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# **Regional Dynamics and Governance in Modern Middle East: From the Ottoman Empire to the Cold War**

**Ramzi Bendebka<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** The modern state's concept as an institution with specific boundaries has been recently introduced in the Middle East region. As a result, without referring to modern regional history and development, there will be no appropriate explanation of the nature and features of present countries in the Middle East, starting with transforming the Islamic *Khilafah* into separate states and the role of different powers, events and issues in shaping the region. Therefore, this essay presents a comprehensive overview of regional governance that can be an alternative to studying separate Middle Eastern states. This study's main objective is to analyse and highlight governance in different historical periods that affected the Middle East's regional dynamics. In doing so, the Historical Dynamics (HD) approach has been used to understand regional governance, coherence and systems. Despite the fact that the Middle East states have several internal differences, the region remains sufficiently integrated and shares fundamental civilisational, political, economic, religious, and historical experiences to provide an intelligible unit of study and a clear understanding. The researcher starts from the Middle East and North Africa's conceptual reality and provides a brief outline of the region's most essential characteristics. Then, he identifies and analyses governance during the Ottoman Empire, colonial periods, independence, nationalism and the Cold War phases.

**Keywords:** Middle East region, governance, Islam, Ottoman, colonialism, independence, Arab nationalism.

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## Introduction

To conceptualise regional dynamics, one must first explain what region is “Middle East” as a terminology is an invention of the West (Hilal & Jamil, 2001, p. 3). Hilal and Jamil (2001) state that “The East, and its adjectival form (oriental), connoted in the European mind more than just a geographic locale” (pp. 21-22). The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as a region had arisen during the colonial era and the fall of the Ottoman Empire. As a concept and a structure with clear borders, the state has been recently introduced to the MENA region, with partial exemptions, namely Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, and Oman (Ayubi, 1995, p. 60-65). Hence, the term “Middle East” encompasses the current nation states in the region that resulted from European colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Middle East cannot sufficiently be defined in terms of culture. A term like “Arab World”<sup>2</sup> cannot be applied to countries such as Iran, Turkey, and some other nations with predominantly non-Arab populations. The term “Islamic World” is also not pertinent for some Muslim countries located outside the MENA region. The inclusion of non-Arab countries such as Turkey and Iran in the region are valid. The Turkish region was the center of the Ottoman Caliphate that controlled the MENA region for approximately four centuries. There is also the geographical proximity with Arab countries (Syria and Iraq in particular), shared culture, history, religious thoughts, practices of Islam and a worldview which comes from a primary source for all Muslims (the Qur’an).

Along with the spread of Islam, areas adjacent to the Arab World were frequently integrated politically, economically, socially, and militarily, contributing to a cultural and political heritage that has been relatively homogeneous and integrated. (Dumper & Bruce, 2007). Furthermore, the Arabic language is widely spoken among the political, economic and religious leaders. Turkey and Iran have a lot more in common with the Arabs than they do with the non-Arabs. Israel and South Sudan are the only exceptions in this research. The latter is a new state which split from Sudan, and it is too early to consider it as part of the Middle East because of shortage of data and information. More

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<sup>2</sup> According to the World Bank (2016), the Arab World comprises members of the League of Arab States. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/1A>.

noticeably, there is barely any resemblance between Israel and other Middle East countries, either in history, politics, religion, language, culture or economy (Beinin & Hajar, 2014). Because of that, Israel and South Sudan are not included in this study.

The Middle East is a dynamic interplay of states and peoples, traditions, thoughts, interests, and goals. The Middle East encompasses a region that stretches from Iran to Morocco, as well as from Turkey to Sudan. This covers 22 nations, consists of 20 Arab League members (including the West Bank), Turkey, and Iran. Despite several differences among the countries, the Middle East region is significantly interconnected and shares a core of political, economic, historical, and religious experiences to provide a coherent unit of study (Bendebka, 2016).

### **The Middle East Region: An Overview**

The term “Middle East” requires many different definitions. Throughout this study, “Middle East” corresponds to the region’s operational definition, including 20 countries within the Arab League, coupled with Turkey and Iran (Yousef, 2004).

According to the Human Development Indicators Rank (World Bank, 2017), land area, energy resources and population are critical drivers for a state’s development and to reinforce its power. The global population increased to around seven billion people in 2012. Developing countries became the main contributors of this, and accounted for and increase of 92% (OPEC, 2014). The Middle East has a population of about 503 million, larger than that of Europe (480 million) and of the United States (315 million). The Middle East’s population comprises 7% of the inhabitants of the world. Ten countries in the Middle East – Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Iraq, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Turkey and Iran– comprise almost 90% of total population in the region.

Concerning land area, data from the World Bank (2018) shows that Algeria, the largest country in the region as well as in Africa, encompasses more than 2 million square kilometers, followed by Egypt, Iran, Libya, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia and Sudan, each of which possesses a land area of more than 1 million square kilometers. The next largest countries are Turkey, Yemen, Morocco and Iraq, each covering between 0.4 and 0.8 million square kilometers. The other countries in the region possess a

land area of less than 0.1 million square kilometers, except for Palestine and Bahrain, the smallest countries in the region, that have less than 0.01 million square kilometers (The World Bank, 2018).

Population trends are reflected in economic growth rates. In 2012, the average of the Middle East's economic growth rate was 3.2% per annum, quite close to the world's average of 3.4% (Anthony, Rey & Mendez, 2013). However, the rate was diverse among the existing countries. The economic growth rates in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Mauritania, Kuwait and Oman were higher than 5%. The growth rates were more than 3% in Algeria, Bahrain, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Tunisia. The remaining growth rates in the Middle East scored less than 3%, the lowest of which in Iran and Sudan with -1.9% and -10.1% respectively (IMF, 2013).

The Middle East is stereotypically perceived as Arab, Muslim and conservative, despite the fact that the countries in the region vary in their economic structures, forms of state, social composition and historical evolution. All the countries are Muslim-majority, and all of the countries are primarily Arabic speaking, except for Turkey and Iran. All countries are predominantly Sunni,<sup>3</sup> with the exception of Iran, which is largely Shia,<sup>4</sup> Bahrain, with Shia-majority citizens, and Iraq and Lebanon, with

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<sup>3</sup> Sunni constitute at least 85 percent of the world's 1.2 billion Muslims. It is the largest branch within the Muslim community. Four legal schools of thought guide Sunni life – Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii, and Hanbali – to develop practises of the example of the Prophet. Although Sunni Islam includes a variety of schools in law, theology, attitudes and perspectives depending on the historical context, the geographical location, and culture, the Sunnis generally share some essential features, including recognition of the legitimacy of Muhammad's first four caliphs (Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, and 'Alī). <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/orn/t125/e2280> (Accessed March 2, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Shia Islam is an Islamic branch with the belief that Prophet Muhammad has named 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib as the only successor (Imam). Shia believe that only God has the right to nominate the Prophet's successor as a prophet is appointed by God alone. They believe that God has chosen 'Alī to succeed Muhammad as the first infallible caliph of Islam. The Sunnis are somewhat different from the Shia in their theological beliefs and religious practices, like prayers. See Britannica for more details: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shii> (Accessed March 2, 2021).

almost equal populations of Sunni and Shia. Some countries such as Egypt, Lebanon and Syria have a sizeable Christian-minority population, while others such as Morocco, Iran, Iraq and Algeria are diverse in terms of language and ethnicity. With the exception of Mauritania, Djibouti and Yemen (rated as the least developed countries), all the countries in the region are considered as developing countries, albeit with some differences (UNCTAD, 2014).

### *The Production of Oil and Middle East Regional Governance*

The emergence and rising influence of oil-producing countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, Iran, Iraq, Algeria, UAE, Bahrain, and Qatar have been a key feature of Middle East economic growth over the last century, until recently (Carkoglu et al., 1998; Luciani, 2017).

Based on World Oil Outlook (2014), Saudi Arabia has total shares of 15.9% oil production, making it the largest oil reserves globally, followed by Iran at 9.4% and Iraq at 9%. The fourth highest country in the region is Kuwait, with more than 6% oil reserve, followed by UAE (5.9%), Libya (2.9%) and Qatar (1.4%). Consequently, the Middle East is a region from which the most enormous components of global oil and gas supplies come from. Therefore, the world energy power is concentrated in the Middle East (Figure 1). Middle Eastern countries also fall into the following categories in terms of regime economic types:

1. Oil economies but lacking in other resources: Libya and the Gulf countries
2. Mixed oil economies: Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria, Iraq and Iran
3. Non-oil economies: Tunisia, Jordan, Turkey and Morocco

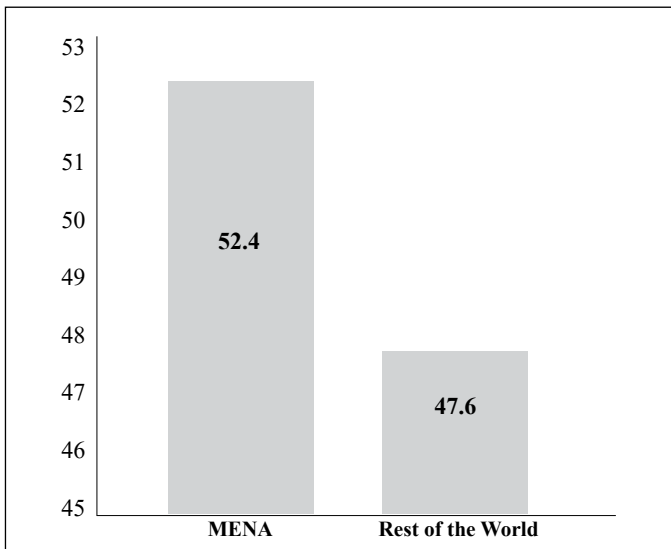
The last two categories have a more diversified economy and their resources include oil, large populations and agricultural land. Even though lacking of other resources, the countries in the first category have the world's most significant oil reserves.

With the exception of several countries, primarily the oil-producing Gulf countries, the Middle East region shares similar characteristics with the other countries in the Third World. One of them is internal



structure due to the historical pattern of state formation based on the state's central government and personal governance (Noble et al., 1993, p. 11). As Mohammad Salman Hassan states, "In the Arab world, there are no state-to-state economic agreements or cooperation, only person-to-person ones" (Ferrara, 2016, p. 69). Therefore, the use of revenues for economic, social and political development is always based on the central government and its will.

Furthermore, the Middle East region has been influenced by civil and inter-regional conflicts, disputes and terrorism. Therefore, most of the revenues and expenditures have been heavily spent on the military rather than social and economic development. For instance, in the Middle East, oil-exporting countries have increased yearly actual spending by 3.6%, while non-oil exporting countries saw real spending rise by around 7.8% (IISS, 2013). On the whole, defense spending in the region rose from USD155.9 billion in 2012 to USD166.4 billion in 2013. Saudi Arabia continues to be the highest military spender in the Middle East, accounted for 31.6% of the overall spending or more than USD50 billion (IISS, 2013).



**Figure 1:** Distribution of Proven Oil Reserves in (2019)

Source: Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), World Oil Outlook.

Concerning regional governance, in 1960, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was formed, which comprised eight countries out of 12 MENA countries. Initially, OPEC intended to protect its members, each one a weak developing nation, from the maneuvers of an informal cartel of international oil corporations (Fisher & Ochsenwald, 1990, p. 552). In Geneva and then in Vienna in 1965, OPEC defined its vision and formed its Secretariat. In 1968, it introduced the “Declaratory Statement of Petroleum Policy in Member Countries,” which emphasised that all countries have the inalienable right to exercise permanent control over their natural resources for the sake of national growth. By 1969, the group had grown to 10 members (OPEC, 2020). OPEC gained international reputation during the 1970s and 1980s as its members held the reins of their domestic oil industries and acquired a significant say in setting the price of crude oil in global market. At certain junctures, oil prices increased sharply in an unpredictable market, for example, the one caused by the Arab oil embargo in 1973, as a pressure on pro-Israeli countries (Fisher & Ochsenwald, 1990). In 1990 and 1991, prices moved less dramatically compared to the 1970s and 1980s, and OPEC effective action had reduced the market impact of Middle East hostilities. However, globalisation, regionalism, technological advancement, and other high-tech movements were pursued in a more integrated oil industry, which adapted to the post-Soviet environment (World Oil Outlook, 2014).

Remarkably, OPEC itself has not fully controlled the world oil market. Now and then, there have been some differences among Middle East members of OPEC; for instance, Libya, Algeria, Iraq and Iran have often pressed for the increase of prices (Fisher & Ochsenwald, 1990, pp. 555-557). The position of Saudi Arabia is based on its gargantuan oil reserves and also that it sells about 40% of OPEC productions. Therefore, the process of regional oil governance is ambiguous and based on crucial states’ interests.

### **The Frame of the Study**

A region is a dynamic entity because various aspects change with time, especially governance and member states’ relations. Various studies and analyses for regional dynamics lead to different types of governance. Therefore, a Historical Dynamics (HD) approach gives an in-depth

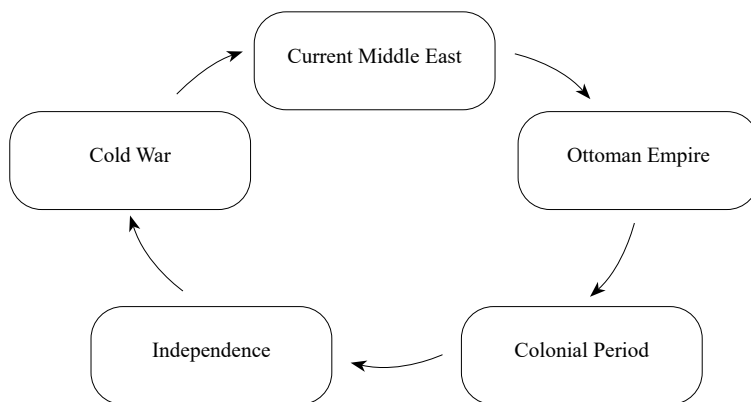
understanding of regional governance, coherence and system. It tells us that political and economic practices evolve over periods, with each phase/period depending on the previous one or how one neutralised another; for example, the independence phase/period neutralised the colonial phase/period. The events and way of governance that took place in the Middle East region during the previous period must be addressed to drive the development of history, such as the reforms, the state creation, and the revolution (Hinnebusch, 2003, 2014). The ability or inability of governance in the Middle East region depends very much on its regional history. Thus, in order to understand how governance works, we need to study different historical periods and how they affected the region's governance. In doing so, we focus on how external factors, such as colonialism and the Cold War, and internal factors, such as Ottoman rule, have affected the Middle East's regional governance. The HD approach also informs us of the ongoing feedback mechanism between the type of governance that exists at a given time in the Middle East's history and the region's related dynamics. As a result, understanding the historical context is crucial in determining the Middle East region's dynamics.

Also, in the HD approach, we can describe how different sub-state entities interact with each other within the region, as in the Ottoman Empire, and how other outside states can affect colonialism in the Middle East region (Turchin, 2004). This description can be done by tracing the way of governance in order to understand the dynamics of the region. Observing the Middle East region's historical dynamics by highlighting the way of governance can allow us to understand the differences between states and help other studies to predict the Middle East's future regional dynamics. Therefore, this essay presents an overview of the Middle East region, the Ottoman period, European colonialism, independence, nationalism and the Cold War.

### ***Governance and Historical Dynamics in the Middle East Region***

In a multi-polar international system, where the world is divided into many geographical cores or "regional worlds," regionalism has become a characteristic of world politics (Buzan, 2011; Acharya, 2011). Since the idea of "area" and the governance of a given region are closely related, it is essential to understand how regions have traditionally been

organised and administered. Although the term “regional governance” is commonly used in textbooks, it is rarely described or conceptualised (Herz, 2014; Nolte, 2016). Söderbaum (2013), drawing on Rosenau, thus gives a definition of regional governance “as spheres of authority at the regional level of human activity which amount to systems of rule, formal and informal, in which goals are pursued through the exercise of control” (Söderbaum, 2004, p. 224). Despite the fact that Fawcett and Serrano do not provide a precise description, they tend to prescribe to a complex concept of regional governance that refers to the setting and enforcing of rules by a regional body such as the institutions that exist within a given geographical space (Nolte, 2016). On the other hand, governance is the management of a specific state or region by actors who have the authority to govern, which is either given by force or voluntarily by states.



**Figure 2:** Study Organisation

In a broad sense, historical data collection is the collection of information about past events, periods, and thoughts on a specific topic, such as about regional governance in our case. To be precise, historical data includes most data collected about the Middle East region, whether manually or automatically. Among many possibilities, sources include books, articles, reports, treaties and agreements as well as various other documents that can be useful for analysis. The data have been divided based on the studied periods. After collecting the data, the second step was to find a logical and comprehensive connection between the

historical events, engagements and decisions of different influential powers and their relationships with regional governance.

## **Results and Discussions**

As a result of World War I, the map of the Middle East has entirely changed. The Turkish Republic and Iran are the only countries whose pre-war border remains essentially unchanged in the region. The region had experienced dramatic changes which seriously impacted the whole population, disrupting centuries of social, political, commercial and cultural relations. These extensive changes still reverberate almost a century later. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottomans faced a number of internal and external problems that included colonial intrusion and escalating rebellion in the provinces. The Ottoman Caliphate finally ended with the Sèvres (1920) and Lausanne (1923) treaties. This section will discuss the Ottomans and Western colonialism.

### ***The Ottomans and Cohesion of the State***

Middle Eastern scholars and books on the history of the Middle East and Arab-Islamic states pay little attention to the Ottoman period, even though the Empire began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and lasted nearly five centuries. With a few exceptions, it encompassed the vast majority of the Arab nations, and it was a period that had the most significant influence on governance practices in the Arab world. This attitude among the Arabs might be influenced by the West that tends to regard the entire Ottoman era, including the previously flourishing centuries, as a period of deterioration that is unworthy of attention (Ayubi, 1995, pp. 65-66). Ayubi approves the remarks of Albert Hourani (1981):

Many of the things Middle Eastern countries have in common can be explained by their having been ruled for so long by the Ottomans; many of the things which differentiate them can be explained by the different ways in which they emerged from the Ottoman Empire. (p. 66)

The Ottoman Empire was extensive territorially, within which various communities with different ethnicities, languages and religions lived. This required good administrative institutions to safeguard the unity and

cohesion of the state. Society in the Ottoman Empire was divided into two separate categories. The first, the people were organised into religious communities or *millet*s (Shaw & Cetinsaya, 2009). The second society was divided based on their affiliation with the government, separating government officials and those who worked in the military from those who were not involved in those institutions. The reign of Suleyman the Magnificent was notable for Ottoman power and affluence, as well as the rapid development of its political, economic and social systems (Witteck, 1938). The Ottoman rulers maintained the old Middle Eastern social divisions, with a small ruling class at the top known as the *askeri*, or “the military,” whose functions were chiefly limited to maintaining order and securing financial resources to sustain itself and fulfil its responsibility. The second, which was the bulk, was the ordinary class of *rayas* (*reaya*, or “the flock”), structured into independent communities based on religion (*millet*s) or economic pursuits (*esnaf*, or “guilds”). They were in charge of the other aspects of life that were not administered by the government (Alderson, 1956; Lowry, 2003).

After a long period of insecurity caused by frequent Mamluk fighting in Egypt and the Levant, Ottoman authority brought the much-needed order (Ayubi, 1995, p. 67). When the Ottomans conquered Arab lands, they incorporated the Mamluk parallel hierarchy and allowed it to coexist, often side by side, with a smaller but formally more authoritative Ottoman hierarchy (Ayubi, 1995, p. 69). Provincial political power appeared to operate more independently from the capital during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Almost everywhere in the Middle East and Mediterranean territories, the central government had become less important, with local distinguished families playing a more significant role in most people’s daily lives. Prominent provincial families dominated the whole sections of Ottoman politics. The Hasan Pasha family (Mamluk), for example, dominated and ruled Baghdad’s political and economic affairs for the entire 18<sup>th</sup> century (1704–1831), while the Jalili family played the same role in Mosul. Algeria was ruled by Nasruddin Barbarossa, while Egypt was ruled by powerful men such as Ali Bey (Quataert, 2000, p. 47).

However, the Ottoman rule in Arab countries was characterised by several features that led to its decline, including the central authority’s weakness and the emergence of separatist movements in the Arab countries (al-Sallabi, 2001).

The first feature was the sufficiency of imposing nominal sovereignty over the states. Among its most essential manifestations is an Ottoman governor's appointment, minting currency in the Sultan's name, sending the annual tribute and praying for the Sultan on the pulpits. Therefore, the powers of the governor (*pasha*) were limited to some tasks. As a result, the sects formed by national and religious minorities played a significant role in social services (e.g., education, health) and economic activities. Secondly, it was due to the spread of corruption and injustice. Since the governors were buying their positions, their main concern was to collect the most considerable amount of money before the expiry of their mandate, which usually did not exceed one year; this marked their rule with corruption and injustice (al-Sallabi, 2001, p. 529).

As a result of all this, the Ottoman state's weak political influence on the people of the Arab states gave rise to the emergence of local forces that knew how to exploit the anger among the Arab people and to lead the revolution against the central authority. Some of them even found encouragement and support from foreign powers (al-Sallabi, 2001, p. 300). These movements appeared in different regions of the Arab countries, the most important of which were: the movement founded by Fakhr al-Din in the Levant which led to Lebanon's independence under his rule and his family's rule between 1585 and 1635 AD; and The Great Ali Bey Movement in Egypt, in which the Mamluk, Sheikh Al-Balad Ali Bey the Great used the Russo-Turkish war outbreaks to declare his independence in 1770 AD (al-Sallabi, 2001, p. 376).

Due to this deterioration in the Ottoman Empire and the ensuing consequences, the conflict and competition among the various European countries to share their possessions in what is called in European history as the Eastern Question resulted in the fall of parts of the Empire under the economic, and then political, domination of some of these countries (al-Sallabi, 2001, p. 336-339).

The Ottomans ruled in Islam's name, but they tolerated other religions as well as other ethnicities. Tolerance became a religious principle as well as a political practise to enhance stability and peace in the region (Pappé, 2005). Each religious community had the right to exercise its laws and regulations. Various refugee groups had always been welcomed by the city of Istanbul, including the Jewish refugees who fled from Spain due to the Inquisition in early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The

Ottomans were not of Arab descent, and they did not assert their sovereignty based on ethnicity, as future Middle East rulers did. Their disregard for ethnicity was the best explanation for their ability to maintain power for nearly five centuries (Pappé, 2005, pp. 17-18).

Interaction with more efficient European administrative systems did not benefit the Ottomans. This situation, however, improved the position of Jews and Christians in Ottoman territory because it brought with it an impartial measure of secularism and demanded the well-being of non-Muslim inhabitants living in Ottoman territory. Furthermore, such reservations had become a justification for European colonial interference and invasion. When this situation arose, the impetus for change came from the state itself. While the leaders adopted a reformist discourse to deal with the expansion of Western rule, the people resisted this reform (Pappé, 2005, p. 20).

The disadvantaged groups of this reform, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the *'ulamā'* (Muslim scholars) and aristocracy, adopted a counter-reform based on tradition and religion. Their discourses were eventually turned into political activity in competition with radical secularising leaders and their opponents who protested against the state's secularisation—the reforms led to a more centralised Ottoman government. Between 1908 and 1924, the Ottomans vanished, after ruling the Middle East for more than five centuries.

Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, there has been no sovereign power in North Africa. The Ottomans gave up control of some Arab countries, such as Morocco and Tunisia. They signed several treaties with the West, especially after World War I, including the Treaty of Serves in 1920 and the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Most of the MENA territories fell under Western rule, as described in the following Articles in the Treaty of Serves (1920):

Article 118:

“Turkey recognises the French Protectorate in Morocco and accepts all the consequences thereof. This recognition shall take effect as from” March 30, 1912.

Article 119:

“Moroccan goods entering Turkey shall be subject to the same treatment as French goods.”



Article 120:

“Turkey recognises the French Protectorate over Tunis and accepts all the consequences thereof. This recognition shall take effect as of May 12, 1881. Tunisian goods entering Turkey shall be subject to the same treatment as French goods.”

This does not include the dozens of agreements and treaties involving Great Britain, Russia and France, which divided the Ottoman territories among these European powers and declared the expiration of the Muslim Caliphate through 1916's Sykes-Picot Treaty and 1917's Balfour Declaration. Mustafa Kemal and his army entered Istanbul and declared the founding of the Republic of Turkey after the Treaty of Lausanne (Kia, 2008, p. 152). Mustafa Kemal explained his generation's refusal of the nation's stale and unprofitable Ottoman past in a lengthy address to parliament. It is so famous that it is referred to as 'The Speech' in Turkish. In the early years in power, he devoted his government to carrying out reforms, which he dubbed revolutions, aimed at convincing the Turkish people to abandon their Ottoman heritage, renounce religious domination, and accept the modern secular state (Finkel, 2005, pp. 2-3).

Another major reason for the decline was the agricultural character of the economy. While Europe experienced the Industrial Revolution in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Ottoman economy remained primarily based on agriculture. The Empire certainly lacked the manufacturing facilities needed to compete with France, Great Britain, and even Russia. Consequently, its economic development was relatively stagnant, and its surplus in agriculture was used to repay loans to European creditors. Therefore, during World War I, the Ottoman Empire lacked the industrial experience required to produce the ammunition, heavy weapons, iron, and steel needed for railroad buildings to support the war (Lieven, 1999).

European development and growth in the economic field also led to the transformation of the Ottoman trade from a transit trade that generated enormous profits for the Empire to a trade based on the direct exchange between low-priced Ottoman raw materials and expensive European materials. Reducing the state's resources led to damage to the small industries of the Empire. The lack of resources caused the government

to resort to burdening the population with taxes, which harmed both local merchants and peasants, many of whom were forced to abandon their lands. As a result, large areas of the Empire were transformed into dead lands, one of the causes of frequent famines (Khalid, 2019).

### *The Colonial Domination Period and Governance Style*

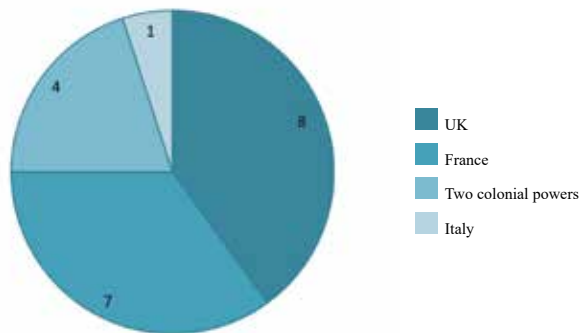
No proper understanding of the current Middle East states' nature and characteristics can be acquired without referring to the period of colonialism. The colonial era is a critical factor in determining post-independence levels of political stability, cultural discourse, economic development, and other issues (Lee & Schultz, 2012). Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the central states and the Middle East region's armed forces were weak, and the economy had reduced to the point where no government could exercise authority within the Middle Eastern countries. As the situation in many states worsened, colonial powers such as the United Kingdom, France and Russia tried to maintain order in their respective spheres of influence within the Ottoman Empire by occupying them, as was the case in Iran, Iraq and Syria. This was the first of several violations of state sovereignty in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, contributing to the escalation of Middle Eastern bitterness towards foreign intervention (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016).

As a system of governance and with the gradual establishment of colonialism, the Middle East region gradually lost control of its foreign policy and economy. The colonial powers established major settlements against the will of indigenous peoples and rulers, integrating their control over government institutions (Ziltener & Kunzler, 2015). In Egypt, for example, France and Great Britain established public finance administration in 1876, well before the military occupation of the country in 1882. The British pursued a similar strategy in the case of Persia (Gerber, 1987). Meanwhile, indigenous governments in Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt existed only nominally. Under the name of indigenous governments, additional officials from England and France were introduced, gradually gaining a higher level of control. As a result, the balance of power shifted. There was no such nominal government in Sudan; instead, it was direct administrative control, with almost all senior positions held by the British (Hourani, 2002; Ismael, 2000).

The postwar Middle East was almost entirely an Anglo-French preserve (Rogan, 2005). Algeria (1830–1962) and Djibouti (1862–1977) were French colonies. Tunisia and Morocco were protectorates from 1903 to 1956, while Syria and Lebanon were administered as League of Nations Mandates (Ziltener & Kuenzler, 2015).

Egypt, on the other hand, gained independence in 1922 but remained directly under British influence until 1956 due to a restrictive treaty. Sudan was ruled by the British until 1956. Aden, or South Yemen, was also a British colony at the time. Palestine, Transjordan, and Iraq were retained as mandates, and Britain’s interests in the Persian Gulf were safeguarded through treaties with the reigning governments in Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain, dubbed the Trucial States anti-piracy treaties, or “truces” signed between Britain and those countries. Similarly, Oman was under informal British control. Libya, which was an Italian colony from 1911 to 1951, Iran, which was ruled by Russia until 1919, and Palestine, which was ruled by Israel until recently, were notable exceptions to the region’s Anglo-French division (Ziltener & Kunzler, 2008; Louise: 2009).

Based on Figure 3, Britain had colonised eight Middle Eastern countries, namely Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, Emirates, Yemen and Sudan. France controlled seven countries in the region: Morocco, Algeria, Djibouti, Syria, Lebanon, Mauritania and Tunisia. This was followed by Italy in Libya, Portugal in Oman, Russia in Iran and Israel in West-Bank and Syria.



**Figure 3:** Middle East Colonies for Each Colonial Power

Source: Ziltener and Kuenzler (2008), “Impact of Colonialism- A Research Survey”.

In terms of government, British colonialism focused on economic interests and concentrated on indirect rule. French colonialism placed a greater emphasis on cultural ties and favoured a policy of direct rule (Ayubi, 1995, pp. 447-449). Both forms of colonialism were involved in profiting out of their territories. Both Timothy and Ayubi agree that colonial powers “enframing” the populations they governed or subjecting them to order and discipline enabled them to be managed and understood (Timothy, 1988).

Most of the new states today experienced colonialism at certain periods in the last two centuries (Hensel et al., 2008). According to Kortright (2003), colonialism is the establishment and control of territory for a long period of time by a foreign power over a subordinate and *other* separated and secluded people from the natural ruling power. Features of colonialism have included ruling and legal domination over another society, political and economic dependencies and institutionalised cultural and racial discrimination. Colonial domination may be imposed through military force, expropriation of resources and labour, incarceration and objective murders; the main goal of colonialism is exploiting both the indigenous people and their land.

According to Houry (1987, p. 58), the French theory of assimilation was strictly implemented in Algeria and, to a certain degree, in Tunisia to turn Muslims into French citizens and to integrate their society and economy with France. The colonial government also employed its army as a coercive force. In Syria, to prevent the country from reunifying politically, the French government used a variety of legal and territorial strategies.

Shafiqul Huque (1997), on the other hand, argued that people’s lives were forever changed as a result of colonialism. Furthermore, they have reached a point where the legacy of dependency affected their future life and development after independence. When colonialism was withdrawn, the situation became more complicated because it did not result in simple and absolute independence but rather substituted one dominant power by another with almost similar governance methods. Such observations often leave a mix of impressions that lead to confusion, mistrust, and immaturity.

Europeans brought their cultures, religions and traditions to justify and implement their presence in the MENA region. Because of this

occupation, some of the local values, *turāth* (heritage) and religions were substituted with European ones (Green & Luehrmann, 2017).

Previously, many Middle Eastern Muslim countries were part of the Ottoman Caliphate. For 12 centuries, up to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Islamic doctrine, the Sharia, had successfully dealt with customary law and local customary practices to emerge as the sole moral and legal force guiding society. This “law” was unique, recognised as a core structure of general norms by the societies and the dynastic forces that governed them (Hallaq, 2012).

France invaded Egypt in 1798. The invasion of the Islamic world had a traumatic impact, and the psychological issues that resulted from it are still present today. Even though the French occupied Egypt only for a short time, Hallaq (2012) claims that “the ease with which the French invaded the country shattered the Muslim confidence in superiority to the West.”(p. 12).

Abdelilah Belkeziz (2010), in his book entitled *The state in contemporary Islamic thought*, pays attention to the impact of colonialism on the Sharia. According to the author, the first of these factors was the colonial occupation of Arab and Islamic countries. What emanated from that in strengthening its political power through its institutions and introducing its political and administrative structures had isolated the Muslim countries from Islamic Sharia logic (Belkeziz, 2010).

The secular structure was then enforced from above by imperial powers, and the people had no choice but to accept it. These secular thoughts and ideas could not compete with the Sharia, nor could the Sharia be excluded from its 13 centuries existence as the centre of influence and referential authority. The issue, however, was not limited to the colonial era. Instead, after the end of overt foreign colonisation, it continued to play its role. How did the colonial powers do that to the Muslim societies in the MENA region?

To answer this question, Abdul Rashid Moten (2011) has explained how the colonial powers have Muslim societies:

The major victim of colonial domination was the Muslim’s self-image and cultural identity. [It] was due to the colonial policy of progress and enlightenment through education

planted in the colonies. Educational policy was geared at transmitting the European cultural values to the natives and to make available to the colonisers a group of clerks, collaborators and cronies to continue the cultural onslaught of the West...people were selected for higher studies. They were educated in the colonial legal system. They were then entrusted with running the educational institutions set up in the colonies to develop a new, educated Western elite class. The traditional leadership was systematically destroyed. The '*ulama*'...were routed out in favour of those who studied Western law and education. A foreign-oriented local leadership was imposed upon the people who became the heir to the imperial powers. This class became voluntary or involuntary instruments of intermediate domination for the pauperisation and the Westernisation of Muslim societies. (p. 346-347)

The continuous colonial domination began with educational policy and concluded with the Westernisation of Muslim societies. Paradoxically, MENA countries have often found that the effort to counter Western domination has involved internal political, social and economic re-organisation and the implementation of concepts foreign to their own traditional values. Thus, the people from the MENA region have found themselves encountering the dilemma of either directly adopting Western "modernising" ideas or totally rejecting them, with the consequence that the resistance to Western economic and developmental models has indirectly kept the region under colonialism.

On the other hand, ideological, religious, ethnic and other divides simmered just below the surface of nationalist movements. For a while, the colonised nations managed to overlook their differences to unite and work together against the colonial powers (Green & Luehrmann, 2012).

### ***Territorial Independence and Nationalism in the Middle East Region***

Within the Middle East region, the states favouring a regime type and constitution had very different concepts and thoughts about what the constitution and regime should achieve in terms of domestic economic, political and social order, as well as external relations with the West. Once the type of regime and constitution were established,

the differences among Middle Eastern state members emerged, making effective governance appear impossible (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016).

In response to colonial rule, nationalist movements emerged within new Middle Eastern states (Tibi, 1971, 1987, 1997). This situation would leave the Middle East region divided between a widely held dream of Arab cohesion and unity and nation-state reality, enhanced by nationalists' struggles for independence (Louise, 2009). Concerning regional governance, the Arab League, founded in Alexandria in 1945, was the first initiative of a concrete organisation to realise Arab nationalism (Salamé, 1979; Salary, 1989). Several institutions and organisations were established under the Arab League, and several agreements for security and economic cooperation were signed (Farrell, Hettne, Langenhove, 2005, pp. 188-189). The Arab League was also the region's first effort at regional cooperation (Hourani, 1962). The Arab League's top priority was to protect independence and sovereignty; the "Issue of Palestine" was a major item on the agenda:

The League has as its purpose the strengthening of the relations between the member states, the coordination of their policies to achieve cooperation between them and to safeguard their independence and sovereignty; and a general concern with the affairs and interests of the Arab countries.

Since the termination of the last Great War, the rule of the Ottoman Empire over the Arab countries, among them Palestine...has come to an end. She has come to be autonomous, not subordinate to any other state. The Treaty of Lausanne proclaimed that her future was to be settled by the parties concerned. ...The states signatory to the Pact of the Arab League are therefore of the opinion that, considering the special circumstances of Palestine. Until that country can effectively exercise its independence, the Council of the League should take charge of selecting an Arab representative from Palestine to take part in its work. (Arab League, 1945: Article II; Annex I Regarding Palestine)

During these years, the Palestine question focused on Arab politics and Arabism, serving as a factor that politically and ideologically united the Arab world (MacDonald, 1965, pp. 33-38). Although the Palestine question has continued to be top priority for the Arab states, they soon

came to practise their politics *vis-à-vis* the issue of the freedom of Palestine (Helena & Schultz, 2003).

However, the contradictions between Arabism and state-building (nationalism) quickly became apparent. Serious disagreements have emerged among Arab states regarding the type of unitary state that should be the primary objective and, as a result, the type of governance that is effective after independence. The United Arab Republic, made up of Egypt and Syria, was the only concrete confederative state. It was declared in 1958 but ended immediately in 1961. Thus, pan-Arabism provided one form of regional political identity between 1945 and 1970, which served as a foundation for regional governance and cooperative projects in terms of organisations (Farrell, Hettne, Van Langenhove, 2005, p. 191). However, this had a greater impact on ideology and discourse than on practical consequences. State-building projects demanded the promotion of state interests and state nationalism. As a result, regional governance under the umbrella of pan-Arabism was based on state-to-state relations (Farrell, Hettne, Van Langenhove, 2005, pp. 188-189).

Halliday (2005), on the other hand, argued that Arab rulers have acted as a single actor in political statements concerning the conflict with Israel. There is an idea of political unity in the wars between Arab states and Israel, in the joint statements from the Arab League and the Arab states, in the hindrance to independent action determined by ideological unity, in the boycotting of Israeli products and communication with Israel. The Arab–Israeli conflict resulted in a series of major wars (1948–1949, 1956, 1967, 1969–1970, 1973, and 1982) as well as an endless series of minor military clashes within and around Israel (Beinin & Hajar, 2014). These wars primarily involved Israel and its neighbours, as well as a mix of states (Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan) and non-state actors (PLO and Hamas) (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

Several countries (Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kuwait, Libya, and Tunisia) were directly engaged in significant ways against Israel, providing financial, rhetorical, and sometimes military support. Almost all Arab countries were involved in these wars to some extent, even if only verbally, and it had a significant impact on inter-Arab politics, especially on the fading and eventual departure of Egypt as the leader of Arab nationalism and the resulting opportunities for other regional



powers such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq to bid for that role (Tibi, 1997, 1998; Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

Below the surface of pan-Arabism, there has always been suspicion and grave ideological polarisation between Arab monarchies and the so-called progressive Arab republics (Luciano, 1990). The 1967 war between Israel and the Arab states gave a severe blow to pan-Arabism. Rather than moving ahead on the track of pan-Arabism and forming an integrated regional entity, during the 1970s the state system was gradually strengthened (Owen, 1992, pp. 90-92).

The 1979 Egypt-Israel treaty was a direct outcome of the 1978 Camp David Accords. As a result, Egypt, one of the most influential Arab states, ended its hostility and recognised Israel. The consequences of this treaty on inter-Arab politics included an immediate attempt to isolate Egypt from the Arab states community and a decision to oppose further negotiation for peace settlements between other Arab countries and Israel (Vatikiotis, 1997, p. 37). Another necessary outcome of the treaty was the reorientation of Egypt's governance and foreign policy toward the West, as well as the development of a better relationship with the United States. This change marked the end of the Soviet Union's previous active and vital role in the region (Vatikiotis, 1997, p. 37).

On the other hand, identifying an opposition or enemy has frequently been a critical step in developing nationalism (Polese et al., 2018). For example, once the concept of Arab nationalism was established, it developed into an idea and a political force for independence, followed by establishing a new state in Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and Iraq, (Kramer, 1993). Therefore, Arabism's main role was to build Middle Eastern states based on Arabic language, culture and heritage. At first, Turkish nationalism opposed it, but after that, European ideologies were accepted in parallel with their occupation of the majority of Arab countries. As a result, Arab nationalists could no longer claim Islamic heritage. This was also worthy of note for the Arab nationalists since Islamic heritage was synonymous with the Ottoman Empire, which ruled the region in the name of Islam for nearly five centuries (Bendebka, 2020).

Finally, political interests and nationalism took a *de facto* lead over Arabism, though Arabism retained its ideological role. Other regional integration has taken sub-regional blocs based on certain interests, such

as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

### ***Governance during the Cold War in the Middle East Region***

The main characteristic of this period is the changing ways of governance in different phases and stages. The crisis in Turkey, Iran, and other countries in the region, interconnected with great power hostility in late 1945 and early 1946, led to tensions between the Soviet Union and its Western-American allies. These crises were part of a broader re-organisation of power dynamics in the region, threatening the Western position in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Iran was crucial to these because it possessed huge petroleum reserves as well as the world's largest oil refinery in Abadan. Furthermore, its geography served as a barrier between the Soviet Union and the oil fields in the Persian Gulf (Halliday, 2005). The crises in Turkey and Iran occurred due to declining British power, intense regional rivalries with the Soviet Union, and internal political polarisation (Yalansiz, 2012). The two countries were affected by WWII. Iran was occupied by British and Soviet forces, with US troops stationed there to control the delivery of supplies to the Soviet Union. While technically neutral, Turkey carefully adjusted its allegiance from a pro-Germany to a pro-Allied position as the tides of war started to shift.

During another period of the Cold War, Britain, fearful of losing control of the Suez Canal, planned the establishment of the Middle East Command (MEC) and Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO), in which the United States, France, and Turkey would participate. In addition to that, in order to prevent the spread of the Soviet's influence into the Middle East, the US tried to involve more states in the region in its policies. Non-Arab countries, such as Turkey and Iran, would play significant roles in this strategy. Following the renewal of the British-Egyptian agreement, the British proposed that Egypt should join the Middle East Defence Organisation. However, the efforts were ineffective because Egypt no longer preferred to be free of British pressure (Yalansiz, 2012).

According to Khalidi (1984), Marcus (1989), Haliday (2005), Harper and James (1994), the Middle East's Cold War evolution can

be divided into four historical periods: 1) 1946 to 1955; 2) 1955 to 1974; 3) 1974 to 1985; and 4) 1985 to 1990. During the first period, the main focus of Soviet-Western rivalry was on the non-Arab countries bordering the USSR, namely Turkey and Iran. During this period, the Soviet Union lacked both the will and the capability to challenge the West in the Arab world.

However, by the second phase, the Soviet Union had established itself as an important ally of many Arab nationalist movements and governments, the most significant of which were Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya, and Algeria. During this time, Arab nationalism, working closely with Moscow, posed a serious challenge to Western dominance (Haliday, 2005). When the revolution and wars were pitted against the Western allies, regional wars such as Algerian (1954-1962), Arab-Israeli, and Yemen (1962-1970) were conducted in East-West antagonism (Marcus, 1989).

The Middle East became an essential part of the East-West rivalry for strategic positions in the Third World during the third period of the Cold War. Between 1970 and 1979, Egypt gradually expelled the Soviet Union. Moscow has maintained its position in other Arab countries, including Iraq and southern Yemen. During the 1970s, the United States expanded its influence in the Arab world.

The fourth phase of the Cold War started in 1985, with the election of Mikhail Gorbachev as Soviet leader. Gorbachev's initiatives, along with policy shifts by regional countries, were visible in the latter part of the 1980s in several territories, for example, the end of the Iraq-Iran War in 1988, the proclamation of the state of Palestine in 1988 and 1990, and the merger of the two Yemens, pro-western North and pro-eastern South, to form a single state. It can even be said that the Cold War had ended earlier in MENA than in any other region of the world (Halliday, 2005, p. 100).

## **Conclusion**

An examination of the modern history of the Middle East's regional dynamics and political regional coherence from different perspectives and different modern periods help to illuminate Middle Eastern countries' present state. This examination was carried out to see the Middle East's

history, recent attempts (Cold War and pan-Arabism) and processes to further its regional dynamics. It was done by explaining, analysing and highlighting governance in different historical periods that affected the Middle East's regional dynamics.

Trans-state power, supra-state identities, and global level forces have always been exceptionally pertinent in Middle Eastern states, competing with loyalties to territories. The weak regional and state governance in the Middle East was caused, in part, by global subordination, mostly during the colonial period and trans-state penetration during the independence, nationalism (pan-Arabism), and Cold War phases. Moreover, the Middle East region was susceptible to adverse events and weak governance in the past and state-building periods after independence.

For the past two centuries, the Middle East region's history was deeply affected by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the upsurge of Western-European military and economic power. In this matter, the main factors of the decline of the Ottoman Empire were weak economic growth, dependence on agriculture, corruption, difficulties in controlling its vast territories as well as the rise of nationalism in Arab countries, especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Different events such as the re-drawn regional map after World War II, decolonisation, the Cold War, the advent of independent countries, oil production and the way of governance have all hastened the formation of the Middle East region and have a direct effect on its cohesion. Attempts at regional development and good governance have flourished in the Arab world after independence, including creating some regional institutions, though these efforts have not led to the establishment of a functioning regional system. Until the 1990s, most attempts were produced based on the idea of pan-Arabism, rather than other stronger links that can be economical and social.

Furthermore, the ideological basis of pan-Arabism was to integrate the "artificially divided" Arab states. Thus, regional governance in the Middle East ranges from building a sense of regional awareness or community (soft regionalism) and consolidating regional groups and networks to the pan- or sub-regional groups formalised by inter-state agreements and organisation (hard regionalism).

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