes and to produce the best future (Kreibich 2008:12, translated by author).

The concepts of possible, probable and desirable futures are relevant to the framework of MENARA and so need to be further defined and analysed. The notion “possible futures” encompasses future developments which might be realized within the limits of the laws of natural sciences (i.e. technological potentials). In contrast, “probable futures” have a high likelihood of becoming reality, that is, a certain level of probability in relation to human activities (i.e. path dependencies and traditions). “Desirable futures” are those that are positive/normative with regard to basic principles and qualities (i.e. sustainable development, human rights) and that are therefore desirable for specific actors (i.e. institutions, governments, segments of a society or international organizations). These concepts will be applied to the study of MENA futures in the framework of a step-by-step, comprehensive approach aimed at shedding light not only on the most probable futures but also (in view of the project’s policy relevance) the most desirable ones, the conditions for achieving them and the role of specific actors.

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<sup>70</sup> A comprehensive definition: “Futures research is the scientific study of possible, probable, desirable future developments (futures), their realization options, as well as their preconditions in the past and the present” (Kreibich 1995:2814, translated by author). For the purposes of this project, Future Studies and Foresight Studies are included in order to give a broad basis for analysis. Foresight Studies are considered to be less subject to scientific research methods.

Furthermore, equally relevant to MENARA are the following concepts: scenarios, megatrends and trends, drivers and driving forces, wild cards. These are part of a step-by-step approach, whereby scenarios – the main concept here – are the final product. Scenarios are consistent and coherent descriptions of alternative hypothetical futures that reflect different perspectives on past, present and future developments, which can serve as a basis for action (Notten 2005:7). Qualitative scenarios, in particular, can have a richness that is not bounded by quantitative methods. They can show relationships and trends, including shocks and discontinuities, for which little or no numerical data is available. Compared to quantitative methods such scenarios can incorporate motivations, values and behaviour; they can create images that capture the imagination of those for whom they are intended. Scenarios are a means of handling, rather than ignoring or expelling, uncertainty. This mode of thinking is connected to contingencies of societal change, to increasing options and the overall pattern of “reflexive modernization” in Western societies (Beck et al. 1994). Scenarios are imagined futures, but they are neither forecasts nor prognoses. Instead, they are often created in sets of alternatives or as different versions or paths of similar starting systems (Bell 2003, Kreibich 2008, Jouvenel 1967).

Scenarios often can help guide strategies and shape the future as they sharpen our ability to think about alternatives and open up thinking “outside the box.” Scenarios can describe a societal system, its structures, basic drivers, powers, relations and other aspects. This is highly relevant because present-day decisions and recommendations will influence future developments, the choices between different paths and alternative futures (Wright 2010, Göll 2011, Mills 1959). Contrasting scenarios can function as eye-openers: they describe and make it possible to visualize future developments, conditions and societal environments that a specific group is (or may become) prepared to consider. The ways in which scenarios are articulated can lead to a flexible, innovative and imaginative response to the range of future possibilities, overcoming automatisms and traditional patterns. The trigger points that a future timeline identifies – circumstances that lead to radical change – are highlighted as “alarm signals” that will give early warning of relevant events over the horizon. In sum, scenarios are imagined futures that can demonstrate that various current trends and actions may lead to dramatically different outcomes, and can therefore help in managing or “shaping the future” (Kosow and Gassner 2008).

To enable us to produce a possible, probable and desirable landscape of the future (the scenarios), megatrends and trends can be used, which function like paths with a high degree of stability and direction, for example demographic change. Megatrends are ongoing and important changes in societies and are especially important for future thinking, because they can describe those developments that have substantial impact and continuity (Naisbitt 1982). Trends can help build bridges into the future and therefore make it possible to visualize certain future developments in a whole region, or selected countries and issues within it.

In order to comprehend such trends adequately it is necessary to analyse drivers and driving forces and to understand the “subjects” of these changes (or lack thereof) and developments. Drivers will be an important element in fostering innovative decisions and policies/strategies. In addition to deliberately constructed and rather plausible scenarios, it is useful – especially for complex topics and a vast region – to consider unexpected events and “wild cards” (or “black swans”). Wild cards are events with low or unknown probability and high impacts. They can disturb or disrupt

trends and scenarios (Holopainen and Toivonen 2012).

## 5.2 TAKING STOCK OF EXISTING FORESIGHT STUDIES ON THE MENA REGION

As has been the case for other regions and countries over the years, many foresight and future studies have been published about the MENA region and about single countries and specific issues. For the purpose of MENARA, it is useful to analyse those studies and to learn from their methodologies and their results. However, not every report whose title includes the word “future” or “foresight” is based on a real foresight process or future research project.

The first step in producing an overview of existing foresight studies about the MENA region is to create a list of criteria, including, for instance, geographical scope, time horizon and scientific foundation. The purpose of such a list is to guarantee a selection with adequate quality and relevance for the project, and a certain positioning within the heterogeneous group of foresight studies.<sup>71</sup>

On the basis of these criteria, it is clear that there are many publications about the future of the MENA region or sub-regions, and many more about single countries, as well as single issues. Most of the published reports are very specific with regard to time, region and topic. This situation is the result of the acute challenges within the countries. A total of forty foresight studies have been found and selected as relevant for MENARA. They were conducted mostly by international experts and institutions, and some from within the region, and while most are in English, a few are in French, Spanish, Italian and German. It must also be noted that some types of future studies have not been published for various reasons (e.g. their classified status or unwelcome results). Over the course of the project, newly published future reports will be integrated.

The selected foresight studies on the MENA region offer a broad variety of insights and are of varying levels of relevance to MENARA. What emerges from the collected data is that numerous studies focus on climate change, migration and energy topics, mostly related to individual countries, while very few studies seem to concentrate explicitly on political, economic and societal issues or on the region as a whole. This finding is worth mentioning, because any future developments will depend to a large extent on political and economic factors and conditions, and adequate political and economic visions are a necessary precondition for facing any challenge, as many foresight and future studies show.<sup>72</sup>

The time horizons of these foresight and future studies are diverse: twenty-one studies present long-term scenarios (2050 or more), sixteen studies present short-term scenarios (until 2030) and in three the time horizon is not clearly specified.

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71 In order to include all relevant aspects of the foresight studies into our search strategy and into our final selection, the foresight studies have been described according to specific categories and aspects.

72 Six future studies give a general overview of the MENA region. Thirty-four future studies focus on the following specific topics: energy (8: MENA; Morocco, Turkey; Iran), climate change/migration (6: MENA; Morocco; Turkey), geopolitics (5: Turkey, Iran), water management (4: Tunisia, Egypt), agriculture (2: MENA, Israel), labour market (2: Syrian refugees in Jordan), demography (3: Israel, Palestine), and socio-economic trends (2: Saudi Arabia, Iran), urbanization (1: Israel), sustainability (1: Israel).

Most of the selected future studies employ a combination of different scientific approaches: quantitative, qualitative, participatory. Almost all the studies have developed “scenarios” together with other methods and tools of investigation and research, for example megatrend analysis, simulation tools, case studies, focus groups, questionnaires and so forth. However, most of the studies use a mono-disciplinary rather than a multi- or interdisciplinary approach.

Most studies are produced by expert groups and authors from outside the region, either members of Western institutions (i.e. think tanks) or by international organizations – academics and other professionals. Experts from civil society organizations or individual citizens seem not to have been involved. The bulk of the studies authored by experts from the MENA region itself focus on one (their own) country and/or on very specific and immediate topics. The MENARA Project will study future possibilities, potentials and options based on a MENA-wide analysis, modern future research approaches and methods, and a broad approach of integrating actors and experts from many of the countries involved who can contribute different expertise, positions and so forth. This is what MENARA is aiming at, and this is reflected in the project’s work plan.

Despite the characteristics and deficiencies of previous foresight studies, it is possible to derive insights about potential future developments for specific regions and issues, thus supporting the discussion of future options and informing the point of departure of MENARA’s research. In this regard, three of the future studies are assessed here in some detail. Their results were published in 2015, the studies having been carried out by international institutions, including the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), the University of East Anglia (UEA) and the Institut national de la recherche agronomique (INRA).

The first study, *Arab Futures. Three Scenarios for 2025* (by EUISS, Gaub and Laban 2015), provides a deep and exhaustive overview of the region, with particular focus on security vacuums and the rise in terrorism across the region. It includes megatrends, game changers, potential scenarios and wild cards. The study’s scenarios are based on a short time horizon (2025).

The second study, *Interpretation of the Foresight Report “Migration and Global Environmental Change” for the Middle East and North Africa (until 2011)* (by UEA, Zeitoun 2015), analyses the influence of climate change and economic factors on migration and the relation between vulnerability, ability to move and wealth, emphasizing the lack of national migration policies in the MENA region.

The third exemplary study, *Addressing Agricultural Import Dependence in the Middle East-North Africa Region Through the Year 2050* (by INRA, Le Mouël et al. 2015) underlines how rapid population growth and a greater degree of Westernization in terms of dietary habits leads to increasing demand and dependence on agricultural imports in the region. The economic and political risks include, among others, trade imbalances, increasing national debt levels, strong exposure to global market fluctuations and recurrent food crises, with negative consequences especially for poor populations.

The issues and challenges articulated in these three studies – security, migration and climate change – are complex, critical problems that do not affect the MENA region alone: they may also compromise and challenge the stability of the European Union.

### **ARAB FUTURES. THREE SCENARIOS FOR 2025**

A major change in the region identified by the EUISS study is that domestic politics has moved from a reform to a security agenda, ignoring the fact that economic issues were one of the driving factors that led to the 2011 uprisings. While security forces are overstretched everywhere, defence budgets are rising across the region.

The report identifies the following megatrends as being of special relevance for future developments in the region: demographic change, urbanization, climate change, energy, food prices, literacy rates, internet penetration, gender equality. These dynamics are relevant in view of MENARA as they also feature as some of the key factors in creating the bases for important changes in the regional order. The authors of the study also discuss several possible developments which they regard as game changers (Gaub and Laban 2015:7 and 19ff). These are events or circumstances which might have a disproportionate influence on the future, depending on the direction they take, for instance because of related decisions that they trigger. In other words, game changers give rise to bifurcations and create the conditions in which actors such as policy-makers can decisively influence the course of events by their choices. Those choices might disrupt the continuation of traditional developments, which could lead to structural and even systemic changes in the relevant societies. The game changers identified are: youth unemployment, dependence on volatile food prices, insecurity, regional spillover, democratic change, inclusiveness.

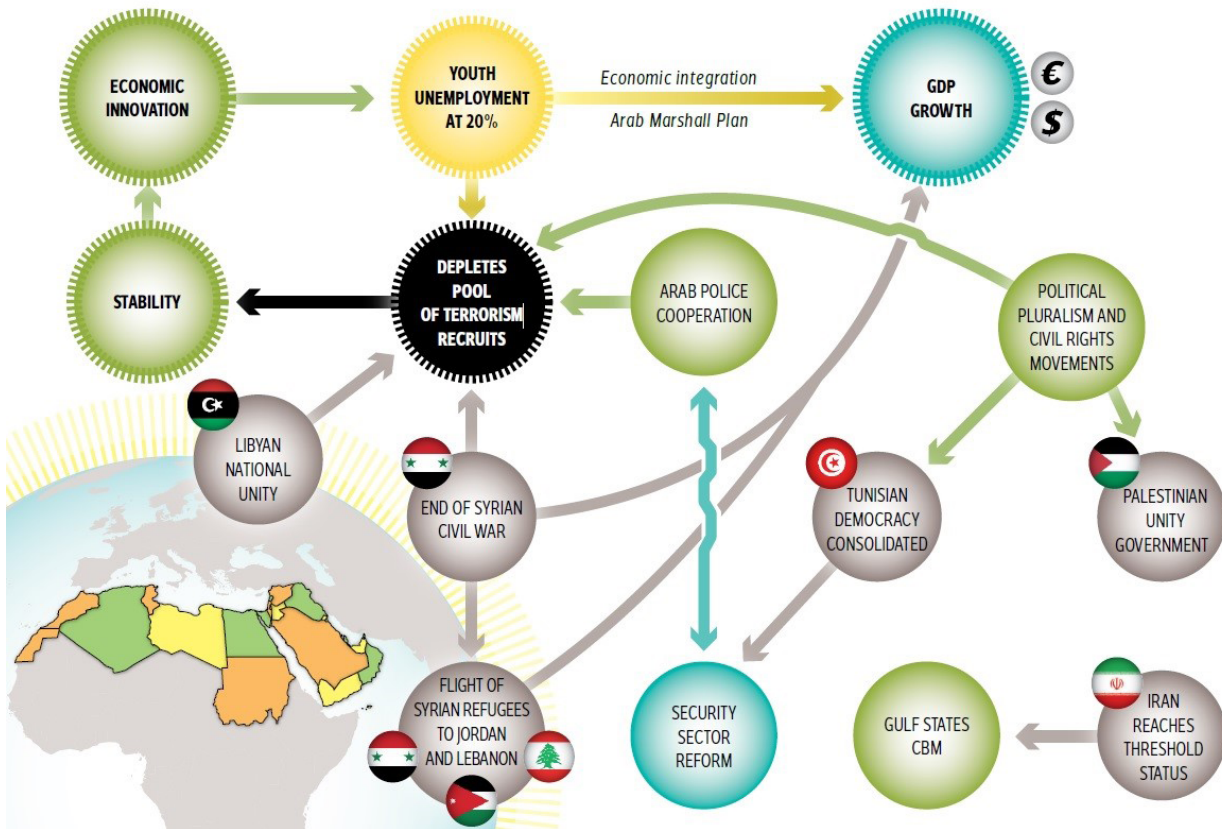
Based on analysis of these megatrends and game changers, the study draws up three different potential futures showing the various directions and courses by which the region could develop:

- “Arab Simmer” (managing problems is the dominating and basic logic/quality, not solving problems)
- “Arab Implosion” (actors and policies are often failures, which could lead to large-scale disruptions and crises)
- “Arab Leap” (this “best case scenario” consists of large-scale reforms, which would lead to recovery and a better future)

The three scenarios are extrapolations of the current situation: in 2015, the Arab world was described as undergoing its third systemic shock since 2011 and was facing several severe challenges. In order for one of these three different paths to materialize, a number of preconditions, potentials and options must be present. As an illustration, Figure 1 shows the most optimistic scenario (“Arab Leap”) and its relevant factors and elements as presented by the authors of the study.



**Figure 1** | Example of the best case scenario: “Arab Leap”



Source: Gaub and Laban 2015:38.

## INTERPRETATION OF THE FORESIGHT REPORT “MIGRATION AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE” FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (UNTIL 2011)

This study interprets the foresight report *Migration and Global Environmental Change* (hereafter: the report) in the case of the MENA region. The time horizon for the report’s analysis is 2060, with an additional focus on how issues develop by 2030. The report examines the influence that environmental change has on five major drivers of migration: economic, social, political, demographic and environmental circumstances. The major environmental challenges identified by the report are sea level rise, a change in tropical storm and cyclone frequency or intensity, changes in rainfall regimes, increases in temperature, changes in atmospheric chemistry, land degradation, coastal and marine ecosystem degradation (Zeitoun 2015:19).

The report presents four major conclusions. First, environmental changes will influence the drivers of migration, while the individual decision to migrate is influenced by several factors and considerations. Secondly, complex interactions between drivers can lead to different outcomes, including migration and displacement. These movements in turn will differ according to the political and socio-economic context, and may vary in their permanence, duration, novelty, speed, distance and whether they are cross-border or internal. The variations in these types of movements will pose different policy challenges in different countries and sub-regions. The third conclusion

concerns the “movement towards vulnerable areas”: powerful economic, political and social drivers mean that some types of migration are likely to continue regardless of environmental change. The fourth conclusion concerns the implications of immobility: migration is costly, and with environmental conditions such as drought and flooding eroding people’s livelihoods, migration – particularly over long distances – may be less possible in some situations. This creates high-risk conditions. In the decades ahead, millions of people will be unable to move away from locations in which they are extremely vulnerable to environmental change. They will be “trapped” in those vulnerable areas, particularly in low-income countries. In some cases people may choose to stay, rather than being forced to. This may be a positive outcome and the circumstances which enable it should be considered; but it should also be noted that there could be public policy issues related to people staying in dangerous environments, and what seems to be a voluntary decision to stay may actually be compromised by socio-political circumstances such as land tenure issues or social networks. Drawing from these four conclusions, the study also offers several specific policy recommendations on this issue area.

### **ADDRESSING AGRICULTURAL IMPORT DEPENDENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST-NORTH AFRICA REGION THROUGH THE YEAR 2050**

The MENA region is characterized by a particularly high level of dependence on agricultural imports: 40 per cent of agricultural products requirement is currently being met by imports, while its dependence on cereal imports is among the highest in the world. Since the 1990s, a combination of demographic growth and changes in dietary habits has led to a marked increase in food requirements.

Regional dependence on agricultural imports is likely to continue to escalate in the foreseeable future, both as a result of ongoing demographic expansion and changes in eating habits and as a result of climate change impacts in a region already recognized as a climate “hot spot.”

The project that forms the basis of this study (Le Mouël et al. 2015) began by examining historic trends (from 1961 to 2011) with regard to the resource-use balance of the regional agri-food system. Next, it analysed several potential future scenarios for the region up to the year 2050. To construct the scenarios, the study made use of simulation tools that take into account the anticipated effects of climate change as well as such factors as technical innovation, improved use of irrigation, contrasting patterns in eating habits, and differential changes in demographic and economic development. These simulations suggest that dependence on agricultural imports is likely to continue to increase in the region until 2050, especially if the effects of climate change are pronounced.

The economic and political risks of maintaining such elevated levels of agricultural import dependence are well known: trade imbalances, increased national debt levels, strong exposure to global market fluctuations, recurrent food crises and so forth.

The three selected future reports suggest that there are a number of pressing trends in the MENA region and the individual countries which will be of major relevance for the future development of the region. By considering the whole sample of forty studies, a list of specifically relevant megatrends and trends has been compiled, to be further assessed in the framework of MENARA.

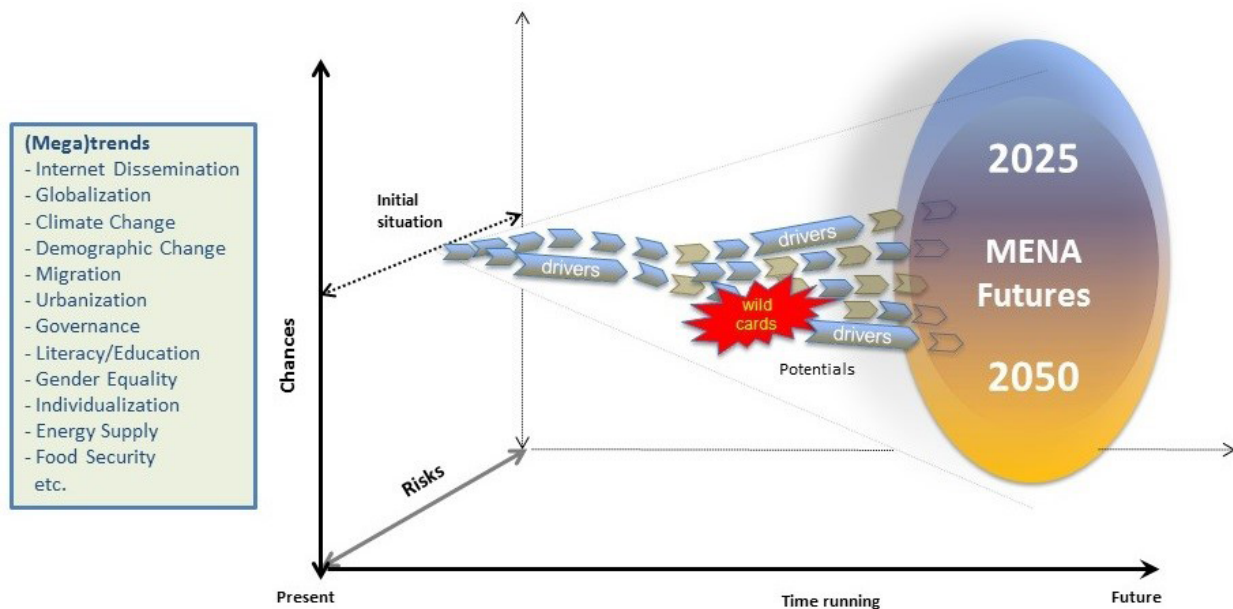
### 5.3 IMAGINING FUTURES FOR THE MENARA PROJECT

The analytical framework for explicit future-oriented analyses and research to be used by the MENARA Project will focus on current dynamics and trends, their possible impact on the regional order, and potential new phenomena and even probable wild cards.

The scientific challenge is to find an adequate “reduction of complexity” (Niklas Luhmann). The analytical framework aims at providing solid and shared theoretical, conceptual, terminological and methodological guidelines for the whole project with regard to future orientation and focus.

In line with the overall work plan of MENARA, all single Work Packages and analytical steps will deliver specific inputs based on their results and insights that will feed the creation of the future scenarios. These inputs, pertaining to a wide range of issues including identity, ideas and values, interdependence and resources, state-society dynamics, regional dynamics, global dynamics and configurations of the new regional order, will contribute to the foresight analysis. Based on the assessment of already existing foresight and future studies of the region or sub-regions, there will be a consecutive process of advancing and cumulating elements and ideas into the creation of scenarios.

**Figure 2** | The “Future Cone” produced by megatrends



In line with the overall research question presented in the Introduction, the MENARA Project will develop two sets of scenarios:

1. Scenarios where *centripetal* transformations prevail, resulting in an integrated region of cohesive societies embedded in global dynamics;
2. Scenarios where *centrifugal* transformations prevail, resulting in a fragmented region of conflict-ridden societies increasingly peripheral in global dynamics.

Each set of scenarios will include two time horizons (2025 and 2050) which facilitate the visualization of changes and differences in development. The short-term time horizon (2025) is useful for policies that will be under discussion during the next few years (i.e. research programmes, sustainability strategy). The long-term time horizon (2050) will articulate consequences as well as the unintended effects of decisions made earlier and under various circumstances (depending on different magnitudes of megatrends). This approach will increase the robustness of the views of the future under construction and highlight the processes of change in all the selected issue areas in the region. To better depict sub-regional peculiarities and discuss whether different sub-regions could take divergent paths, MENARA will also provide sets of sub-regional scenarios and issue-related scenarios. Moreover, it is necessary to bear in mind that there is likely to be an important degree of variation within the two sets of scenarios, as centripetal and centrifugal transformations will not occur in parallel at all three levels of analysis in which MENARA is articulated (domestic, regional, global) and in all the countries of the region. The scenario-building exercise will reflect these elements of complexity.

Various *megatrends and trends* will be traced. Megatrends are ongoing and manifold changes in societies and are especially important for future thinking, because they can describe societal developments that are strong,<sup>73</sup> have substantial impact and last at least a generation (Naisbitt 1982). To a certain extent this concept resembles the *longue durée* (long term) of Fernand Braudel, which includes not only the socio-economic cycles and structural crises, but also “old attitudes of thought and action, resistant frameworks dying hard, at times against all logic” (Braudel 1958:733). Modern examples are globalization, individualization, digitalization and demographic change. They are relevant for the MENARA Project because some of them can be used for framing the future development of the whole region or of selected countries and issues within them. At the same time, it is important to understand that each megatrend is highly complex and takes various forms, and that most bring about counter-trends (Tiberius 2012).

Drawing on the analysis of existing foresight and future studies on the MENA region, several megatrends with specific relevance for the MENA region can be suggested for further study and focus:

- Demographic changes
- Urbanization
- Climate change
- Energy trends
- Food security
- Literacy/education
- Internet/technology penetration
- Gender equality/individualization
- Religiosity/secularization trends
- Militarization
- Securitization
- Governance
- Globalization

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<sup>73</sup> These include developments in different areas and of different types, such as social, technological, economic, environmental, political and values-related.

All these megatrends are major challenges for the countries in the MENA region; they pose threats as well as offering new options and chances for decision-makers and citizens. The specific intensity and impacts, the preparedness and the sensitivity vis-à-vis these megatrends differ greatly across countries. The megatrends have to be analysed under various dimensions in order to make sure that all/most relevant characteristics, potentials and effects are recognized adequately. Those dimensions are: social, technological, economic, environmental, political, values and military (STEEP+V+M). Megatrends are empowered by driving forces (“drivers”). These can be individuals, or more often collective actors such as institutions, organizations and civil movements, which follow certain traditions, principles, intentions, strategies or plans. They often act in cooperation with other actors (i.e. coalitions) and at the same time are confronted by adversaries. In this regard, it is necessary to pay special attention to the dimension of behaviour (i.e. decisions, strategies, policies, deliberate activities), because this will enable the project team to focus on relevant dimensions like challenges, perceptions, habitus and activities, which together “reproduce or produce” development. This will allow the team to grasp path dependencies.

In this process, *wild cards* will complete the scenario development exercise (Holopainen and Toivonen 2012, Steinmüller 2012). Wild cards are events with low or unknown probability and high impacts. They can either lead to a drastic acceleration of a trend or to its reversal or disruption. Wild cards disturb or disrupt stable trends, plans or daily activities and even whole systems. Rapid acceleration, trend breaks or the generation of new trends are all examples of their potential impact.

To fully capture all this, one method that will be used in the MENARA Project is the *Delphi* method. Delphi is a proven methodology for long-term prospecting and thinking involving an iterative survey of experts (Göll and Evers-Wölk 2014:84-85). It uses a special kind of questionnaire that asks selected experts on a specific issue area or research question for comments and arguments for their individual positions. The results will be anonymously reported back to the experts, who will then be asked to respond to the questions and comments again. This approach is suitable for coping with a high degree of uncertainty and to address highly complex issues (Cuhls 2012). In the framework of MENARA, a two-round online Delphi survey aimed at validating certain aspects of the two sets of scenarios and delivering inputs for the formulation of policy recommendations will be conducted.

In conclusion, to create future images of developments in MENA, one of MENARA’s tasks is to try to understand the structures, dynamics, challenges and potentials of all the relevant actors in the MENA region. The regional and international contexts play an important role in all issues and problems inside the region and sub-regions. Therefore, the most important external influences have to be taken into account.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the strong megatrends in the region today that could remain relevant for the next ten and thirty-five years? What are the driving forces (“drivers”) of those trends, and what actors/institutions inside and outside the region are the major players? Are there any influential coalitions today, or are there shifts in coalition building?
- What are major latent conflicts, unsolved problems, leftover challenges which so far have been ignored, neglected or postponed? What would/could be the possible impacts of those issues/conflicts upon the regional order? Which internal and external interests are involved, and what capacities are needed in order to overcome these kinds of deadlocks?
- What have the major responses been to those issues to date, and how successful have they been? What structural impediments exist now, and could they possibly be changed – how and by whom? What are the potential new phenomena and game changers and probable wild cards?

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## CONCLUSIONS

Silvia Colombo and Jordi Quero

This concept paper has accomplished a twofold goal. On the one hand, it has provided a first systematic analysis of the very complex and ambitious research material and objectives that underpin MENARA. The project is an interdisciplinary endeavour, multi-layered (addressing the domestic, regional and global levels of analysis) and cross-temporal (grasping the past, understanding present dynamics and imagining possible futures of the MENA region). On the other hand, it has identified the key research questions that will guide the research, and which will be translated in (policy-oriented) outreach tools, throughout the entire duration of the project. Each section of the concept paper has offered a concise but comprehensive list of research questions that, taken together, reflect the analytical scope and the temporal depth of MENARA from different disciplinary standpoints. The conclusions of the concept paper will also perform a twofold task: first, they will link the research questions advanced by the previous sections to the overarching research challenge of the project. In this way, they offer a narrative of the manifold dynamics and actors whose future is at stake in the reconfiguration of the regional order in the MENA region. Second, they will lay out the shared workplan that will be the basis for the project's step-by-step implementation.

To recap our point of departure, MENARA addresses the question as to whether the regional order in MENA will be marked by centrifugal or centripetal dynamics or a combination of both. By framing the future of the region in terms of centrifugal and centripetal dynamics means underscoring the extent to which the region has been undergoing a process of transformation whose ultimate configuration is not clear yet. Centrifugal and centripetal dynamics apply to a region that has not been static, but rather has been characterized by changes and continuities all along its (recent) development. When narrowing this overarching question down to three levels of analysis, the concepts of "conflicts" (domestic), "integration" (regional) and "embeddedness" (global) need to be further investigated and put at the core of our research.

The project will identify and delve into the main dynamics and actors that shape conflicts in MENA at the domestic level from within and under the impact of regional and global trends. Old and new conflicts – most of which involve both state and non-state actors – proliferate, while in the wake of the Arab uprisings demands for more inclusiveness, accountability and transparency have created a (short-lived) window of opportunity to work out a new social contract between states and societies in the region. The picture is mixed. However, overall a heightened level of conflict seems to prevail over peace at the domestic level, and conflict-ridden state–society relations prevail over cohesive alternatives. In particular, four dynamics have tended to characterize state–society relations in the MENA since 2011, a watershed year for the political evolution of the in view of the profound impact of local and domestic unrest and revolutions. These four dynamics, which will be assessed in greater detail during the course of the project, are the erosion of state capacities, the securitization of regime policies, the militarization of contentious politics and the pluralization of collective identities and how states have accommodated diversity. These are related to each other and are potential drivers in the destruction and re-creation of domestic order in the region.

Assessing them involves pinpointing their constitutive structural features and the agency of an array of actors belonging both to the regimes (e.g., key figures and institutions that hold power), and to the contentious societal players (e.g., civil society groups, informal networks, identity-based factions and irregular military actors). Furthermore, questions on the mutual relations and inter-connections between the four dynamics will be explored, at both the domestic and the transnational, global levels.

Talks about regional integration (or lack thereof) in the MENA have always been paramount in the academic and policy literature about the region. This remains a relevant question today and for the MENA's future. In the light of the implications of the above-mentioned domestic dynamics on regional equilibria, the issue arises as to whether the MENA region as a whole has been experiencing a change of regional order – that is a deep and long-lasting revision of the “formal or informal arrangement that sustains rule-governed interactions among different units within a system in their pursuit of individual and collective goals” (MENARA's definition of international order), or changes within the existing order, particularly after the most recent watersheds in the development of the region, namely the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the 2011 Arab uprisings. Tackling this issue means addressing a preliminary question concerning the geographical scope of the MENA regional system that, in line with one of the main hypotheses of MENARA, has been defined as constituted by a number of sub-systems or sub-regions, namely the Maghreb, the Mashreq and the Gulf. Physical and ideational boundaries will be re-appraised empirically throughout the project to detect changes in the main cleavages that define the regional order and their implications in terms of integration and cooperation (or lack thereof) in MENA. Ultimately, in view of sharpening its policy impact, MENARA will conceptualize the integration/ fragmentation dichotomy not only in terms of the existence of formal and institutionalized forms of cooperation among states in the region, but also as the patterns of amity/enmity among states, non-state actors and other political, social and economic entities in the region.

As stated above, the MENA region has historically been a penetrated system in which extra-regional actors have played a critical role in shaping its socio-political reality through direct presence (colonialism/imperialism) or indirect influence. In the era of globalization, the region has become increasingly entangled in global dynamics and processes, such as large-scale movements of people, energy and climate-related issues, youth activism, new communication technologies and non-proliferation, with key regional actors coming to the fore and playing a proactive role on the global stage. Against this backdrop, one of the main questions to be addressed concerns the direction of the influence between regional and the global spheres. In other words, not only is it worth exploring the extent to which global dynamics and actors are shaping the regional order, but the research conducted by MENARA will shed light on the outward contribution of the region to global dynamics and order. This contribution can take different forms, ranging from the passive acceptance of global norms and institutions to the articulation of completely alternative sets of norms and institutions, from the proactive change of specific elements of the existing global order to their opposition and destruction. The result of the interplay between these bi-directional processes of influence between the regional and the global orders can be described the peripheralization vs. embeddedness of the MENA in global dynamics.

**Table 1** | Research question and levels of analysis

<b>Study of the MENA geopolitical order</b>	
CENTRIFUGAL VS. CENTRIPETAL DYNAMICS	
<i>Level of analysis 1: Domestic</i>	Conflict vs. cohesion
<i>Level of analysis 2: Regional</i>	Fragmentation vs. integration
<i>Level of analysis 3: International</i>	Peripheralization vs. embeddedness

These three levels of analysis are connected to each other: this will be reflected in the project workplan. It would be an act of reductionism to consider them as self-standing and independent from each other, given the significant connections and interdependencies between and among (sub-)regions and that transcend national borders; at the same time the MENA positions itself vis-à-vis broader global dynamics. An additional factor fosters a comprehensive understanding of the complexities characterizing the MENA is provided by the temporal dimension. As mentioned above, a cross-temporal investigation spanning the past, the present and the future of the region is of utmost importance to grasp further interconnections among the different levels of analysis. This undercurrent of the project will lead to a cross-temporal reconceptualization of dynamics and actors and, ultimately, to define the boundaries and the scope of the transformation process the MENA has been undergoing.

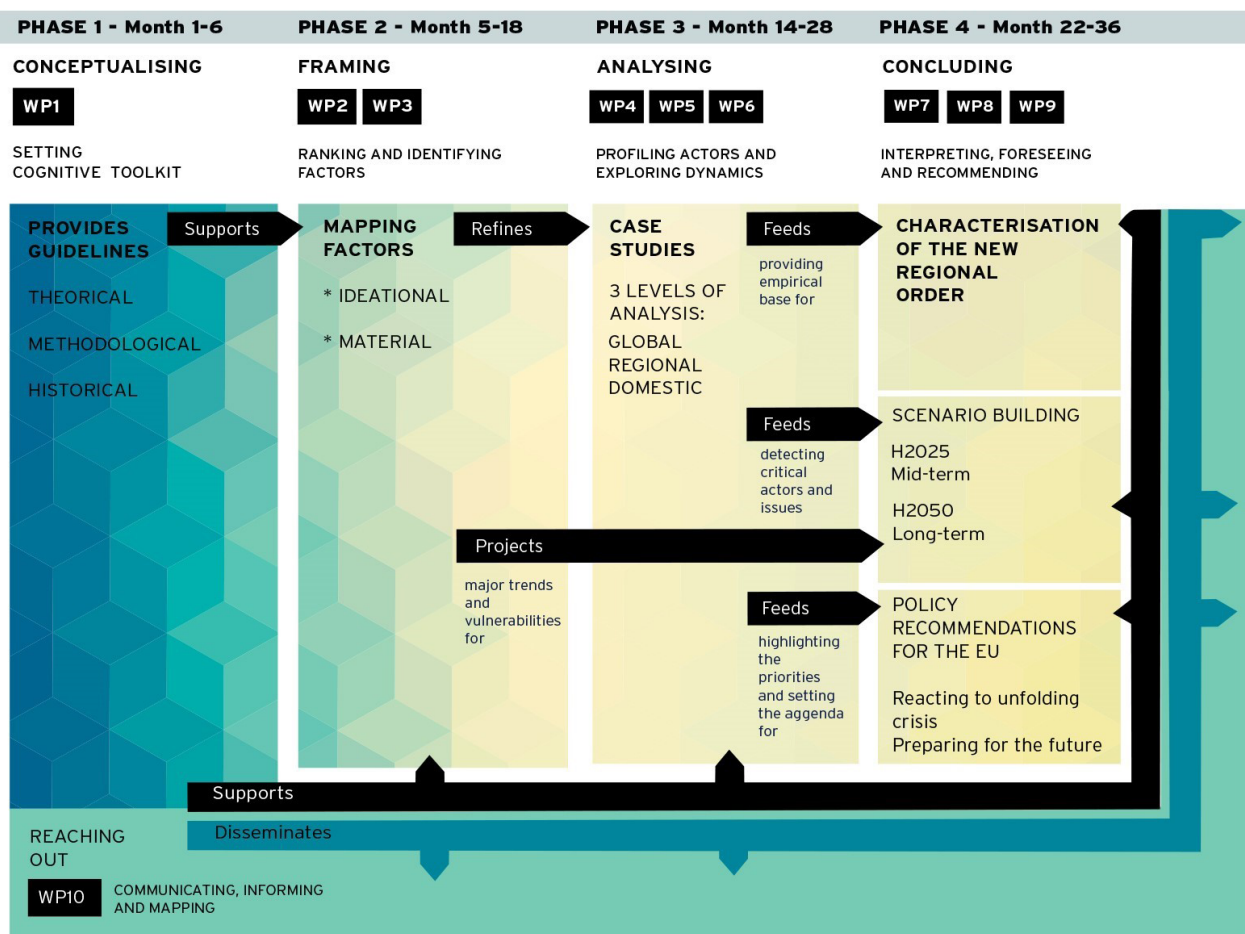
In this respect, key research questions about the past and the future of the MENA have been identified so as to create a bridge across the different phases of the temporal development of the region. To better understand the role of the past in influencing the making and remaking of the regional order in the MENA, and to grasp the dynamic and contested nature of often externally imposed definitions and meanings, it is necessary to re-conceptualize key concepts, including “state,” “sectarianism,” “minority” and “borders.” The importance of history for the development of the region is overwhelming, not least in the sense that more or less abrupt and far-ranging changes (or the lack thereof), which have been evolving in the MENA, cannot be adequately understood unless the historical perspective is duly factored into the analysis. Examples abound and can be located at different levels of the analytical chain. In regard to the domestic level, the proliferation of non-state actors (e.g., militias, religious and ethnic groups, transnational networks) and their relationship to state institutions and powers needs to be further investigated by taking into account the *longue durée* of processes of (de)construction of the authority of the nation-states in the region. To return to the peripheralization vs. embeddedness dichotomy, this needs to be scrutinized in view of the dynamics of path dependency influencing the mutual relations between the regional and the global orders.

Finally, a similar set of questions arises about the future outlook for the MENA. These questions revolve around the critical role of trends and megatrends, of drivers, of game-changers and of wild cards. These terms, which have been thoroughly discussed in section five of the concept paper, stand at the core of the analysis of the possible futures of the region. Coming at the end of the project lifecycle, and by drawing on inputs and insights derived from the phases that have preceded it, the foresight endeavour fulfils the ultimate goal of MENARA by assessing and providing

further temporal depth to the current trends of change and continuity experienced by the region, to the articulation of the dynamics and the actors that shape the regional order and to the policy implications that will be drawn from the project.

In order to accomplish this multi-faceted and comprehensive set of tasks, MENARA is articulated around a multilevel, incremental research agenda comprising three different project phases to be carried out in the next two years and a half.

**Figure 3 | Research calendar**



The first phase, entitled *Mapping factors and actors*, will identify, analyse and map the main factors that have shaped the regional order in the MENA and are likely to do so in the future. On the one hand, MENARA will trace and evaluate the impact of non-material ideational factors on the evolution of the regional order, These factors represent the basis for socio-political identification and common shared values and actions and will include national, subnational and supranational identities (covering tribalism, ethnicity, state-nationalism, pan-Arabism and pan-Turkism); religion and politics (covering sectarianism and political Islam, among others); and global identities (focusing on identities that transcend the region, such as gender, global subcultures, cosmopolitanism and youth cultures). Additionally, it will identify critical junctures at which they have had a decisive impact on the configuration of the regional order, thus elucidating the

circumstances and actors whose bearing on these major shifts has been significant. On the other, the project will trace and evaluate the impact of a wide range of material factors on the evolution of the regional order, including natural resources, demographic transformations, financial and trade flows and militarization processes. It will also identify and study relations of dependence and interdependence within the region and in relation to global structures.

Once this big picture is provided the second phase, entitled *Mapping dynamics*, will zoom into specific case-studies at three different levels: domestic, regional and global. MENARA will analyse in detail the four dynamics identified in section three of this concept paper – that is, the erosion of state capacities, the securitization of regime policies, the militarization of contentious politics and the pluralization of collective identities, as well as their impact in shaping the current and future domestic orders in the MENA. In particular, the project will examine how the production, consolidation and change of domestic political orders are related to the regional order and its shifts. This will be achieved, where possible, through fact-finding missions conducted by the MENARA research team in various countries. MENARA's initial plan is to focus on Libya, Syria, Yemen and Iraq (to study the erosion of the state capacity); Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran (the securitization of regime policies); Egypt, Syria and Libya (the militarization of contentious politics); Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Israel and Palestine (the pluralization of collective identities).

At the regional scale, MENARA will assess shifting power dynamics across the region and identify the most salient factors that are likely to shape future regional dynamics, with special emphasis on regional actors, conflicts and issues, and cooperation platforms. Once this first endeavour is accomplished, the project will map the current structure of the regional system by outlining power distribution patterns among state and non-state actors that shape regional dynamics. The aim of this exercise is understand their – potentially rival – geopolitical visions. To do so, the project plans to conduct research on case-studies of either concrete issues or actors. Among others aims, MENARA intends to shed light on Algeria–Morocco relations as a cornerstone of regional dynamics in the Maghreb; the emergence of violent non-state actors with regional outreach such as ISIS/Daesh and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb; the quest for hegemony among regional powers in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq; the Arab-Israeli conflict and its current regional impact; Libya and the Maghreb–Sahel insecurity continuum; old and new refugees in the MENA region; human trafficking in North Africa; and regional cooperation and integration in the framework of the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council's actions in the 21st century.

Finally, at the global level, the project will identify and investigate present and future global dynamics and the role, capabilities and agendas of global actors with the capacity, ability and willingness to shape the regional geopolitical order (including the USA, Russia, the People's Republic of China and Brazil). Attention will also given to the issue of how regional actors influence extra-regional processes and to their perception of their own role in global dynamics, including their self-identification in the changing distribution of global political, economic and social power. This broader picture will benefit from the analysis of concrete case-studies on, among others areas, global mobility dynamics; global competition for natural resources and energy; global trends in weapons of mass destruction and non-proliferation international regimes; and the role of the United Nations and of international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in the region.

The third phase of MENARA is constituted by three parallel endeavours entitled *The new regional order*, *Future scenarios* and *Policy recommendations* for the EU. Broadly speaking, the all-encompassing objective of this third phase is to draw on all the research conducted up to this point to produce a clear description of the new regional order in the making in the MENA and, in the light of this, construct scenarios for the future of the region (in 2025 and 2050) and outline policy recommendations for the European Union. The project will assess the evolution of key regional norms and identities; identify critical state and non-state actors and core patterns of enmity–amity; examine how current conflicts have impacted on the salience or permeability of state borders and notions of state sovereignty; measure the impact of domestic and global dynamics in the configuration of the emerging regional order and how this order relates to the constellation of domestic orders and the overarching global order; and, finally, it will evaluate whether the delimitation of the region and the relationship between sub-regions has been affected by the compounding effect of domestic, regional and global dynamics. Once at this point, MENARA will elaborate on the EU’s role vis-à-vis the evolving regional order, explore the means to increase coordination and coherence between EU policies and those of its members, and highlight what the validated scenarios mean in terms of the EU’s ability and preparedness to anticipate, cope with and react to ongoing and future geopolitical changes in the Middle East and North Africa. Interviews, focus groups, online Delphi surveys, construction of future scenarios, stakeholder’s engagement meetings will underpin the research and outreach effort of this third phase.



## THE MENARA PROJECT: THE 50 CONCEPTS

**1. AMITY/ENMITY PATTERNS.** Amity/enmity patterns are some of the cleavages in place in an international system, which shape the foreign behaviour of actors. Amity means relations that range from friendship to expectations of protection and support, and conversely enmity are relations of fear and distrusts. They can revolve around a whole range of issues, e.g. border disputes, ethnicity, ideology, religion, but they must be determined empirically rather than theoretically. This notion is based on a conceptualization of international relations that claims that conflicts and security dynamics cannot be predicted by material power distribution alone, but historical constellations of hatred and friendship, as well as the specific issues that trigger conflict or cooperation.

**2. ARAB UPRISINGS.** The group of socio-political, cultural and economic contestation events that unfolded in the Middle East and North Africa since late 2010 which led to political changes – among others – in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria and Yemen. MENARA opts for this terminology in front of alternative ones like Arab Spring, Arab upheavals, Arab revolutions, or “*al-marar al-Arabi*” (“the Arab bitterness”).

**3. ARABISM (PAN-).** Political ideology articulated around some of the ideas of Michel Aflaq, Salah Bitar and Zaki al-Arsuzi – influenced by other older ideological proposals like An-Nahda’s – which advocates for the political integration of all the Arab people. Pan-Arabism integrates ideological positions from the postcolonial narrative to the socialist one. It has diverted into a heterogeneous plethora of consequential political ideologies underpinning many political organisations in the MENA region.

**4. AUTHORITARIAN RESILIENCE.** The capacity of authoritarian political regimes to cope with forces of change by slightly changing some of their more controversial features (composition or structure of the regime, policies, people holding public responsibilities, etc.) while maintaining in place the essentials of the autocratic system and the benefits for the autocratic elite.

**5. BALANCE OF POWER.** An informal institution of some international systems marked by the recurrent behaviour of different actors who join efforts together to face any hegemonic attempt carried out by any unit of the system. The expression “balance of power” is also defectively used as a synonym of an even distribution of power among the units of a system or of any given distribution of power (i.e. the structure of the system).

**6. CENTRIFUGAL DYNAMICS.** A set of dynamics at domestic, regional and global levels where different agents are involved in processes of splitting apart, diverging from one another and of departing from a common base point. At domestic level, MENARA translates centrifugal dynamics into socio-political conflict. At regional level, this is equated with fragmentation, meaning the reduction of the levels of interaction between regional actors. At global level, peripheralisation trends refer to the reduction of the impact that the region has in shaping the global order and similarly the other way around.

**7. CENTRIPETAL DYNAMICS.** A set of dynamics at domestic, regional and global levels where different agents are involved in processes of aggregation, alignment and synthesis. At domestic level, MENARA translates centripetal dynamics into socio-political cohesion. At regional level, this is equated with integration, meaning the increase of the levels of interaction between regional actors. At global level, embeddedness trends refer to the increase of the impact the region has in shaping the global order and similarly the other way around.

**8. CITIZENSHIP.** Concept that recalls the Greek “polites” (“citizen”) and Roman “cives”. Classical Arabic and other Semitic idioms offered no word to indicate such concept. The Arabic word *Jinsīya* (from the root j-n-s, which in classic Arabic indicated – depending on the case – gender, race and class) has been adopted in modern times, partially with the aim of introducing a concept functional for the interpretation of the locals by outsiders.

**9. CONTENTIOUS POLITICS (ACTORS, DYNAMICS).** Political dynamics marked by the social, political, economic or cultural contestation of political regimes and structures in place, generally autocratic and authoritarian.

**10. DEPENDENCY (INTER-).** Quality of a relation between two units marked by an extreme economic, political, social or cultural reliance of one of them to the other. The prefix “inter”- indicates that both units experience this condition in their relation with the other. Within MENARA this concept applies to the study of the relations between international actors, both at regional and global levels.

**11. DOMESTIC ORDER(S).** The empirical outcomes of the conflicts of influence over political decision-making within each of the specific domestic arenas in the MENA region. This implies that there is no single domestic political order in the MENA, but rather a series of constantly changing orders in plural. It also suggests that these domestic orders are perpetually prone to further change. In conceptualizing domestic political orders, MENARA takes into consideration dynamics of change occurring within four distinct factors: state capacities, regime policies, forms of contentious politics and formation of collective identities.

**12. DRIVER.** Motivating forces behind the (mega)trends described in the foresight studies informing the constructed scenarios. See megatrend and scenario.

**13. EMBEDDEDNESS.** A quality that describes a great level of insertion, attachment or parallelism of one regional or domestic actor or dynamic into broader global trends.

**14. FORESIGHT STUDIES.** Field of research within Social Sciences which, based on scientific concepts and methods from current theories and insights about characteristics and changes in societies, offers suggestions, images and paths about different future options and developments.

**15. GLOBAL ORDER.** A set of formal or informal arrangements that sustains rule-governed interactions among different units within the global system in their pursuit of individual and collective goals. These arrangements are generally based on values and translated into norms, institutions and international regimes. This definition does not take for granted any constitutive

objective of any order.

**16. GLOBAL STRUCTURE.** The distribution of power capabilities among the units of the global system. This definition departs from alternative ones used in the International Relations discipline by structuralists and World-System theorists who define it as the critical organizing principles of the capitalist world economy.

**17. GLOBALISATION.** Process of augmentation in the quantity, depth and scope of social, economic, political and cultural contacts between individuals, public and private organisations and the states at global level that started unfolding in the 1960s and since then has been constantly growing. Even if there are many reasons that might contribute to explain this phenomena, the technological and transportation systems revolution are generally pointed out as the most important ones.

**18. HETEROPOLARITY.** This concept characterises a diffused distribution of power, within an international system, marked by its inclusion of non-state actors into the examination of this distribution beyond conceptualising them as mere instruments of alterative state units. Coined by Daryl Copeland and James Der Derian, it recognizes the blurred nature of power and its distribution within a system and circumvents the problem of narrowing the discussion just to state units. MENARA takes heteropolarity as a starting point to describe the distribution of power within the MENA regional system.

**19. HISTORICAL TURNING POINT.** Moment in the history of the region when a struggle to (re) define the regional order or some of its core values, norms or institutions takes place. In most circumstances the use of this terminology is limited to those instances when there is an actual or a perceived change of order or, at least, a modification of some of its elements (constitutional, primary, issue-based regimes).

**20. IDENTITY (COLLECTIVE).** Inter-subjective beliefs of membership that glue together individuals in broader political or cultural communities.

**21. JIHADISM.** Neologism coined in the last decades with whom it is often indicated a branch of Islamism that prescribes the use of violence for the liberation of the umma in front of internal and external threats and justifies it appealing to religious arguments.

**22. MEGATREND (TREND).** Ongoing and manifold changes in societies which are especially important for future thinking and the production of foresight studies as they can describe those developments which have substantial impact and continuity. Trends can help to build bridges into the future and therefore visualise certain future development of the whole targeted region, or selected countries and issues within it. See foresight studies.

**23. MENA (I.E. MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA).** The Middle East and North Africa include the countries of the so-called Arab core (Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrein, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen) as well as three non-Arab countries (Turkey, Israel and Iran).

**24. MINORITY.** Categories used to describe groups of individuals tied together by intersubjective identity bonds which do not represent a majority in a given territorial nation-state. Before the first decades of the 20th century, neither the local populations in the MENA, nor Western political representatives or observers, used the term “minority” or “majority” to describe the ethno-religious composition of the region. These concepts had become widespread following a “process of minorization” started, under Western influence, in the second half of the 19th century.

**25. MULTIPOLARITY.** A specific type of international structure where three or more poles have prominent power capacities. Multipolarity does not entangle an even or balanced distribution of power among the central poles of the system or it implies neither conflictive nor cooperative relations among them.

**26. MULTILATERALISM.** Cooperative multi-party endeavours to govern international affairs where state as well as non-state actors might be part of.

**27. NON-STATE ACTOR.** This broader category includes a comprehensive spectrum of actors such as transnational business enterprises, international non-governmental organisations, transnational organized crime groups, international terrorist organisations or individuals.

**28. NORM.** Standard of behaviour that sets the limits of what is considered legitimate behaviour within a community (of individuals or states). This definition does not restrict the label of norm only to the formal, positivized, institutionalised ones. Informal arrangements that create expectations over other actors through repetition of behaviours (patterns of behaviours) also fit in this definition.

**29. NORM DIFFUSION.** Process through which international norms are spread all over a system and through which international actors assumed the content of the norm and modify their behaviour accordingly. In the process of diffusion a norm can also be modified by dialectical processes among the actors of the system, despites their role as norm entrepreneurs or not.

**30. NORM ENTREPRENEUR.** Type of actor involved in the initial stages of the inception of an international norm which has a significant capability in shaping and/or diffusing the norm.

**31. PATH DEPENDENCY.** Social and political phenomena where procedures and behaviours carried out in the past survive over time as the cost of change is lower than its benefits. Path dependency logics influence the possibility of change in domestic and international dynamics.

**32. PAX AMERICANA.** Feature that describes a concrete historical order that took shape in the MENA in the aftermath of the Second World War –many authors point out to 1956 and the Suez Crisis as its inception moment- defined by a critical role played by the United States in the security relations of the subsystem. Under Pax Americana, the privilege power position of the US enabled this country to actively participate in the consolidation of the regional peace and security framework.

**33. PENETRATED SYSTEM.** This concept describes any regional system -in our case, the Middle East and North Africa one- as a subject of high and unparalleled intervention and control by actors

from outside the region. According to Carl Brown application of Rosenau's term in the MENA case, since Ottoman times extra-regional powers have aimed at protecting their vital interests in the region by actively participating in local and regional politics and directing them to the achievement of their goals. This has fostered an unmatched participation of these foreign actors in shaping the norms, values, institutions and regimes that constitute the regional order and have affected the regional distribution of power.

**34. PERIPHERY (GLOBAL).** Territorial entity not defined by geographical terms but with the nature of the relation between its integrative parts and the so-called "core" of world politics. The "core" is constituted by international actors who have traditionally held the capabilities to shape the global order in accordance with their interests, values and norms. For many authors this is equated with the so-called West. Authors like Martina Ghosh-Schellhorn have warned against the dangers of recurring to this binarism as it might ultimately contribute to perpetuating the idea that established power is the sole, and sometimes even the main, dispenser of values and knowledge, while the periphery is assumed as submissive.

**35. POLARITY.** A condition of the structure of an international system that describes the number of power centres (poles) with the capabilities to profoundly influence the whole system. This power centres might be referred as great powers, superpowers or regional powers / medium powers depending on the account and the geographical scope.

**36. POLITICAL ISLAM.** Political ideology that draws on Islamic precepts (categories, values and its theological metanarrative) to articulate their social, political, cultural and economic objectives and strategies as well as to legitimate them. Broadly speaking, all Islamist movements share a common vindication of Sha'aria law as the central articulating principle of political life. Additionally, most forms of Islamism take the umma (the community of the believers) as starting political subject of their ideological projects.

**37. REGION.** Geographical units made up of territorial-based political entities, tied by high and persistent levels of political, economic, security-based and/or cultural interaction among its members (objective factors) and/or by a shared sense of belonging (subjective factors). As both objective and subjective factors might change over time, the existence and limits of a set region may evolve accordingly. Similarly, a region can be qualified functionally as a cultural, historical, security, political, economic or ecological unit depending of the variables taken into consideration. A region can comprise one or more sub-regions, understood as narrower groupings, whose members have more intense interactions and/or a deeper sense of belonging among them than with the broader group.

**38. REGIONAL ORDER.** A set of formal or informal arrangements that sustains rule-governed interactions among different units within a regional system in their pursuit of individual and collective goals. These arrangements are generally based on values and translated into norms, institutions and international regimes. This definition does not take for granted any constitutive objective of all orders.

**39. REGIONAL POWER.** A State-actor at regional level who concentrates a significant amount of power capabilities within the regional system yet this is not paralleled with equivalent capacities vis-à-vis the global system. Regional poles is a synonym.

**40. REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX (RSC).** As defined by Buzan and Wæver (2003:44), they are a “set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another”. The Middle East is considered by the Copenhagen School as “a near perfect example of a classical, state-centric, military political type RSC [regional security complex]” (Buzan and Wæver 2003:217) and divides the region in three regional sub-complexes: the Maghreb, the Levant and the Gulf. They also identify three key “insulators” (the Sahel, Turkey and Afghanistan), that is, bordering states or regions “where larger regional security dynamics stand back to back” (Buzan and Wæver 2003:41).

**41. REGIONAL STRUCTURE.** The distribution of power capabilities among the units of the regional system. This definition departs from alternative ones used in the International Relations discipline by structuralists and World-System theorists who define it as the critical organising principles of the capitalist world economy in the region.

**42. REVISIONIST ACTOR.** Units within a political system that question and challenge some of the core elements of the order of the system, such as its values, norms or institutions. The condition of revisionist is unrelated with the actual capacity of the actor to foster any change in the order but just with its capability of articulating revisionist narrative.

**43. SCENARIO.** Consistent and coherent descriptions of alternative hypothetical futures that reflect different perspectives on past, present, and future developments, which can serve as a basis for action. Scenarios are imagined futures, but they are neither forecasts nor prognoses. Instead, they are often created in sets of alternatives, or as different versions or paths of the similar starting system. See foresight studies.

**44. SECTARIANISM.** A neologism introduced in Arabic in the 19th century (*ta'ifiya*) that describes the process of identity construction of an individual putting at the centre his/her sectarian affiliation (understood in religious, communitarian, tribal or linguistic terms). It might also refer to a political ideology advocating for the protection of a specific sect or for the creation of a political system articulated around sectarian affiliation of the individuals.

**45. SECURITISATION.** Term coined by the Copenhagen School of International Relations and the New Security Studies which appeals to the phenomena through which actors present a reality out of the strict security field using precisely security terms. By “securitizing” any non-security related issue, securitizing actors try to legitimate any potential use of extraordinary measures to tackle the subject.

**46. AUTOCRATIC REGIME.** Set of institutional governmental structures where the political power is held by a limited amount of individuals and whose exercise of public duties is undemocratic, unrepresentative and in most occasions aiming at individual and not societal gains. This term can

in no case be equated with the state itself where the autocratic regimes take place.

**47. STATE CAPACITY.** The ability of any political regime ruling one country to tackle contentious actors using their bureaucratic, institutional and coercive apparatus.

**48. STATE EROSION.** Process through which state capacity is reduced, not necessarily but most prominently, by contentious actors challenging some elements of the domestic order(s).

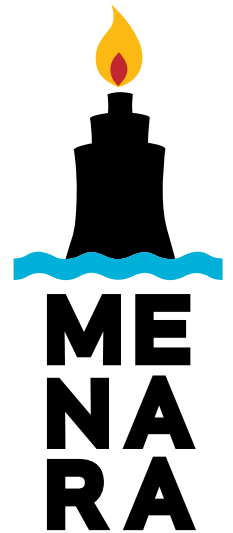
**49. SYSTEM (SUB-).** A group of units with sufficient levels of interaction to force the actors within the system to take into consideration the other actors' behaviour in their own decision making process.

**50. WILD CARD.** Notion used in foresight studies to describe events with low or unknown probability to take place/unfold yet high impacts in case they turn real. They are able to disturb or disrupt trends and scenarios. See foresight studies and scenarios.



## ABBREVIATIONS

AUB	American University of Beirut
CBM	Confidence-building measures
CIDOB	Barcelona Centre for International Affairs
DIIS	Danish Institute for International Studies
EU	European Union
EUISS	European Union Institute for Security Studies
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIGA	German Institute of Global and Area Studies
IAI	Istituto Affari Internazionali
IFAT	Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
INRA	Institut national de la recherche agronomique
IR	International Relations
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
IZT	Institute for Futures Studies and Technology Assessment
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PRIF	Peace Research Institute Frankfurt
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RSC	Regional Security Complex
SC	Security Council
UEA	University of East Anglia
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WEOG	Western European and Others Group
WP	Working package
WZB	Berlin Social Science Center



**Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture: Mapping geopolitical shifts, regional order and domestic transformations (MENARA)** is a research project that aims to shed light on domestic dynamics and bottom-up perspectives in the Middle East and North Africa amid increasingly volatile and uncertain times.

**MENARA** maps the driving variables and forces behind these dynamics and poses a single all-encompassing research question: Will the geopolitical future of the region be marked by either centrifugal or centripetal dynamics or a combination of both? In answering this question, the project is articulated around three levels of analysis (domestic, regional and global) and outlines future scenarios for 2025 and 2050. Its final objective is to provide EU Member States policy makers with valuable insights.

**MENARA** is carried out by a consortium of leading research institutions in the field of international relations, identity and religion politics, history, political sociology, demography, energy, economy, military and environmental studies.



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