

Regional Arms Control Regime in the Middle East

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Abstract

Arms control and the designing of global and regional security regimes is important issues in the field of strategic studies. This article proposes that strategic stability and systemic equilibrium are causally related to the formation of security regimes in international politics and Middle East studies. In respect to barriers to the formation of such regime, the author argues that systemic equilibrium and strategic stability are necessary preconditions in order to creation arms control regime in the Middle East . Thus, in light of these arguments, the research concludes that the main obstacles to the formation and sustainability of arms control regimes consist of: structural disequilibrium, imbalance of power, interventions of intrusive powers, global cycles of power and its linkage to this region, as well as strategic instability caused by these variables.

Keywords: arms control, regional security regimes, strategic studies, systemic equilibrium, strategic stability

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Introduction

Arms control and disarmament are vital issues in the fields of international relations and international security. The primary perception is that the control or elimination of armaments would prevent hostilities between signatories to arms control regimes and pave the way for effective cooperation and perpetual peace. This view is reflected in idealist theories of international relations, the creation and ratification of global and regional organizations, as well as treaties. For instance, the 1868 Declaration of St. Petersburg was the first step towards establishing a global disarmament regime. Efforts to create such a disarmament regime continued with Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning the use of gas and bacteriological weapons. Moreover, Article 11 and Article 29 of the United Nations charter address the issue of disarmament. Since 1945, many arms control agreements have focused on issues related to anti-ballistic missile systems, proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and the reduction of the frequency of nuclear tests around the world. The following agreements address nuclear weapons and the danger of a nuclear war between the two Cold War superpowers: the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, which prevents states from using Antarctica for military purposes; the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963, which banned nuclear tests in the atmosphere, underwater and in space; the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, which bans the manufacturing and possession of biological weapons; the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I & SALT II), controlling the development and use of



anti-ballistic missile systems and the 1989 Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, limiting the number of conventional arms that could be deployed in Europe (Sonali and Way, 2004).

With the emergence and development of nuclear weapons in some parts of the world, efforts were made to create a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) disarmament regime. The Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963 and the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) were among the most important efforts to reach that goal by the international community. With the proliferation of nuclear weapons, attempts to halt the spread of such arms became limited. Moreover, *in order to prevent the proliferation of WMDs* and to promote peace and stability, various regions came to the conclusion that regional disarmament regimes should be established. Consequently, regional treaties were signed and the concept of the Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone, or NWFZ developed. According to article 6 of the NPT, each of the Parties to the Treaty commits itself to pursuing negotiations in good faith on effective measures related to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament as well as a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Moreover, Article 7 states that nothing in this Treaty affects the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties in order to assure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories. The Central Asian Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone (CANWFZ) treaty was established by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. It commits all signatories to not manufacture, acquire, test, or possess nuclear weapons. The treaty was signed on 8 September 2006. In addition, the African NWFZ Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, establishes a NWFZ in Africa. The Southeast Asian NWFZ (SEANWFZ), or the Bangkok Treaty of 1995, is a nuclear weapons moratorium treaty between Southeast Asian member-states under the auspices of the ASEAN. The Treaty of Rarotonga is the common name for the South Pacific NWFZ Treaty, which formalizes a NWFZ in the South



Pacific and was signed by the South Pacific nations on August 6, 1985. Finally, a NWFZ in the Middle East was addressed at the NPT Review Conference in 1995 and Resolution A/RES/58/68, which was adopted by the General Assembly on the 19th of December 2003. However, despite considerable efforts to boost regional disarmament regimes, the formation and evolution of disarmament security regimes faced numerous obstacles; especially in the Middle East. In theory and practice of international relations, there is no consensus on the effectiveness of such efforts among scholars. It should be noted that there are few states which have successfully detonated nuclear weapons. Five are considered to be "nuclear-weapon states" (NWS) under the terms of the NPT. A total of eight states have successfully detonated nuclear weapons. In order of acquisition, the United States, Russia (successor state to the Soviet Union), the United Kingdom, France, and China have developed nuclear weapons. States that are known or believed to possess nuclear weapons are sometimes referred to as the nuclear club. Since the NPT came into effect, three states that are not parties to the Treaty have conducted nuclear tests; namely India, Pakistan, and North Korea. North Korea had been a party to the NPT but withdrew in 2003. Israel is also widely believed to have nuclear weapons, although it has refused to confirm or deny this, and is not known to have conducted a nuclear test. South Africa has the unique status of a nation that developed nuclear weapons but has since disassembled its atomic arsenal before joining the NPT.

It seems that there is no general agreement about the advantages of nuclear disarmament regimes among international relations scholars. However, many believe that such regimes can bring technical advantages and also promote stability. (Sagan, Waltz, Betts, 2007) As a result, three groups with different perceptions concerning the issue could be identified: The first group emphasizes on the dynamics of technology as a principal objective for their efforts. Based on their analysis, access to such weapons is associated with progress of technology, and technological requirements push countries to develop



nuclear weapons. The second group puts emphasis on maintenance of security vis-à-vis foreign enemies as a driving force behind development of atomic arms. In other words, the security environment is of great importance for developing such weapons. The third group considers internal variables such as government incentives, form of government and so forth.

The status of each variable would result in regime inefficiencies, some of which may be identified in the Middle East. Many *scholars have paid a lot of attention* to the status of such weapons in the Middle East and motivations and barriers to acquiring such weapons. (Lotfian, 1388: 189-226) Overall, it appears that the formation of security and arms control regimes in the Middle East are based on systemic facts. In this regard, addressing the underlying factors in the formation of arms control regimes in regional systems is presented as a scientific necessity. Given that in some regions such as the Middle East *we are facing the asymmetric spread of nuclear weapons, the formation of control and disarmament regimes is perceived as a serious issue.*

The research question is what are the major obstacles to creating a regional arms control regime in the Middle East? With regard to international regimes theory as well as foreign variables and *security environment*, it is perceived that strategic stability in the international arena and regional strategic *environment are the most important preconditions for creating international security regimes. Conventional imbalance in strategic stability in the Middle East poses serious challenges for the formation and evolution of security regimes in this region.* In order to answer key questions, an empirical case study is used as the research method. In this respect, *after presenting a theoretical model of this phenomenon, the research endeavors to investigate the Middle East region as a case study.*

I. Theoretical Framework

The theorization of arms issues features *distinguishing theoretical frameworks*. On the one hand, it is a theoretical concept about disarmament and the common assumption is that states tend to create



conflicts through weapons manufacturing industries. Accordingly, there is an overwhelming attempt to reduce wars in international relations through the removal of armament. *Another* assumption is that individual *states with more power do not show restraint in responding to threats and act aggressively. From this point of view, disarmament theories do not consider the consequences of military supremacy, but rather examine the consequences of arms races.* In other words, it is perceived that the removal of war equipment would reduce conflicts and lead to perpetual peace (Ghasemi, 1388).

The other area is arms control based on real politick. It is argued that the *probability of eliminating weapon in international politics is not strong; however, the management of weapons is not impossible.* In other words, through creating arms control regimes and set them with a certain level of strategic stability, a minimum level of security could be achieved. The general structure of the conceptual realist perspective can be operational as shown in Model1. The main objective is to prevent arms races which would lead to devastating wars and change the systemic equilibrium point. Control should be exerted upon the structural and operational level. At the structural level, preserving harmony between forces and equipment is of great importance. Meanwhile, at the operational level, creating accurate perceptions, transparency and predictability is essential to maintaining strategic stability in regional and international systems.

The question which is raised is how states cooperate on arms control within the framework of regional security regimes? Various theories in international relations explain the formation of international regimes (Ghasemi, 2005). The realist approach is the main and most important theory used to address the formation of regimes. In this respect, security studies have certain principles that can be described as follows:



Fundamental Principles of Realism with regards to Security Environments	
Structural Status of the System	Anarchy
Actors	States
Aim	Survival, Security and Dominance
Patterns of Interaction	Conflict and Competition
Main Concern	Security
States' Priorities	Access to Military Power
Dominant trend	Use of force
Peace	Based on Preparing for War
Confidence	Based on lack of Confidence
The Significance of Arms	Military Equipment
Pattern of Power Distribution	Preventing the Will to Dominate or Creating Alliances
Arms Races	Based on Balance of Power

Realists believe that states are inherently aggressive (offensive realism) and/or obsessed with security (defensive realism), and that territorial expansion is only constrained by other power(s). Although these two groups share common principles, they favor different strategies to ensure security. In international relations, defensive realism is a variant of *political realism*. Defensive realism looks at states as rational players who are the primary actors in world affairs. Defensive realism predicts that anarchy on the world stage causes states to become obsessed with security. Aggressive expansionist policies in this regard are not necessary. In addition, countries are trying to sustain balance in an international system structure that encourages countries to maintain balance. In response to serious threats, states seek to preserve the balance (Baldwin, 1993); (Keohane, 1996); and (Kelly, 2007).

Offensive realism argues that states are not satisfied with a given amount of *power*, but seek *hegemony* i.e., maximization of their share of world power for security and survival. States implement aggressive expansionist policies to provide security (Ghasemi, 1384: 105-106). In this regard, balance and threats are necessary concepts in offensive realism to improve long term survival. Both can lead to the formation of a partnership in the form of a regime and instable conditions, countries can closely cooperate even though offensive realism rejects



the possibility of cooperation among states.

Generally, based on these principles, the security environment of states is based on anarchy, power and distrust. Accordingly, the assumptions and formulas shaping the international security regime can be made in the following configuration; the region's strategic importance in the international system and *great powers' sensitivity to it plays an important role in the formation of security regimes*. Notably, geopolitical regions with very high sensitivity and lack of internal cohesion can hardly create security regimes. As a result, the security environments of these regions are fragile and could lead to conflicts. Moreover, the structure of the international system and balancing behavior of the states within the system are a determining factor in the formation and evolution of regional regimes. Accordingly, the type of global order, i.e. competitive or hegemonic order, would lead the region in question to maintain balance or vice versa. Significant turning points in the international system play an important role in the period of security regime formation. Some *events in the short term would result in growing instability in the region. This is also a main obstacle to the formation of regimes*. The power structure can facilitate regime formation. If membership in regimes leads to growing instability, states will not enter such agreements. Mentioned variables have a determining impact on the formation of regimes.

In order to establish security regimes, important policies should be implemented. There are three stages in formation of security regimes: In the first stage stability or instability in International system, lack of trust between member states; *international appeal of boosting military capabilities and quantitative or qualitative arms race* are the main features. In the second stage the definition of new strategic stability in the international system and agreement among member states concerning the strategic stability point in the system are critical and finally in third stage bringing the international regimes into a new form is of vital importance.

Game theory in international relations analyzes the system's



strategic stability. Game theory is a mathematical method for analyzing calculated circumstances, such as in games, where a person's success is based upon the choices of others. More formally, it is the study of mathematical models of conflict and cooperation between intelligent and rational decision-makers. The equilibrium point in games theory is a critical issue. At this point, the optimal strategy for both players would be recognized (Maoz, Kuperman, 2006). *Another important issue is micro and macro behavior. In many cases, behavior at the micro-level will disturb the balance (Schelling, 1967). Reaching balance is a determining factor in game theory. In this situation, actors conclude that the optimal strategy is at this point.*

There is a different level of equilibrium within the international system. In each of the equilibrium points, member states have different relative abilities and bargaining power which are desirable positions capable of shaping security regimes (Chatterjee, 2003). With regard to game theory, militarization, deterrence, regional disarmament and arms control are different ways to establish strategic stability in regional systems. In the stage strategic stability and cooperation states and governments are analyzed based on the *Prisoner's Dilemma* theory, Collective benevolence theory and market failure theories.

The prisoner's dilemma is a canonical example of a game, analyzed in *game theory* that shows why two individuals might not cooperate, even if it appears that it is in their best interest to do so. It was originally conceived by *Merrill Flood* and *Melvin Dresher* while working at *RAND* in 1950. *Albert W. Tucker* formalized the game with prison sentence payoffs and gave it the name "prisoner's dilemma" (Poundstone, 1992).

II. The Middle East and Arms Control Regimes

To create a Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone in the Middle East, critical issues including structural stability in the Middle East; global power cycle and strategic stability in the region; security dilemma in the Middle East; balance of power in the region and pattern of



relationships and the balance of threats have to be considered.

Structural stability in the Middle East originates from interaction between global, regional and internal strategic environments. Energy resources in the Middle East are an important issue for the other regions. For instance, Saudi Arabia is famous for its rich petroleum reserves, which are the dominant force in its economy. Though dependent on world oil prices, the country is one of the richest in the world thanks to these crude reserves. During the 1970s and '80s, the Saudi government gained control of Aramco, originally an oil enterprise of the United States, which brought in so much revenue that the country was virtually at full employment.

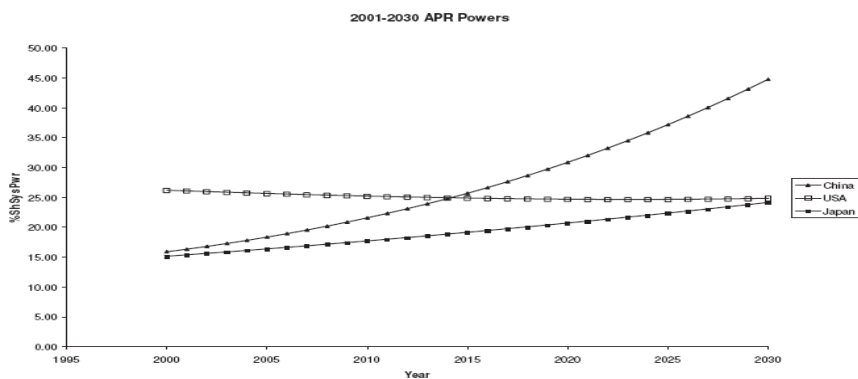
Polarity in international relations is any of the various ways in which power is distributed within the international system. It describes the nature of the international system at any given period of time. One generally distinguishes four types of systems: unipolarity, bipolarity, tripolarity, and multipolarity for four or more centers of power. Bipolarity is a distribution of power in which two states have the majority of economic, military, and cultural influence internationally or regionally. Often, spheres of influence will develop. For example, during the Cold War, most Western and democratic states would fall under the influence of the USA, while most Communist states would fall under the influence of the USSR. After this, the two powers will normally maneuver for the support of the unclaimed areas. Strategic stability in bipolar systems was a product of geopolitical balance between the competing powers. During the Cold War, the United States and the USSR were in competition concerning the Middle East and each side asserted influence in the region. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the balance of power in the Middle East changed in favor of the United States. Consequently, the Middle East region was highly exposed to the waves of a hegemonic system. In other words, the hegemonic order undermines the independence of the region because the regional order is formulated based on hegemonic power interests.



In the Middle East, there are certain challenges that pave the way for the presence of hegemonic and transnational powers: 1) Nation-building; in some parts of the region, there is no unification between the people and the state; 2) Inefficiencies within the region expose vulnerability to external threats; and 3) Centrifugal tendencies.

These challenges bring further instability to the region. According to Cohen, the Middle East is a fragile environment and suffers from structural challenges. For instance it lacks a center of historical and regional integration mechanism. Moreover, there is no regional organization in the region and effective regional territory. Situation of empty areas along borders and shatter points in the region which prohibit further communication. Beside there are changing alliances, these issues reduce the level of cooperation in the region. This paves the way for the formulation of intervention policies by trans-regional players. Accordingly, the link between power cycles and global strategic stability in this region intensifies.

Global power cycle and strategic stability in the region: After 1991, US power declined and China and the European Union were introduced as new global players. This decline, albeit slow, has continued to be stable and permanent (Kissane, 2005). Such developments can be demonstrated as follows:



Source: Dylan Kissane (2005) 2015 and the Rise of China: Power and Cycle Analysis and the Implications for Australia Volume 1 Number1, p116.



One of the critical aspects affecting strategic stability in the Middle East is the global power cycle and its implications for the region. The United States and China have competing interests in the region. In this regard, the Middle East has a critical role in the future. Chinese engagement in the Middle East has expanded economically, politically, and strategically over the last several years. Since 2002, the Middle East has become the leading arena for Beijing's efforts to secure effective ownership of critical hydrocarbon resources, rather than solely relying on international markets to meet China's energy import needs. There is every reason to anticipate that China will continue and even intensify its emphasis on the Middle East as part of its energy security strategy. China will likely keep working to expand its ties to the region's energy exporters over the next several years to ensure that it is not disadvantaged relative to other foreign customers and to maximize its access to hydrocarbon resources under any foreseeable circumstances, including possible military conflict with the United States. If not managed prudently, this competition will generate multiple points of bilateral friction in the region (Lahneman, 2003).

Considering the US military presence in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan on the one hand, and containing Islamic Republic on the other, one may assume that the importance of the region for major powers is on the rise (Motaghi, 2009). The Middle East is faced with different waves of strategic competition and the threats against some of the units, including units of the international system which are also faced with internal imbalances, are also enhanced. In such an environment, states' tendency to form indigenous regimes will decrease. In addition, intervening measures taken by major powers undermine regional countries' efforts to create security regimes. Moreover, strategic imbalances in the world lead to further instability in geopolitical zones including the Middle East. Accordingly, growing instability as well as security problems of the states within the region is determining obstacles to the formation and evolution of indigenous



security regimes.

Intervention and Structure of the Security Dilemma in the Middle East: As mentioned before, the prisoner's dilemma is a canonical example of a game analyzed in *game theory* that shows why two players might not cooperate. The absence of a specific organization and interference and influence of third parties are major obstacles to cooperation between prisoners. Generally, strategic instability within the region and structural challenges pave the way for foreign intervention. This would bring about further inconveniences and new challenges. Under this condition, the system is far from the equilibrium necessary for the formation of arms control security regimes. Nonetheless, unilateralism typically requires an assertive hegemony: a particular willingness to deploy military, economic, and political resources. In a unipolar system, alliances are created to control the hegemon or to take advantage of the power of the hegemonic power (Walt, 2009). Imposing punitive measures on rivals as well as offering incentives to encourage allies is interventionist state strategy.

With regard to the hegemonic power, it is argued that the Soviet Union played a significant role in Middle Eastern affairs. For instance, the Arab-Israeli conflict was a major part of the *Cold War*. However, since 1973, the US took a leading role in this conflict and supported Israel, Egypt and other countries in the Middle East. After the Cold War, this trend came to fruition. US policies can be viewed through the lens of the prisoner's dilemma. The United States provides its allies with military equipment and at the same time launches considerable efforts to contain some countries which have competing interests (Miller, 2001). It should be noted that US military aid to some countries in the region indicate its policy toward the region.



Israeli Missile Arsenal

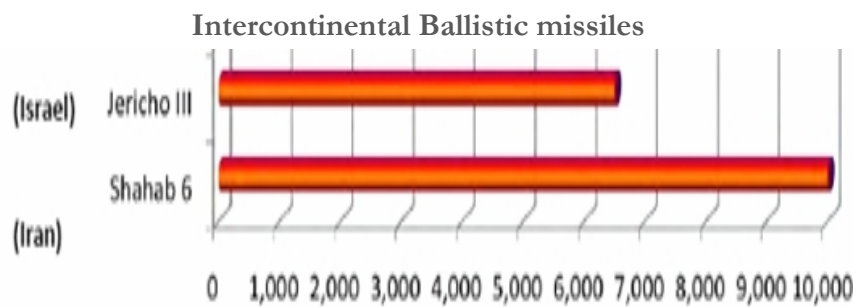
System	Class	Payload	Warhead	Range (km)	Estimated CEP
Jericho I	Short Range Ballistic Missile (SRBM)	Single Warhead	450 kg; Nuclear 20KT; HE	500 km	500 m (Obsolete)
Jericho II	Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBM)	Single Warhead	Nuclear 1MT; HE	1,500 km	1.5 km
Jericho III	Intercontinental Range Ballistic Missile (ICBM)	Single Warhead	750 Kg	4,800 – 6,500 km	4.8 – 6.5 km

Source: Israeli Weapons of Mass Destruction. An Overview Anthony H. Cordesman, CSIS, June 2008

Islamic Republic of Iran’s Ballistic Missile Arsenal

Designation	Progenitor Missiles	Class	Propellant	Payload (kg)	Range (km)	Estimated CEP
Mushak-120	CSS-8, SA-2	SRBM	Solid	500	130	130 m
Mushak-160	CSS-8, SA-2	SRBM	Liquid	500	160	160 m
Mushak-200	SA-2	SRBM	Liquid	500	200	200
Shahab-1	N. Korean SCUD B	SRBM	Liquid	987-1,000	300	450
Shahab-2	N Korean SCUD C	SRBM	Liquid	750-989	500	700
Shahab-3	N. Korea Nodong-1	MRBM	Liquid	760-1,158	1,300	1,300 m
Shahab-4	N. Korea Taep'o-dong-1	MRBM	Liquid	1,040-1,500	3,000	3,000 m
Ghadr 101	Pakistan Shaheen-1	MRBM	Solid	NA	2,500	2,500 m
Ghadr 110	Pakistan Shaheen-2	MRBM	Solid	NA	3,000	3,000 m
IRIS	China M-18	MRBM	Solid	760-1,158	3,000	3,000 m
Kh-55	Soviet AS-15 Kent	MRBM	Jet Engine	200kg nuclear	2,900-3,000	2,900 – 3,000 m
Shahab-5	N. Korea Taep'o-dong-2	IRBM	Liquid	390-1,000	5,500	5,500 m
Shahab-6	N. Korea Taep'	ICBM	Liquid	270-1,220	10,000	10 km

Source: Anthony Cordesman, CSIS

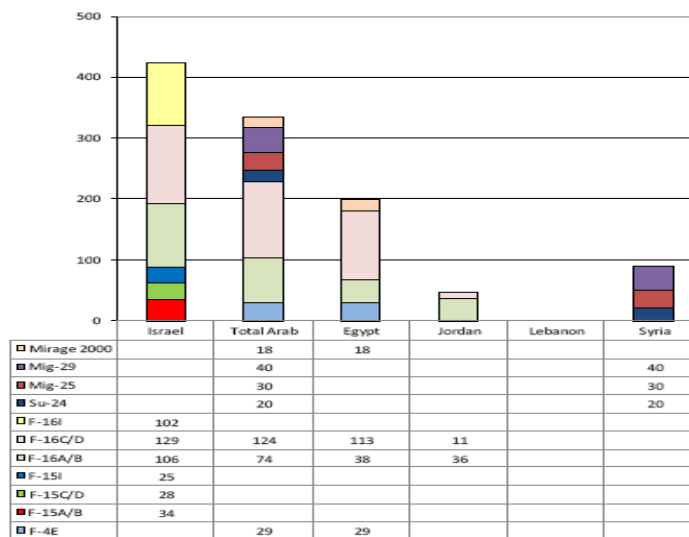


Source: Cordesman & Nerguizian: The Arab-Israeli Military Balance 6/29/10 Page 24



Military equipment is a determining factor in estimating countries' power. Israel has also manufactured aircraft including the *Kfir* (reserve), *LAI Lavi* (canceled), and the *LAI Phalcon airborne early warning system* as well as naval systems (patrol and missile ships). Only Israel has an operational anti-ballistic missile defense system covering its entire surface area – the *Arrow* system, jointly funded and produced by Israel and the United States. Israel has also worked with the US on the development of a tactical high energy *laser system* against *medium-range rockets* (called *Nautilus* or *THEL*). Israel has independent capability of launching *reconnaissance satellites* into orbit, a capability shared with Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, South Korea, Italy, Germany, China, India, Japan, *Brazil* and *Ukraine*. Israel is known to have developed *nuclear weapons* (Horowitz, 2009). In the chart below, Israeli military capability is shown:

Israeli Advanced Combat Aircraft in 2010

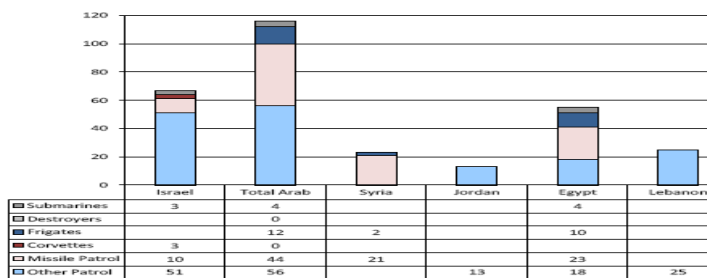


Source: Adapted by Anthony H. Cordesman and Arm Nerguizian From the IISS. The Military Balance And Discussions With U.S and regional experts.



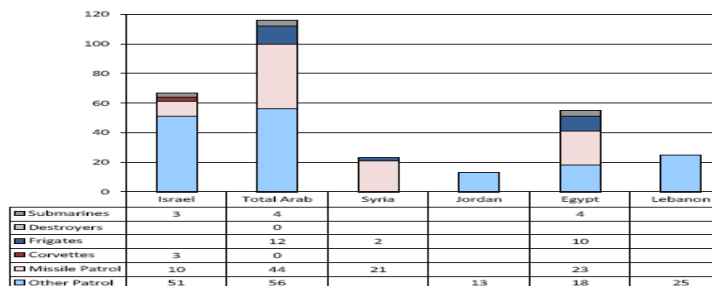
War at Sea is one of the dimensions of power. There is Strategic inequality between Arab countries and Israel.

Warships Arabs-Israel, in 2010

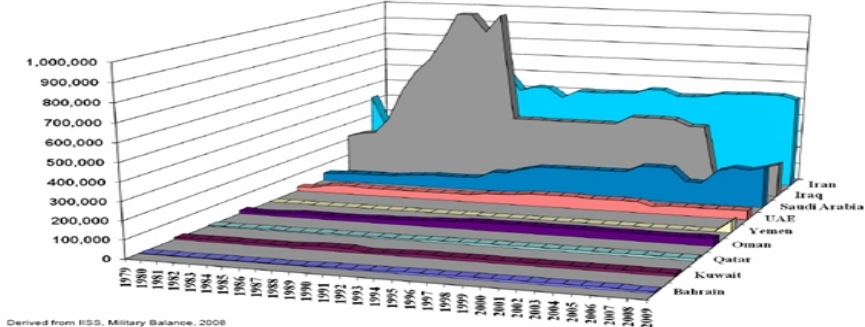


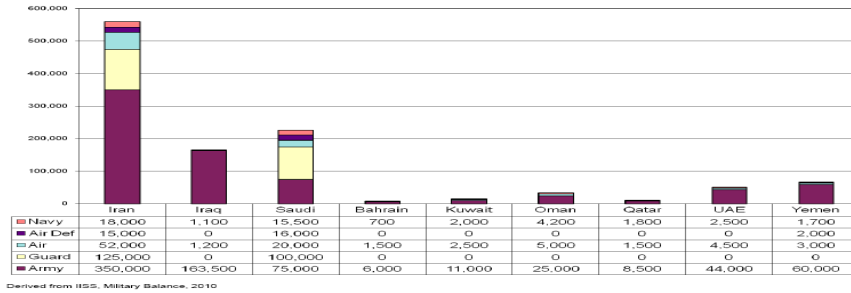
Source: Adapted by Anthony H. Cordesman and Aram Nerguizian from IISS, The Military Balance and Jane's Fighting Ships Shios, Various editions.

Considering human resources as well as costs of war, there is also serious inequality between countries in the region and Israel.



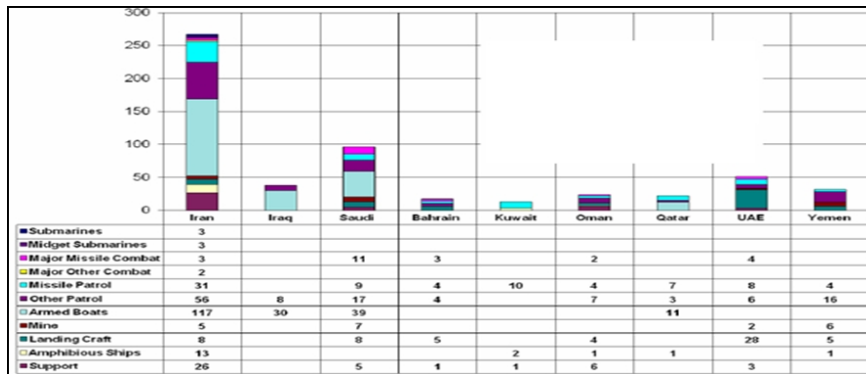
Source: Adapted by Anthony H. Cordesman and Aram Nerguizian from IISS, The Military Balance and Jane's Fighting Ships Shios, Various editions.





Power of asymmetric warfare in the Middle East is inharmonious. For instance, a comparative study of the Persian Gulf states can be cited. The following statistics demonstrate Iran’s superiority in asymmetric warfare in the Persian Gulf. Geographical features as well as Iran’s military structure give the Islamic Republic a strategic position in asymmetric warfare.

The Asymmetric War at Sea



Source: Cordesman, 2010: 27.

Proliferation of nuclear weapons is the most important aspect of strategic instability in the Middle East. *Israel* is widely believed to possess *weapons of mass destruction*, including nuclear arms (outside the NPT). *Israel* possessed an operational nuclear weapons capability by 1967, with the mass production of nuclear warheads occurring immediately after the *Six-Day War*. Although no official statistics exist, it has been estimated that *Israel* possesses from 75 to as many



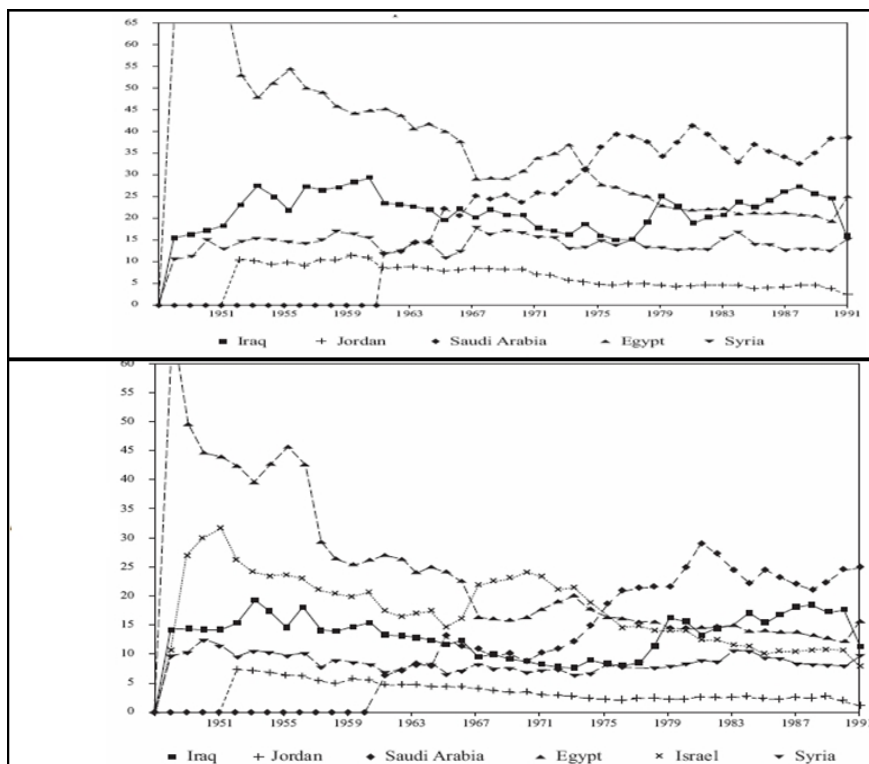
as 400 nuclear weapons, which are reported to include *thermonuclear weapons* in the *megaton* range. Israel is also reported to possess a wide range of different systems, including *neutron bombs*, *tactical nuclear weapons*, and *suitcase nukes*. Israel is believed to manufacture its nuclear weapons at the *Negev Nuclear Research Center*, a highly secretive nuclear installation located near *Dimona*.

Israel has threatened to attack Iran and its regional allies namely Syria and Lebanon. Consequently, there is a severe imbalance in the size of conventional and non-conventional military forces in the region. Israel and the United States enjoy close military cooperation. In 1983, the United States and Israel established a *Joint Political Military Group*, which convenes twice a year. Both the US and Israel participate in joint military planning and combined exercises, and have collaborated on military research and weapons development. Additionally, the *US military* maintains two classified, pre-positioned *War Reserve Stocks* in Israel valued at \$493 million. Israel has the official distinction of being a major American non-NATO ally. As a result, the US and Israel share the vast majority of their security and military technology. The US- Israel military cooperation and their hostile policies toward other countries in the region can cause the system to create a security dilemma and increasing instability.

Power Cycle in the Region and Strategic Instability: The power cycle in the Middle East has its own features such as trans-regional power interference and presence. Some states devote remarkable efforts to increase their power. There are also countries which are US allies and act as American proxies. As a result, there are extreme swings in the region's power cycle. The second feature is the number of turning points (important events) in the cycle. There is a link between turning points, alliances and strategic instability. Divergence within regional players as well as the presence of intervening powers leads to growing challenges in the region such as the Iran-Iraq war, Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the US-led invasion of Iraq.



Relative Power



Source: Andrew T. Parasiliti (2003) *The Causes and Timing of Iraq's Wars: A Power Cycle Assessment* *International Political Science Review* (2003), Vol. 24, No. 1, 151–165(159).

Pattern of Relationships and the Balance of Threats: Pattern of relationships and the balance of threats are the most important variables in establishing and achieving strategic stability. The mentioned patterns in the Middle East can be divided into two distinct periods. The first period is after the Second World War and the second is after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, collapse of the bipolar system and formation of the hegemonic system. In a study carried out in the first period, competition between both sides and Israeli influence play an important role in the strategic stability of the region.



Relations based on Friendship, Neutrality and Enmity in the Middle East in 1948-1978

	Positive Relations	Neutral Relations	Negative Relations
USSR-USA	96	2	-247
Arab-Israeli	8	11	-335
USSR-Arab	262	60	-66
USA-Arab	246	13	-113
USSR-Israel	157	167	-115

Source: David Lai 1948-1978 Alignment, Structural Balance, and International Conflict in the Middle East, 1948-197 Conflict Management and Peace Science 2001; 18; pp233-34.

In the second period, the three sets of sub-Persian Gulf, Central and West can be seen. Relations between countries in the Persian Gulf lack regional integration. The United States holds a prominent role in the regional developments and security issues related to the region. The US-led invasion of Iraq and increasing threats against Islamic Republic are clear signs of the US intervening measures toward the region. Moreover, Iran's relations with the US allies in the region such as Saudi Arabia have historically gone through many ups and downs. Before the Islamic Revolution, Iran and Saudi Arabia competed for primacy in the Persian Gulf, although as monarchies they found common ground both in opposition to Soviet penetration and also to the radical successor regimes that overthrew monarchies in Egypt and Iraq. However, the fall of the Pahlavi regime after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 re-defined Iranian-Saudi rivalry. The Iran-Iraq War increased Saudi concerns about security, leading to its financial support to Iraq, although relations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia at that time were not warm. Since then, efforts have been made to improve relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia although there are still concerns on both sides. Iran as a regional power with a majority Shia population remains at the heart of such fears in Saudi Arabia, a predominantly Sunni state ruled by the Al Saud family since its foundation in 1932. In addition, Israel's relations with Iranian allies, namely Syria and Lebanon, have become increasingly strained in recent years. In 1982, Israel *invaded Lebanon* to drive out the *PLO*. Syria sent ground and air forces to assist Lebanon, but these were largely routed by the Israelis.



Syria continued to support Lebanese resistance, leading up to Israel's withdrawal in 2000. The first high-level public talks aimed at a permanent resolution of the conflict between Israel and Syria were held at and after the multilateral *Madrid Conference of 1991*. Throughout the 1990s, several Israeli administrations negotiated with Syria's President *Hafez Al-Assad*. While serious progress was made, they were unsuccessful. High points of hostility in the 2000s included the *Ain-es-Sabeh airstrike*, an *Israeli Air Force* mission against Palestinian fighters inside Syria, in 2003 and *Operation Orchard*, an Israeli air and commando mission against Syria's alleged nuclear program, in 2007. During the *2006 Lebanon War*, Syria threatened to enter the war on Hezbollah's side and provided support to Hezbollah. Later, *Turkey* organized peace talks between Syria and Israel, but Syria later withdrew in response to the 2008-2009 *Gaza War*. In 2010, Syrian President *Bashar al-Assad* accused Israel of avoiding peace, and Syrian Foreign Minister *Walid al-Muallem* warned that in the event of a future war, Israeli cities would be targeted by Syrian missiles. The mentioned developments show that there is no harmonious approach among regional countries on one hand and regional countries and the US on the other (Salt, Fall 2010).

Generally, the following patterns can be seen in the Middle East power structure: Pattern of conflict between Iran and Israel as well as Syria and Israel; tense relations between Israeli Arabs and other Arab countries, competitive approach (mistrust between Iran and Saudi Arabia as well as other countries south of the Persian Gulf) cooperation between Iran, Syria, Lebanon and resistance movements, cooperation between regional countries within the framework of the Arab League, cooperation between Iran and Iraq and alliance between the US and Israel and strategic cooperation between Arabs and the US.

The patterns above combined with defensive and offensive alliances have created serious challenges for the region. Moreover, the ineffectiveness of local administrations as well as intervening policies of trans-regional powers fosters regional instability.



Conclusion

To maintain their survival, states remain dependent on the support of military and paramilitary agencies. At the regional level, this concern can be met through the provision of strategic stability. States are aware that if a regional competitor violates the established order, there is the possibility to compensate for other members. This condition illustrates that there is a relative stability within the system and that states tend to enhance their cooperation. This is a prelude and starting point for states' strategic partnership concerning the formation of arms control security regimes. Practically, as far as stability is maintained within the system, states tend to enter into such security regimes. Structural disequilibrium, imbalance of power, interventions of intrusive powers, global cycles of power and its linkage to this region and strategic instability are critical elements for creating security. However, it should be noted that these variables provide the system with further instability in the Middle East on the one hand and have a determining role in ineffectiveness of arms control regime in this area on the other. In addition, the strategic link between the Middle East and global system and intervening policies of trans-regional powers lead to permanent instability in this area. As a result, the region is faced with an instability dilemma and initiatives to establish a regional arms control regime have not come to fruition.

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