Journal of
Global Analysis

(Dis) Integration and the Emergence of the State System in the Middle East

Dr. Imad El-Anis[*]

The fall of the Ottoman Empire during World War One and the emergence of the modern state system in the Middle East have received significant attention in academic literature. However, the impacts that the proliferation of state borders in the 19th and 20th centuries have had on political and economic integration within the Middle East is often ignored. This study argues that between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries the region underwent significant structural changes. Furthermore, these changes were driven by external intervention and internal decline. A number of theoretical assumptions are posited concerning the importance on integration and cooperation of the following: the increase in borders and claims to sovereignty and the separation of peoples/markets. The conclusions drawn are that the change from a system characterised by large political actors and integrated markets to one which is characterised by smaller states and separated markets led to the disintegration of the region's internal relations.

Keywords: Structure-agency debate, systemic transformation, interdependence, international relations, Middle East.

School of Arts and Humanities
Nottingham Trent University
Clifton Lane
Nottingham, NG11 8NS
UK

e-mail: imad.el-anis@ntu.ac.uk

* Imad El-Anis is a Lecturer in International Relations with teaching responsibilities on the BA (Hons) International Relations and Global Politics undergraduate degree and International Relations modules for Year One, Two and Three.

CESRANSARAM
STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR VE ANALİZ MERKEZİ - SARAM
CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS - CESRAN
www.cesran.org

CESRANSARAM

STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR VE ANALİZ MERKEZİ - SARAM
CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS - CESRAN

www.cesran.org

(Dis) Integration and the Emergence of the State System in the Middle East

Introduction

Studies of the international relations of the Middle East have been dominated by discussions of inter-state relations and conflicts.[1] The dominant state- and conflict-centric approaches used to study this region largely ignore the impact of regional structures and non-state actors.[2] Furthermore, much existing literature tends to view the region's international relations in a relatively short time-frame. This usually entails exploring the region's history since World War One. Again, this is problematic as it results in the exclusion of an analysis of the transformation of the regional system since the mid-19th century. The main argument of this paper is manifested in two parts. The first is that the proliferation of states in the Middle East following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the occupation of much of the region by the British and French following World War One led to the *disintegration* of intra-regional relations.[3] That is to say that, relations between people in the Middle East were relatively integrated under the imperial system in the sense that there were fewer borders and boundaries (both physical and imagined) between them.[4] This was a result of the lack of state borders within the region – these were few in number and left large swathes of territory as part of the same political entity and economic market. Introducing modern states as a way of organising people into political entities resulted in the creation of many political borders and many claims to sovereignty over territories which often were relatively small in scope. The second element of this paper's argument is that the post-World War One disintegration of the Middle East system disrupted economic as well as political activity within the region, ultimately resulting in more instability in intra-regional relations.

Essential to this study is the belief in the value of historical analysis as well as the adoption of the tools of historical sociology in the study of international relations.[5] Understanding and explaining the relations of the Middle East requires us to view

1   Fred Halliday, The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

2   F. Gregory Gause, "Systemic Approaches to Middle East Studies", International Studies Review, Vol 1, No 1, 1999, pp. 11-31.

3   See: David Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East, London, Phoenix, 2010.

4   William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, A History of the Modern Middle East, Oxford, Westview Press, 2000, pp.40-44.

5   Stephen Hobden and John M. Hobson (eds.), Historical Sociology of International Relations, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

the history of the region not as cyclical or full of patterns of behaviour. There is more value in viewing the region's history as containing multiple layers of progression/ movement from one condition to another – unevenly experienced at different times and in different spaces for the inhabitants of the region. It is certainly the position of this paper that searching for patterns of behaviour with regards to this region at least prevents the development of an eclectic framework of analysis which can take into account the diversity of experiences of the people in the region.

In order to develop an analysis of the systemic transformation which took place in the Middle East in the 19th and 20th centuries this study addresses three core research questions. The first considers what the experiences of people living in the Middle East were like under the previous system in terms of level of interaction and integration through the movement of people, goods, capital, services and ideas. The second area of investigation focuses on what these experiences have been like following the emergence of the modern state system. A final question to address is how these changes have affected economic integration, stability and the potential for cooperation between people in the region. This latter question draws upon the analytical assumptions outlined as part of a theory of systemic transformation and integration/interdependence theory which follow in the pages below. It is true that these questions are quite ambitious and it is not possible to fully answer them in just one study and the use of case study analysis from part of the Middle East is used here as an initial analysis.

Conceptualising the Middle East System

It can be claimed that systemic structures determine, to a significant extent, international relations within any given regional system: through shaping the interests, capabilities and patterns of behaviour of the actors in that system.[6] This is a bold claim about the relationship between structure and agency and is based on existing literature within this debate.[7] This paper does not, however, seek to engage fully with the structure-agency debate. Nevertheless, for the clarity of this analysis this core assumption must be outlined to some extent and so elements of this debate will be reflected on at various stages in the following pages. With regards to the Middle East, the system under consideration here includes both state and non-state actors. Primary in most analyses of the region are the state actors – the governments, military forces, intelligence services and other security services – and the *international* in the *international relations* denotes relations which cross territorial borders between these state actors.[8] However, a pluralistic approach to studying the international relations of the region is required. The modern *state* as actor in the Middle East is a relatively new form of actor and one which has been, for the most part, externally transplanted onto the region as opposed to one which has internally evolved and emerged.[9] Furthermore,

---

6   Alexander Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory", International Organisation, Vol 41, No 3,1987, pp: 335-370

7   Gil Friedman and Harvey Starr, Agency, Structure and International Politics: From Ontology to Empirical Inquiry, New York, Routledge, 1997, p. 3.

8   Halliday, The Middle East in International Relations.

9   James Gelvin, The Modern Middle East: A History, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 173.

historically, non-state actors, including influential individuals and economic actors, have been important in shaping relations at the local and regional level.[10]

There is a clear distinction between the contemporary system and previous systems which existed in the Middle East, with the latter all tending to share key characteristics. The contemporary Middle East system is a state-system with a significant number of intra-regional borders, boundaries and claims to sovereignty.[11] Previous systems, including the one which immediately preceded the state-system and which spanned from the 15th to early 20th centuries, were characterised by (intra-regional) empire.[12] These systems were characterised by few internal borders, boundaries and claims to sovereignty. This observation is important when considering the argument that borders, boundaries, claims to sovereignty and multiple 'ways' of organising people into groups help to determine international relations. Any given region with many of these will likely be less stable, internally, than one which contains few,[13] or which is highly integrated through institutions, for example, the EU. There is a correlation between levels of integration between states/markets and the stability of the relations between them.[14] Greater levels of economic interaction between people in any given system tends to lead to greater interdependence between them.[15] This economic interdependence encourages peaceful coexistence and helps to reduce conflict by increasing the profits derived through peaceful interaction while at the same time increasing the costs of conflict.[16] Power in international and domestic relations is primarily economic in nature and therefore competition between actors occurs largely in the economic sphere. Where there is a high level of economic interdependence and economic cooperation, competition between actors will be limited.[17] On the other hand, in a disintegrated system where interaction is limited and where levels of economic interdependence are low, cooperation between actors (state, or non-state) is likely to be hindered.[18]

This paper does not discuss inter-regional relations here as it is concerned exclusively with an analysis which considers intra-regional relations. This is not to suggest that processes of globalisation, interdependence and interaction cease at some imagined regional boundary. These processes and their existence in a global system are acknowledged. Rather, the focus here is on patterns of international relations

10 Fernand Braudel, A History of Civilisations, London, Penguin, 1993, pp. 72-83.

11 Mehran Kamrava, The Modern Middle East: A Political History Since the First World War, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005.

12 Mansfield, A History of the Middle East, pp. 25-32.

13 Paul Pierson, "The Path to European Integration: A Historical Institutionalist Analysis", Comparative Political Studies, Vol 29, No 2, 1996, pp: 122-163.

14 Robert Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation, New York, Basic Books, 1984.

15 Robert Keohane, After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy, Surrey: Princeton University Press, 1984, p: 49.

16 For an authoritative and informative assessment of how economic interdependence renders violent confrontation obsolete see Norman Angell, The Great Illusion: A Study of the Relation of Military Power to National Advantage, London, Read Books, 1911.

17 Paul Krugman and Michael Obstfeld, International Economics: Theory and Policy, 5th Edition, Reading, Addison-Wesley, 2000, p: 3.

18 Aysegul Aydin, "The deterrent effects of economic integration", Journal of Peace Research, Vol 47, No 5, 2010, pp: 523-533.

within the Middle East and *between* Middle Eastern actors before and after the state-system was formed there in order to explore how this change may have affected the direction of intra-regional relations. It is true that placing the emphasis on a Middle East-centric approach risks simply replacing one dominant perspective (the western-centric approach found within much International Relations and Middle East Studies literature) with another. However, little literature exists on the impacts of the systemic transformation which took place in the Middle East prior to and following World War One and even fewer studies have been approached with the people of the Middle East and their experiences as the focus.

The key thesis of this analysis is that a systemic transformation occurred in the Middle East through the 19th and 20th centuries and reached its apex around one hundred years ago. This transformation regarded the region-wide patterns of organising the people of the region into groups and rests on the fundamental assumption that how people are organised and what groups they are organised into are key determinants of the relations which take place between them and others. In other words, any given set of people may behave towards each other in one manner at one time, but if they are organised differently and their *groups* are altered they will interact quite differently – even if this change takes place over a short period of time. It is essential to this analysis that the relations which are discussed are not simply those which are classed as *international*. Instead we must consider the relations as inter-human relations – as in not seeing people as belonging simply to one state or another and therefore being defined simply as elements of that state, but as people first and foremost. In the case of the transformation of the Middle East system this is of great importance due to the rapid changes in citizenship which took place during the period of transformation. Over a very short period of time individuals in the region changed from being a citizen of one *state*, say the Ottoman Empire, to an entirely different (and almost exclusively new) one[19], such as Jordan, Syria or Kuwait. When considering relations in this way and not simply discussing *international* relations we can gain a better understanding of how the changes which took place altered intra-regional relations. In a literal (and state-centric[20]) translation of the term *international relations* we would simply be discussing the inter-state/inter-empire relations of the Ottoman Empire and the Qajar-led Persian Empire, for example, and then the multiple inter-state relations which emerged after World War One as new states were created (or *imagined*). We would thus be ignoring the relations between people in the form of non-state actors in those empires when they did not interact directly with people or non-state actors in the other empire(s). For example, it is useful for us to consider how people from Salt (in contemporary Jordan) and those in Nablus (in the West Bank of contemporary Palestine) interacted when they were part of the Ottoman Empire and then following the systemic transformation which left them in different states and with a new border between them. It is to this discussion that this paper now turns.

At first consideration the political map of the Middle East is familiar and relatively constant. The states of the region can be identified easily and even the most

---

19 Kamrava, The Modern Middle East.

20 Michael Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller (eds.), The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. ix.

inexperienced student of the international relations of the region can present a respectable amount of information about at least some of the states of the region. But here in lies the problem. The common-sense understanding of the Middle East as consisting of the twenty or so states (give or take a couple for sovereign status and/or geographical definition[21]) that we see so neatly presented on political maps symbolises a perception of the region which is isolated in time and lacks critical awareness. Perhaps even more worryingly it denotes a surrender of the ability to critically explore and analyse the region and its *international* relations. In contrast, a quick exploration of a political map of the region from the late 19th century will suggest a far simpler understanding of *who* was there and by extension how many sets of *international* relations there were. The changes to the political map of the Middle East that have taken place in the past one hundred and fifty years or so are extremely profound and make an understanding of contemporary international relations there dissimilar to that of the mid-1800s or early 1900s.

To be more specific, in the late 19th century there were two major empires in the region along with a small number of far less significant emirates or sheikdoms.[22] Flexibly using current definitions for identifying states, therefore, we can identify the Ottoman Empire and the Qajar-led Persian Empire as the two principal regional state-actors at that time. The Moroccan Empire under the Alaouite dynasty in the Maghreb (present-day Morocco and parts of Algeria), the Imamate of Oman and the fledgling Saudi entity in the interior of the Arabian Peninsula complete the regional system of that time (much of the Saharan territories of what are today North African states were left out of the Middle East system in general, even by the early 20th century, due to extremely low levels of population and because much of this territory simply acted as transitory routes for the caravan trade and was uninhabited[23]). The intra-regional international relations of this system were limited, therefore, to a small number of *state-actors* and the borders of these entities, while long in some cases, were quite remote from the vast majority of the people of the region. Living in Cairo or Alexandria, for example, would have meant living in the heart of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, Cairenes or Alexandrians would rarely have to consider their international relations with Persians (as *foreigners*) in a way which meant something to their every day lives.

One problem arises when we consider the implications of European imperialism in the region. By the late 19th century two sizeable areas of the Ottoman Empire had been occupied by European powers and so alter our assessment of the number of actors in the Middle East system at the time that the transformation of the region was reaching its peak. The French occupation of the Ottoman Vilayet (province) of Algiers in 1830 and the subsequent annexation to France of that territory in 1834[24] can be viewed as injecting a new empire/state into the regional system. This view

---

21   The states classed as being in the MENA region according to this study are as follows: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, and Yemen.

22   Christopher Catherwood, A Brief History of the Middle East, London, Robinson Publishing, 2010.

23   James Goodwin, Lords of the Horizons: A History of the Ottoman Empire, London, Vintage, 1999.

24   Mahfoud Bennoune, The Making of Contemporary Algeria: Colonial Upheavals and Post-Independence Development, 1830-1987, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

can be contradicted by the interpretation that the French action in Algiers was a single process of invasion and the start of the introduction of the state system into Middle East. This argument requires us to view this process as very lengthy and as characterised by the almost constant resistance to French domination (both physical and imagined, and culminating in the Algerian War of Independence in the 1950s and 1960s). Likewise, the British occupation of Egypt in 1882,[25] which was promoted as an endeavour driven by economic interests (the ensuring of the repayment of British loans to Egypt[26]) can be seen in much the same way as the French action in Algiers. The provincial boundaries of these territories remained largely the same as they were prior to the European invasions, that is, open to the movement of goods and people for the most part. As such they do not represent the same processes of political and economic disintegration found in the latter stages of the systemic transformation discussed here.

If we compare the number and closeness to population centres of the state borders of today's system with the previous system we find that often borders and by extension international relations are much closer to most population centres than they had been before. For example, Cairenes and Alexandrians are now much closer in geographical terms to a *foreign* state and people than their forebears. In addition, the actual number of relations which are now classed as *international* because they are *between* states has increased significantly. There are also more *markets* than there had been in the imperial system and these are often separated from each other by governmental controls and barriers to trade and movement such as tariffs and taxes on goods, services and capital, as well as visa requirements. Even an initial comparison and assessment as highlighted above demonstrates that there are more actors in the regional system and therefore more sets of relations, even if we maintain a state-centric approach (which ignores the range of non-state actors found in the region).

But what does this all mean? Yes, there are more states in the regional system and yes there are as a result, more borders between the region's people and non-state actors than there were at the start of the 20th century. However, we need to identify if and how this increase in state-actors and borders changed the relations between people within the region, as well as how this affected stability, market integration, economic activity and patterns of cooperation. At this point we need, initially, to refer back to the debate between analyses which place emphasis on the agency of individual actors and those which focus more on the structures of any given system. When viewing an individual actor as a rational and unitary actor which exists in time and space as distinct and separate from other actors the nature of that actor's agency can be seen as the determining factor driving and shaping its interests, policies and actions.[27] In this way, if Libya, for example, is examined as an actor which is distinct and separate from its immediate neighbours and other actors further a-field, focus can be placed on exploring processes which take place within its state borders. It is possible in this way to consider what the issues of significance are which effect only Libyans (such as access to fresh water sources – as Libya is not a riparian state on any shared river system or

---

25   Albert Hourani, A History of the Arab Peoples, London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1991, pp. 282-285.

26   Peter Mansfield, The Arabs, 3rd edition, London, Penguin, 1992, p. 121.

27   See: James Morrow, Game Theory for Political Scientists, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994.

alternative source of fresh water), domestic pension schemes, access to education and so on. Furthermore, we can examine domestic processes of governance and decision-making as insular processes. It would then be possible to make conclusions about policy-making and actions which are specific to Libya. However, the success and validity of this type of analysis relies upon the assumption that Libya (as a state and people) does in fact exist as distinct and separate from other actors. The suggestion of this paper is that the people and states of the Middle East do not exist in this way, but instead demonstrate a high degree of historical integration (in the previous system, for example) and now constitute a regional system of states and people (even though this system is characterised quite heavily by the disintegration of international relations). As constituent parts of a system, therefore, the states in the region cannot be analysed as entirely distinct and separate.[28]

In this way the value of an analysis which primarily considers the agency of these state-actors is undermined because we cannot guarantee that they are actually unitary and insulated. In other words, we cannot assume that Libya, to return to the above example, is able to rationally calculate what its own interests are based on what is relevant to its citizens in its own territory. Existing as part of a system implies at least some measure of interdependence,[29] international interaction as well as systemic processes and issues which permeate and overlap state borders. This embedded set of structures, or what can be called the systemic environment,[30] influences patterns of movement, trade, communication, access to and use of resources, security/insecurity, group identity and levels of development, therefore, ultimately, it informs state-interests and the ability to act, or *agency*.[31]

Engaging with an analysis of the systemic transformation which has occurred in the Middle East is no small endeavour. The sheer range of people, places, actors of various kinds and processes which need to be discussed is far too great for an analysis of this size. However, it is possible to explore some of the key themes found in an analysis of regional systemic transformation based on the theoretical assumptions outlined above. Furthermore, this can be achieved to some extent by using case studies to test the hypothesis which is posited in this paper. In one sense, it is possible to use a small number of case studies in order to develop the discussion of systemic transformation in this region. This is not to say that the use of a small number of case studies is sufficient to confirm the assumptions and hypothesis posited in this paper. Further studies which adopt this approach and the core research questions found within it must be conducted to develop the overall analysis.

It is important to note at this stage that the transformation from a system of empires to one of states most deeply affected the Ottoman Empire.[32] The other major political entities found in the region in the 19th and early 20th centuries introduced above were

---

28 Gause, "Systemic Approaches to Middle East Studies", pp. 11-31.

29 Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age", Foreign Affairs, Vol 77, No 5, Sep/Oct 1998, pp. 81-94.

30 Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory", pp. 335-370.

31 Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, "Two Stories about Structure and Agency", Review of International Studies, Vol 20, No 3, 1994, pp. 241-251.

32 Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace.

also deeply affected in terms of the creation of new or revised borders, alterations in the form of domestic governance structures and external relations. However, these actors remained less changed overall than did the Ottoman Empire (and what it meant for its citizens' lives) which was completely removed as a political entity from the Middle East system. The vast majority of the new states and, therefore, new borders, governments, and claims to sovereignty occurred in the territories which had been the Ottoman Empire. Because of this fact the case study chosen here demonstrates the change in former Ottoman territories.

Systemic Transformation

The systemic transformation that occurred in the Middle East took place over a relatively short period of time and was not characterised by drawn-out processes of evolving change. The processes were actually quite rapid and demonstrated a level of revolutionary change.[33] Perhaps one of the most striking features of this transformation was that it often entailed very rapid changes and disruptions to structures already in place. Furthermore, these changes lead to deep-rooted alterations.[34] The main thrust of this set of processes came during and immediately after World War One but significant periods of change can also be found in the 19th century and in the following two decades or so after World War One. We can take Republican France's 1798 invasion of Egypt as the real starting point of the systemic transformation of the Middle East. At the time Egypt was a Vilayet of the Ottoman Empire and had witnessed a significant amount of European economic penetration in the preceding fifty years.[35] Egypt had also begun to demonstrate slightly more autonomy under the Ottoman-Egyptian Beys and Mamluk ruling class than was normal under the Ottoman system. As an aspiring general who had recently won highly-celebrated (in France) successes in the Italian and Austrian campaigns, Napoleon Bonaparte had set his sights on weakening France's arch foe, the British Empire, by seizing control of Egypt and the key overland communication and trade route with the Indian sub-continent.[36] In this way the conquest of the Middle East and the realignment of political entities within it were after-thoughts. As has been discussed in detail elsewhere, Napoleon's military successes against the Ottoman-Egyptian military forces did not translate into overall success in the campaign and by 1801 the general himself had left Egypt and was back in France orchestrating his rise to power there and the remaining French forces were obliged to withdraw from Egypt altogether.[37] By the end of this campaign the political map of the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East as a whole had not actually changed permanently. However, this first modern encounter with European powers in the Middle East was a harbinger of more European conquest accompanied by the very real prospects for systemic change in the region. Indeed, the fact that the French were obliged to withdraw from Egypt was a result of the engagement of the British Royal

---

33 James Renton, "Changing Languages of Empire and the Orient: Britain and the Invention of the Middle East, 1917-1918", Historical Journal, Vol 50, No 3, 2007, pp. 645-667.

34 Mehdi P. Amineh, "Introduction: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to the Study of the Greater Middle East2", Perspectives on Global Development and Technology, Vol 6, No 1, 2007, pp. 13-15.

35 Mansfield, The Arabs, p.121.

36 Juan Cole, Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East, London, Palgrave, 2007.

37 Piers Mackesy, British Victory in Egypt: The End of Napoleon's Conquest, London, I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp. 225-233.

Navy and military forces alongside Ottoman-Egyptian forces (the near-constant state of rebellion in Egypt itself and the lack of total defeat of Ibrahim Bey and Murad Bey, the de facto rulers of Egypt before the invasion, also played a role[38]) is indicative of the inability of Middle East actors to preserve their own system by this time.

The 1830 French invasion and subsequent annexation of the Vilayet of Algiers represents the next stage in the downfall of the previous Middle East system. The Ottoman Vilayets of Tunis (1881) and Egypt (1882), as well as the Moroccan Kingdom (to varying degrees from the 1840s until formal recognition of French domination in 1904) were all occupied by either France or Britain through the 19th and early 20th centuries. In many ways these external interventions have one thing in common (and they vary in other ways): they represented intervention in the Middle East by external powers and a challenge to the existing regional system. In the case of Algeria, of course, the French did not seek to occupy and establish a puppet regime or subvert the existing regime to European interests. Instead, the French purpose in that part of the region was to *possess* it entirely as part of the French state. The Vilayet of Tunis and the Moroccan Kingdom are slightly different in that the general French aim and methods seemed to have been much closer to those witnessed in the Egyptian campaign of 1798-1801. The British occupation of Egypt in 1882 was ostensibly for economic purposes and to secure the Suez Canal and thus protect access to other parts of the world, notably the Asian possessions of the British Empire.[39] It was, therefore, not entirely an intervention which sought to permanently alter the political and economic structures of that part of the regional system.

The main period of structural change that forms the core of the systemic transformation of the Middle East is undoubtedly found in the experiences of World War One. During this conflict the Ottoman Empire (which had already lost its North African Vilayets) chose to side with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire against the British, French and Tsarist Russia.[40] There is no need for a repetition of the history of the war here, or even of a lengthy discussion of the events of the war in the Middle East. It is worth discussing the way the outcome of the war altered the Middle East system permanently though. As a result of the military and political successes of the Allied Powers the remaining territories of the Middle East which were not already controlled by European powers were almost entirely conquered. The only exceptions were Anatolia, the inner Arabian Peninsula and Iran. The rest of the region came under the influence of the British and French (either directly or implicitly, but for all intents and purposes, ruled by Britain or France). The political and economic structures of the region were, at that point, in the hands of these European powers and subject to further revision. Of course, a significant part of the Arab population in the Middle East had sought to achieve a grand state of their own based on ethno-linguistic identity[41]

---

38 Cole, Napoleon's Egypt, pp. 167-172.

39 Roger Owen, "Egypt and Europe: From French Expedition to British Occupation", in Albert Hourani, Philip Khoury and Mary C. Wilson, The Modern Middle East (2nd Edition), London, I.B. Tauris, 2005, pp: 119-123.

40 For a thorough discussion of this decision see: Mustafa Aksakal, The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

41 Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, "Reflections on Arab Nationalism", Middle East Studies, Vol 32, No 4, 1996, pp. 367-394.

and become separate from the Ottoman Empire and this desire was expressed in the Great Arab Revolt. The implication of this event was that systemic change was sought from within the region to some extent. But it was the whole-sale restructuring that the British and French introduced to the region which is of most significance here as indigenous processes of change were impeded or prevented by the European powers.

The Treaty of Sevres (10 August 1920) which followed the end of World War One began the process of identifying and legitimising British and French aspirations in the Middle East. At the conference which produced this treaty both powers sought to reinforce their claims to various territories in the region.[42] Mutual or overlapping claims were dealt with by a system of barter. The treaty itself identified and formalised a number of key elements pertaining to who would, in effect, possess which territories and thus have the ability to shape the political and economic structures found there. The British would possess the territories which would become contemporary Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait (along with the Middle East possessions already controlled by them). The French would possess the territories which would become contemporary Syria and Lebanon (in addition to the Middle East possessions already controlled by them). The Conference of San Remo (held from 19th to 26th of April 1922) finalised the division of the Middle East into British and French spheres of influence and legitimised the new League of Nations mandate system.[43] Once again, literature[44] on the processes of negotiation which were taking place between the British and French during this period exists and this discussion does not need to be engaged with here. The result of these negotiations is worth attention though. The British were formally acknowledged as having (mandate) authority over the territories which would become Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and parts of Yemen. Meanwhile, the French were given mandate authority over what would become Morocco, Tunisia, Syria and Lebanon (Algeria was classed as a part of France and was not up for negotiation).[45] Britain also was acknowledged to have significant interests in Iran but as Iran was never formally involved in World War One as a combatant and was never formally and fully occupied it maintained its nominal independence and was not part of the mandate system (what would become Libya remained under Italian control from 1911 until being relinquished to British and French authority in 1947). The effect of this treaty was the creation of new territorial entities, the proliferation of borders and the establishment of new governments with often competing claims to sovereignty. In short, the map of the region suddenly looked extremely different to the one that had existed in 1829 or even in 1914. It is important to remember at this point that the creation of new actors in the form of mandate territories and states (Turkey had emerged by 1923 as in independent and new state, as had Saudi Arabia by the early 1930s) represent significant changes in the political and economic structures of the Middle East from the perspective of the people who lived there at the time.

---

42 Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace, pp. 403-404.

43 Ibid.

44 See: Jukka Nevakivi, Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1919-1931, London, Collins, 1972.

45 Roger Owen, State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 6-8.

The impact in particular of the proliferation of borders and the extent of governmental authority expressed by the new *indigenous* governments over given territories in the region cannot be underestimated. It is not hard to imagine or to conclude that existing one day as an Ottoman citizen, for example, and then in a short period of time existing as a citizen of an entirely different political entity was quite disruptive to processes of movement, trade, association and identity. Existing under the confusing dual rule of a domestic government as well as a foreign occupying power must also have offered a great deal of dislocation and disruption to the lives and agency of the people of the region. The implementation of new rules, laws and procedures which accompanied existing ones, also are of concern for our discussion of the changes that took place in the region and their impacts on stability, economic activity and cooperation. The introduction of new currencies and subsequent alterations in monetary values also must be considered. Add to all of these changes the fact that people living in the region at this time did not know what final form the political entity they found themselves living in would take and how long their current situation would last and there is much to explore.

The next stage in the transition to a modern state-system was the drive for independence from Britain and France which followed the Treaty of Sevres, the Conference of San Remo and the mandate system. The pursuit of full independence rapidly developed during and immediately after World War Two.[46] This was partly as a result of the decline in the capabilities of Britain and France as they endured the attrition of the war, as well as the embedding of the new structures of the system which solidified the *state* as the main legitimate political unit in the region.[47] While, for some years this process was characterised by broader notions of nationalism, such as pan-Arabism,[48] by the early 1990s state-nationalisms had largely replaced region-wide forms of nationalism.[49] The embedding of the state system is reflected in the primacy given to policies and programmes which represent state-interests as opposed to regional ones. The failure of pan-Arabism, for example, to hasten the reintegration of Middle East economic markets perhaps best demonstrates the transition to a state-system. There are some visible processes of *integration* taking place in the Middle East which represent the *reintegration* of the regional system. In other words, a move towards a regional system which while being made up of states will reflect similar patterns of interaction which can be identified in the previous system. However, it is doubtful that these processes represent a return to the previous system of a small number of large empires and emirates or sheikdoms. Instead, these processes can be seen to be synonymous with regionalisation and even globalisation and tend to be facilitated or hindered by state power. The contemporary world system which is characterised by

---

46 Halliday, The Middle East in International Relations, pp: 82-83.

47 Tareq Ishmael and Jacqueline Ishmael, Government and Politics of the Contemporary Middle East: Continuity and Change, London, Routledge, 2011, pp: 35-39.

48 See: Rashid Khalidi, The Origins of Arab Nationalism, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991; Mahmoud Haddad, "The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered", International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol 26, No 2, 1994, pp: 201-222; Juan Cole and Deniz Kandiyoti, "Nationalism and the Colonial Legacy in the Middle East and Central Asia: introduction", International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol 34, No 1, 2002, pp: 189-203

49 See: Elie Podeh, The Decline of Arab Unity: The Rise and Fall of the United Arab Republic, Eastbourne, Sussex Academic Press, 1999.

processes of integration in practically all spheres of human agency[50] may simply be reflected in the processes which are taking place in the Middle East. The Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) agreement is one example of these processes. It is facilitated by states through the League of Arab States' council of Arab economic unity but its implementation in 2005 has been mixed as state governments have differed in their adherence to the institutions of this agreement.[51]

Ottoman Vilayets and Modern States

At the onset of World War One the Ottoman Empire (in the Middle East) was organised in much the same way as it had been in the preceding centuries. Vilayets (provinces) were the primary unit of political and economic organisation under the umbrella of the imperial state.[52] Between Anatolia and the northern Hejaz (today's western Saudi Arabia) was the Vilayets of Beirut, Damascus and Aleppo in Syria. These Vilayets were made up of the lands and communities which today form the states of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and Palestine. The contemporary relations of these communities are influenced by a different set of political and economic structures compared to those that existed in the early 1900s Vilayet. In particular the proliferation of mandate borders (or what one could term *hard borders*) as opposed to the internal district borders (*soft borders*) of the Vilayet system meant that there was a greater level of governmental regulation of the movement of people, goods, services, capital and institutions within this territory following the creation of the mandate system.[53] Where it was possible to identify a market which was highly integrated, both with itself (the Vilayet) and the Ottoman Empire as a whole, this proliferation of borders led to a disintegrated market which resulted in the creation of several smaller markets; each quite detached from the other for much of the 20th century and which remain less integrated at present than they had been under the Ottoman system in relative terms. In other words the modern states which emerged out of the Vilayets in Syria as a result of British and French control became insulated markets and communities which were separated from each other by state borders and different political-economic national/ state systems.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries the rural and urban communities of the Vilayets of Syria were economically interdependent. There existed explicit divisions of labour which had allowed this part of the Ottoman Empire to function economically. The relationship between Nablus and Salt offers a good case to explore. As medium size settlements in this period, Nablus (approximately 70000) and Salt (approximately 20000[54]) were able to develop certain comparative advantages (to use David Ricardo's term[55]) and a trading relationship which underpinned their local economies. By the

---

50 Jan Arte Scholte, Globalization: A Critical Introduction (2nd Edition), London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp: 15-29.

51 Bernard Hoekman and Jamel Zarrouk, Catching Up With the Competition: Trade Opportunities and Challenges for Arab Countries, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 2003, p. 290.

52 Suraiya Faroqhi, Bruce McGowan, Donald Quataert and Sevket Pamuk, An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, (vol. 2), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

53 Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace, pp: 435-448.

54 Peter Hinchcliffe and Beverley Milton-Edwards, Jordan: A Hashemite Legacy, London, Routledge, 2001, p: 22.

55 David Ricardo, Principles of Political Economy and Taxation, New York, Prometheus Books, 1996.

late 19th century the economy of Nablus had developed quite successfully as a centre for manufacturing textiles and clothing as well as agricultural products and merchants from the city sought to expand their market access east of the River Jordan. At the time Salt was the only significant settlement in the territory which would become Jordan (but still was only a small and relatively poor village[56]) and so became a focus for Nabulsi merchants. As a result of the development of this trading relationship Salt's economy developed quite rapidly as a source of raw materials (especially wood and other construction materials) and agricultural produce (due to its highly fertile soils). The coupling of the economies of Salt and Nablus allowed these two towns to prosper into the 1920s but their interdependence would prove also to be the cause of their stagnation following the withdrawal of the British from the region in the late 1940s. The Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49 which followed the British withdrawal from the mandate of Palestine and the newly independent state of Transjordan (later to become Jordan) resulted in significant disruptions to both Nablus and Salt. In the case of the former its integration with the community in Haifa was lost as this town became part of the state of Israel. The relationship between Haifa and Nablus emerged for economic reasons in much the same way as that between Nablus and Salt. Haifa acted as not only a market for the exchange of goods and services but also an entry and exit point to the Mediterranean Sea and thus acted as a major trade centre. The loss of this access to the Mediterranean Sea left Nablus with a significantly damaged economy. By extension Haifa also acted as a trade outlet for Salt's economy and so the impact was much the same on that town.

As the economies of Nablus and Salt both began to suffer some level of stagnation and decline as a result of the loss of the Haifa market and access to the Mediterranean Sea trade between them also suffered. Nevertheless, as a result of the Jordanian annexation of the West Bank after the 1948-49 war Nablus and Salt remained as parts of the same political and economic entity and therefore enjoyed unhindered access to each other's markets.[57] The 1967 Six Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbours would change this as Israel conquered and occupied the West Bank from Jordan. This severed the relationship between Nablus and Salt by creating a border between the two towns which would remain closed for significant amounts of time afterwards or which was subject to considerable regulation and periodic closures.[58] Furthermore, following the decision by King Hussein of Jordan in 1988 to recognise the legal and administrative separation of the West Bank and Jordan the border between the two territories, and thus Nablus and Salt, was reinforced[59] – there was in effect a border between the states of Jordan and Palestine as well as a de facto border between Jordan and Israel as a third state (over a territory which was occupied). The economic impacts of this separation of the markets in Nablus and Salt was quite damaging to both. The movement of people between the towns was significantly disrupted or halted altogether at various times since, as was the movement of goods, services and capital.

56 Hinchcliffe and Milton-Edwards, Jordan, p: 22.

57 Kamal Salibi, The Modern History of Jordan, London, I.B. Tauris, 2006 pp: 120-143.

58 Avi Schlaim, The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World, London, Penguin, 2000, pp: 510-514.

59 Philip Robins, "Shedding Half a Kingdom: Jordan's Dismantling of Ties with the West Bank", Bulletin (British Society for Middle East Studies), Vol 16, No 5, 1989, pp: 162-175.

This represented a disintegration of the two markets and the two communities who have lived ever since as part of separate political entities and national/state markets.

Conclusions

This paper set out to explore the validity of the hypothesis that the systemic transformation which occurred in the Middle East through the 19th and 20th centuries lead to the disintegration of relations between peoples in the region. In order to engage with this discussion a number of theoretical assumptions and arguments were posited. To some extent these developed out of the existing structure-agency debate in IR but also, in some ways, they are specific to the Middle East and its recent history. In the first case, this paper takes the position that the influence of structures on actors in the Middle East system significantly impacts upon agency to the extent that it helps to determine how actors behave. In the second case, this paper has argued that significant changes did take place in the Middle East in the ways in which the people of the region were organised into groups, were governed and therefore how they related to each other. These changes manifested as a result of the external intervention of Britain and France which began in 1798 and picked up pace in the mid- to late-1800s, and which culminated with the victory of the Allied Powers in World War One, the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the League of Nations mandate system. The final argument posited here is that the creation of the new states by the mandate system as well as the emergence of Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran as *modern* states (and not empires) lead to a proliferation of *hard* borders, boundaries and claims to sovereignty within the region and that these new borders disrupted economic, social and political relations within the region. This is in contrast to the structures which existed in the previous regional system, which was characterised by fewer borders and boundaries between people.

The motivation for this analysis largely stems from a concern with the patterns of interaction between people in the region before and after systemic transformation took place. The key questions here relate to the movement of people, goods, capital, resources and ideas, as well as relating to identity and by extension levels of interaction and cooperation between the people of the region. This study has adopted the notion that an integrated system is likely to be far more stable and will witness more cooperation and less conflict than one which is disintegrated. It is also likely to be more economically dynamic. It was necessary to develop this analysis by exploring case study evidence to analyse whether patterns of interaction under the previous regional system were likely to be more intense and integrated than after the state-system emerged. The study of the territories which comprised the Ottoman Vilayet of Syria was useful in this regard as much of the alterations and additions of new actors in the region took place in the remnants of the Ottoman Empire.

With regards to the research questions considered here, a number of conclusions can be drawn. The movement of people, goods, services, capital and ideas in the Ottoman Vilayet of Syria was facilitated by an integrated market and no hard borders. Indeed, the possibility for integration between peoples/markets was, in relative terms, much greater than that which exists in the modern state-system between Israel, Jordan,

Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. The advent of the state-system in the former Vilayets in Syria has largely been characterised by significant disruption of economic and social interdependence and interaction. What once existed as one market and social environment has fragmented into separate markets and states. The final conclusion drawn from this study relies rather more on theoretical interpretation than empirical observations and suggests that economic integration, and therefore the stability of this region's international relations, have been challenged by the processes of systemic transformation.

Bibliography

Aksakal, Mustafa, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Amineh, Mehdi P., "Introduction: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to the Study of the Greater Middle East", *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, Vol 6, No 1, 2007, pp. 13-15.

Angell, Norman, *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Relation of Military Power to National Advantage*, London, Read Books, 1911.

Axelrod, Robert, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, New York, Basic Books, 1984.

Aydin, Aysegul, "The deterrent effects of economic integration", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol 47, No 5, 2010, pp: 523-533.

Bennoune, Mahfoud, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria: Colonial Upheavals and Post-Independence Development, 1830-1987*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Braudel, Fernand, *A History of Civilisations*, London, Penguin, 1993.

Brown, Michael, Lynn-Jones, Sean M. and Miller, Steven E. (eds.), *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Catherwood, Christopher, *A Brief History of the Middle East*, London, Robinson Publishing, 2010.

Cleveland, William and Bunton, Martin, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Oxford, Westview Press, 2000.

Cole, Juan and Kandiyoti, Deniz, 'Nationalism and the Colonial Legacy in the Middle East and Central Asia: introduction', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol 34, No , 2002, pp: 189-203

Cole, Juan, *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East*, London, Palgrave, 2007.

Faroqhi, Suraiya, McGowan, Bruce, Quataert, Donald and Pamuk, Sevket, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, (vol. 2)*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Friedman, Gil and Starr, Harvey, *Agency, Structure and International Politics: From Ontology to Empirical Inquiry*, New York, Routledge, 1997.

Fromkin, David, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, London, Phoenix, 2010.

Gause, F. Gregory, "Systemic Approaches to Middle East Studies", *International Studies Review*, Vol 1, No 1, 1999, pp. 11-31.

Gelvin, James, *The Modern Middle East: A History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.

Goodwin, James, *Lords of the Horizons: A History of the Ottoman Empire*, London, Vintage, 1999.

Haddad, Mahmoud, "The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol 26, No 2, 1994, pp: 201-222

Halliday, Fred, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Hinchcliffe, Peter and Milton-Edwards, Beverley, *Jordan: A Hashemite Legacy*, London, Routledge, 2001.

Hobden, Stephen and Hobson, John (eds.), *Historical Sociology of International Relations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Hoekman, Bernard and Zarrouk, Jamel, *Catching Up With the Competition: Trade Opportunities and Challenges for Arab Countries*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 2003.

Hollis, Martin and Smith, Steve, "Two Stories about Structure and Agency", *Review of International Studies*, Vol 20, No 3, 1994, pp. 241-251.

Hourani, Albert, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1991.

Ishmael, Tareq and Ishmael, Jacqueline, *Government and Politics of the Contemporary Middle East: Continuity and Change,* London, Routledge, 2011.

Kamrava, Mehran, *The Modern Middle East: A Political History Since the First World War*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005.

Karsh, Efraim and Karsh, Inari, "Reflections on Arab Nationalism", *Middle East Studies*, Vol 32, No 4, 1996, pp. 367-394.

Keohane, Robert and Nye, Joseph, "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 77, No 5, Sep/Oct 1998, pp. 81-94.

Keohane, Robert, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Surrey, Princeton University Press, 1984.

Khalidi, Rashid, *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991.

Krugman, Paul and Obstfeld, Michael, *International Economics: Theory and Policy (5th Edition)*, Reading, Addison-Wesley, 2000.

Mackesy, Piers, *British Victory in Egypt: The End of Napoleon's Conquest*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2010.

Mansfield, Peter, *The Arabs* (3rd edition), London, Penguin, 1992.

Morrow, James, *Game Theory for Political Scientists*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994.

Nevakivi, Jukka, *Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1919-1931*, London, Collins, 1972.

Owen, Roger, "Egypt and Europe: From French Expedition to British Occupation", in Hourani, Albert, Khoury, Philip and Wilson, Mary C., *The Modern Middle East (2nd Edition),* London, I.B. Tauris, 2005.

Owen, Roger, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, London, Routledge, 1992.

Pierson, Paul, "The Path to European Integration: A Historical Institutionalist Analysis", *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol 29, No 2, 1996, pp: 122-163.

Podeh, Elie, *The Decline of Arab Unity: The Rise and Fall of the United Arab Republic*, Eastbourne, Sussex Academic Press, 1999.

Renton, James, "Changing Languages of Empire and the Orient: Britain and the Invention of the Middle East, 1917-1918", *Historical Journal*, Vol 50, No 3, 2007, pp. 645-667.

Ricardo, David, *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, New York, Prometheus Books, 1996.

Robins, Philip, "Shedding Half a Kingdom: Jordan's Dismantling of Ties with the West Bank", *Bulletin (British Society for Middle East Studies)*, Vol 16, No 5, 1989, pp: 162-175.

Salibi, Kamal, *The Modern History of Jordan*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2006.

Schlaim, Avi, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, London, Penguin, 2000.

Scholte, Jan Arte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction (2nd Edition),* London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Wendt, Alexander, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory", *International Organisation*, Vol 41, No 3, 1987, pp. 335-370.