

Forum: United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Issue # 2: Measures to Address Tensions over Supremacy in the Middle East

Written by: Diego Henesy

Chairs: Diego Henesy, Jimena Camargo



Guiding Questions as you Read

How is the creation of these Middle Eastern governments related to their lack of consistency?

How did the Arab spring allow for a change in Middle Eastern policies in the contemporary era?

How did the discovery of Oil and Natural Gas deposits influence the western interest in the MENA region?

How did the fall of Afghanistan in 2022 lead to a sudden interest in Middle Eastern relations?

Introduction

The tensions over Supremacy in the Middle East have been an issue for hundreds of years, being at the forefront of UN intervention for decades. The causes for these struggles range from religious differences to societal conflicts and **geopolitical advantages**. The sudden influx in power that occurred in the late 20th century due to discoveries of massive **oil deposits** throughout the region led to increased tensions and development that brought the attention of major external powers interested in the benefits that came with the copious amounts of oil. As years go on, the conflicts in the Middle East continue to develop and become more extreme, with millions throughout all the involved countries suffering from one of the largest **humanitarian crises** of all time. The lack of resources entering these regions, with the amount of exportation occurring, leads to a lack of stability and consistency within these countries' governments, which directly introduces political protests, societal dissent, and rebel groups attempting to remove and replace governments. For example, **The Arab Spring** which has been occurring since 2011, led to the reform of many northern African and Middle Eastern countries' governments. This led them away from authoritarianism, and into democracy.

Definition of Key Terms

Proxy War: A proxy war is a conflict that is fought not through its main instigators or participants, but rather through a separate entity which protects the major parties' central headquarters. For example, The Vietnam War.

Geopolitical Advantages: Benefits that a country or region has due to its strategic location, resources, economy, military strength, and other factors that give it an advantage over other countries in influencing global affairs.

Oil Deposits: Petroleum reserves found underground.

Humanitarian Crises: A humanitarian crisis is defined as an event or series of events that put in jeopardy the mental, physical, or emotional well-being of a group, whether caused by internal or external issues

The Arab Spring: The Arab Spring was a sequential series of pro-democracy, and anti-authoritarian uprisings that happened across many countries in the Middle East and North Africa, beginning in late 2010. These uprisings aimed to overthrow authoritarian regimes, and subsequently increase personal freedoms and social liberties.

Current Situation

Syrian Civil War

The Syrian civil war has been ongoing since 2011 and began as a conflict that arose from criticism of the government of President Bashar al-Assad. They were connected to the "Arab Spring Movement", which wanted to challenge the existing authoritarian governments in Middle Eastern and North African countries. The conflict has become more of a proxy war between major international players. Russia and China are known to support the Syrian government, while rebel groups are backed by the Turkish government, the United States of America, and some major Gulf states. This situation has led to a major humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands dead, and millions displaced from their homes and cities. There is also a severe lack of necessary resources available, like food and water, and medical care, which causes major psychological trauma and stress to people who must face the conflict daily.

Yemen Crisis

The Yemen Crisis began in 2011, also due to the Arab Spring, and is a massive

humanitarian issue occurring in Yemen due to political, social, economic, and military issues. It began with street protests advocating for the resignation of then-president Ali Abdullah Saleh but evolved into a major crisis that prevented tens of millions of people from receiving necessities for survival. This leads to one of the most prevalent humanitarian issues currently, with millions of children succumbing to vaccine-preventable illnesses due to a lack of clean water, hygiene, and nourishment. This alongside the proxy war is backed by Iran which supports the Houthi Rebels, while the United States of America and the UK support the Saudi coalition. There have been attempts to resolve this issue diplomatically, but all have failed, leading to the devastating effects the conflict is having on its population.

Israel-Palestine conflict

The Israel-Palestine dispute is a long-standing conflict between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. It has been going on for over 200 years and has included attempts at diplomacy (failed), wars, anti-war movements, armed conflicts, and international intervention throughout. The most prominent contributors to interventions are the United States of America, supporting Israel during several situations, most notable being their direct sending of resources and weaponry to Israel during the 1967 war. Also, recently they have aided the Palestinian Authority with military aid. The Arabic States have also intervened, but in most cases been defeated by the Israeli army. The United Nations has attempted numerous peace deals over the years, but unfortunately, the conflict continues with its violent nature and has not shown any attempt to be peacefully resolved.

International interest in Gas and Oil deposits

In the late 20th Century, massive oil reserves were discovered in the Middle East. This led to massive economic, societal, and geopolitical changes in the world, as now some of the most poor countries in the world controlled one of the most important resources for

technological evolution and maintenance, Oil. Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman. These countries are among the largest oil producers in the world, with Saudi Arabia and Iran being the two largest oil producers in the region. China, India, Japan, South Korea, and the United States are the largest importers of oil from these regions, with China and India alone accounting for over 50% of the aforementioned nations' exports.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Iran

Iran is a major player in several conflicts and wars within the middle east, whether direct or proxy. This includes the war in Syria, the conflict in Yemen, and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Iran supports the current Syrian government in the civil war, and it is suspected that they have been involved in supporting the Yemeni and Palestinian groups in their conflicts with Israel. They have also been a cause for international concern due to their nuclear program which has led to economic sanctions. Their views are mainly concerned with maintaining their influence in the Middle East and continuing to build relationships with their allies, evident in their support of the Syrian government in its civil war. They also strive to continue to develop their nuclear program, which is a cause for concern to international governments.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has their main interests in the protection of their existing power and the control of the developing Iranian power. This causes concern to Saudi Arabia due to the Iran influence, which goes against theirs. Saudi Arabia is a supporter of the Syrian opposition and has provided funds and military resources to them in the past. In terms

of the Yemen crisis, the Saudi government has been leading a group of Arab states to go against the Houthi rebels, who they identify as an Iranian proxy, and therefore a problem that must be addressed. Saudi Arabia supports a 2 party solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has suggested that they will normalize relations with Israel if they compromise to 2 party solution with Palestine.

Israel

Israel values and believes that it is a state in a position of vulnerability and jeopardy. The Israel identity aligns a lot with Western culture and values and has demonstrated in the past a hostile nature towards other countries in the region. Israel sees Iran as its main regional rival and believes that if it continues to go unchecked, it will be a threat to national security. It strongly went against Iran's acquiring nuclear arms and threatened military action. At the center point of Israel's views is a lack of security, and a desire to maintain power and alienate the Palestinians and Iranians. It also upholds several Western values that allow it to cooperate with nations such as the USA.

United States of America

The United States of America views the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) as mainly an economic and geopolitical focal point and secondarily a security concern. It has consistently supported specific countries like Israel and has consistently upheld its main value, which usually follows the train of spreading democracy and getting rid of possible authoritarian and communist developments throughout the world. The reason for their view of MENA as a security threat comes from a history of Military involvement and some occasions of terrorism, which developed into an everlasting rule of countries like Afghanistan. This recently changed, and the areas have regressed into their aforementioned extremist states. The USA has also attempted and been successful in using the MENA region as an import facilitator of Oil, one of the most important resources. It seeks to uphold this and continue to utilize the MENA region for its

resources.

UN Involvement

The UN has previously addressed these issues with economic sanctions, and peacekeeping divisions aiming at dissolving issues, like the Israel-Palestine partition, since 1947. It has addressed the gulf war between Iraq and Kuwait, and it condemned Iraq for its actions and organized coalitions of partner nations, like the USA in the organization of the liberation of Kuwait.

In the Syrian Civil War, it organized and administered several resolutions enforcing ceasefires and political and diplomatic resolutions for the issue. It also organized civil discussions between the Syrian government and the opposition groups. During the Libyan civil war, the UN allowed and prepared military intervention led by NATO and other several Arab countries, while also establishing the UNSMIL, United Nations Support Mission in Libya, to support the reintroduction of stability and peace in the country.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1979-1989: Soviet-Afghan war	The Soviet-Afghan war began when the soviet union attempted to take over Afghanistan to further spread communism, but failed when the

Mujahideen fought back, trying to establish an Islamic state.

1990-1991: The First Gulf War

This war began following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which was countered by a US intervention that removed the Iraq threat and was followed by a major humanitarian crisis in Iraq, and rain of economic sanctions.

1993: Oslo Accords

The agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that aimed to achieve peace between the two sides.

1999-2014: Afghanistan War

The Afghanistan war was triggered after the 2001 9/11 attacks, which caused a large sense of uncertainty and imposed danger within the MENA region, (Middle East, North Africa). This tension led to an American invasion and a long-lasting war that ended with US occupation. In 2021, the US withdrew from Afghanistan, leaving a power vacuum that led to a sudden Taliban reintroduction.

2003-2011: The Second Gulf War

This conflict was about the overtaking of

Saddam Hussein's government in Iraq by the US. This was a controversial war that led to the deaths of thousands of civilians and military personnel, for both parties.

2006: Lebanon War

the conflict between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah that resulted in significant destruction and loss of life in both countries.

2011-2012: Arab Spring

A series of protests and uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, leading to political and social changes in several countries' governments, usually surrounding the removal of authoritarianism.

2015: Iran Nuclear Deal

An agreement between Iran and six major powers (United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China.) aimed at limiting Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions

Past International Action

Creation of Israel

The creation of Israel in 1948, following the UN resolution to separate Palestine was a massively significant moment in the history of the MENA since it not only created an entirely new party involved in all diplomatic relations but also displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who previously lived in the pre-partitioned Israel. The solution was mainly supported by the USA and Western powers, but most importantly, was disagreed upon by most Arab and Middle-Eastern states. It has been the cause of many modern conflicts, most notably the Israel-Palestine war, which sees both countries fighting for land and power over each other.

Gulf War

The Gulf War began as a response to the aggression being presented by Saddam Hussein-led Iraq, which had just invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990. The action was seen as violent, and unjustifiable by the Western powers, primarily the USA, and some Arab countries, which led to the beginning of the war. The involved parties were Iraq, the USA, Britain, France, Germany, the Soviet Union, Japan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Other parties were also involved, but these were the most notable. The war had significant geopolitical effects on the region since it led to higher tensions between the USA and other MENA regions, and eventually the 2003 Iraq invasion by the USA.

Current Syrian conflict

The current Syrian civil war was spearheaded by the revolts in 2011 against the government of Bashar al-Assad, who had been the leader of Syria since 2000. Since then, the war evolved into a complex and idiosyncratic situation that led to one of the most devastating and prolonged humanitarian crises of the modern era. There have been several attempts at diplomatic solutions to the subject, both emerging internally and aided by external international factors, but the conflict remains prevalent and is

unfortunately still ongoing, increasing the number of displaced Syrians who have to emigrate from their native land constantly.

Arab Spring

The Arab Spring was a series of sequential series of pro-democracy, and anti-authoritarian uprisings that happened across many countries in the Middle East and North Africa, beginning in late 2010. These uprisings aimed to overthrow authoritarian regimes, and subsequently increase personal freedoms and social liberties. The origins of the uprisings are in Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain, where the authoritarian regimes were particularly conflicting since the situations in those countries were disastrous. The Arab spring itself was not as significant as the diplomatic and geopolitical differences it made in the region, allowing for the emergence of democratic nations, and more fluid international relations. This was not the case in all countries, though.

Possible Solutions

Supporting Anti-Terrorism and Anti-extremism Agencies

Combatting terrorism in the Middle East and Northern Africa is critically important to the development of the region. This is due to the historically dominant and pervasive authoritarian organizations that suppressed, killed, and injured thousands during their reigns. With a comprehensive and functional anti-terrorism system, the MENA region could be a much more viable place, not only for living but for internal economic and social improvement. Cracking down on terrorist groups by promoting international collaboration efforts and supplying resources to these areas to ensure that the governments don't devolve back into this could be a viable solution to corruption in the region.

Prioritizing diplomatic relations over violent conflicts

To foster positive, functional, and most important, sustainable relations between nations in the MENA region it's crucial to promote sustained dialogue and diplomacy among all parties involved. Providing channels for direct negotiations, such as peace conferences and summits, enables conflicting nations to express their problems and find a middle ground. Impartial international entities, such as the United Nations, or the ICJ, can also play a vital role in mediating the process and building trust and mutual understanding between the parties. This solution would prevent further damage to the population of these nations, as past occurrences have demonstrated the humanitarian crises that have occurred in the past.

Improve Regional Cooperation

To promote better understanding and cooperation between nations, it is critical to boost regional organizations such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council to play an active role in resolving tensions in the MENA region. These organizations should establish functional frameworks for preventing and resolving conflicts and for building confidence between regional nations, and international powers. Moreover, encouraging greater economic, cultural, and social exchanges can significantly contribute to nurturing mutual trust and understanding among nations. This could allow people to develop interests in other cultures, and not be restricted and standoffish towards other cultures.

Arms control and non-proliferation

Arms control and non-proliferation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region

play a crucial role in promoting stability and peace. Preventing the spread of weapons and curtailing the influence of armed groups are vital steps toward combating terrorism in this volatile region. MENA has a history marked by dominant and oppressive authoritarian organizations that caused immense suffering through suppression, violence, and loss of life. Establishing a comprehensive and effective anti-terrorism system is paramount for the region's development. By fostering international collaboration and providing necessary resources, governments can successfully crack down on terrorist groups, ensuring they do not regain power and avoiding a relapse into corruption. Such measures would not only enhance security but also pave the way for internal economic and social progress, making the MENA region a more promising and prosperous place to live.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

The sustainable development goal (SDG) that best aligns with this topic would be SDG 16, which aims to Promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. This would align critically with the MENA region's issues since many of the government's inefficiencies lead to the collapses of societies and even cultures. If nations in the MENA region attempted to implement SDG 16, efforts to mitigate civilian casualties and general consequences would be more approachable, ensuring that no innocent people suffer the repercussions of their government's actions.

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history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/creation-Israel.

"The Gulf War: Operation Desert Storm, 1991." United States Department of Veterans Affairs, 27 Jan. 202

Useful Links for Research

- I. Country profiles
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
- II. Article on current Middle East and North African politics:
<https://world101.cfr.org/rotw/middle-east/politics>
- III. A news source covering a wide range of topics related to the Middle East region.
- IV. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42008809>
- V. Offers news and analysis on the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine.

- VI. <https://www.aljazeera.com/tag/israel-palestine-conflict/>
- VII. Explores the underlying causes and origins of the Arab Spring movement in the Middle East.
- VIII. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/arab-spring-cause>
- IX. Reflects on the ten-year anniversary of the Arab Spring and its aftermath through an interactive feature.
- X. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2021/arab-spring-10-year-anniversary-lost-decade/>
- XI. Provides an overview of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its historical context.
- XII. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict>
- XIII. Focuses on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, particularly its impact on children and their rights.
- XIV. <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/yemen-crisis>
- XV. Reports on recent attacks carried out by ISIS-K in Afghanistan amidst the Taliban's control of the country.
- XVI. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/19/asia/isis-k-attacks-afghanistan-taliban-command/index.html>