Factors Contributing To Non-Cooperation In The Middle East and North Africa Region

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Abstract:

The present situation in MENA region represents a challenge to our ability for rethinking the reasons and factors of failure in building an effective regional system, not only due to the new challenges and issues such as the role of superpowers and the crucial division among the regional states, but also due to the fact that the obstacles to cooperation existed from the very beginning and establishment of nation-state in MENA region most importantly, colonialism and the way of governance in the region. Discussing the several factors based on the new regionalism theory is modern and useful. In order to get a clear picture and a clear view of regional dynamics in MENA, we need to look at both *inside* states, to comprehend the motivational factors underlying their regional policies and actions, and *outside* states, to take into account the growing role of some factors in affecting regional cooperation in the region. Therefore, in this paper, colonialism, identity issues, conflicts and bad-governance are the main factors that influence cooperation in the MENA region. It is a significant part of this work to use a theory of new regionalism. The final objective is to provide a comprehensive model of factors that can be tracked based on new regionalism theory.

Keywords: Cooperation, MENA region, colonialism, conflicts, governance

1. Introduction:

The work proposed here has the intention to contribute to the development of studying regions and cooperation, with a focus on MENA region, knowing that different issues are being analysed and studied in many works, and old concepts improved in efficiency, but that new approaches of new regionalism are obviously not so frequent. Therefore, discussing the four factors based on the new regionalism theory is modern and useful. In order to get a clear picture and a clear view of regional dynamics in MENA, we need to look at both *inside* states, to comprehend the motivational governance and identity issues underlying their regional policies and actions, and *outside* states, to take into account the growing role of several powers in affecting cooperation.

The idea, not yet published and for that reason not yet accessible for discussion, could already been discussed separately in a narrow perspectives, and unfortunately with less compressive methods to test a real effects of governance. This was due to the lack of possibilities to build a complete model of measurement that can combine different characteristics of regionalism and to see how the governance is affecting these characteristics in a systematic way. The principle is always to deal with MENA region as an exception regional case in the world. It is therefore a significant part of the objectives of this work to use a theory of new regionalism with which the principle of exceptionalism can be finally contracted. To investigate the current position of regionalism in MENA and to clarify the level of cooperation whether it is weak or strong, the researcher suggests using new regionalism theory that has been used during PhD, including the integration achievement score. The final objective is to provide a comprehensive model of factors that can be tracked based on new regionalism theory.

2. Literature Review

Since the end of the 1980s, transformation in the global context has changed the structure and content of regional cooperation and made it more complex and varied (Hettne & Soderbaum, 2006). Therefore, any serious discussion of the factors that can influence regionalism anywhere today must take into account multiple, complex, and related trends (Hudson, 1999, p. 4). The factors for degrees of cooperation vary depending on the use of approaches and theoretical assumptions (Korany, Noble & Brynen 1993; Hudson 1999; Fawcett 2005). In the MENA region for instance, the basic “integration puzzle”, as in the writings of Hudson, is the geographic proximity, the relatively high degree of social, cultural, and religious homogeneity as well as political, economic and military interaction, and the degree of institutional regional cooperation.

To begin with, neo-realist approach and dependency theories, for example, tend to focus on the use of power between the countries of the region and international players who pursue their national interests in that particular region. Therefore, the international powers can have an effect on regional cooperation if this cooperation is not seen to be compatible with their

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interests, as in the case of what colonialism did with the Third World. From a similar viewpoint, Hettne, Inotai and Sunkel (1999a; 1999b; 1999c) and Schulz, Soderbaum and Ojendal (2001) argue that any assessment of regional cooperation cannot be interdependent from the perspective of outside regional transformation. The world is interlinked in many ways and any event can have an effect on regional cooperation. According to this approach, internal splits, conflicts and lack of regional institution building are considered products of colonialism and external superpower intervention. Moreover, Binder (1958) opines that the MENA region is a subordinate sub-system. Ismael (1986), Pawelka (1993), Hudson (1999, pp.17-20), Amin and el-Kenz (2005) talk about a “penetrated” and dependent Third World (including MENA region) system.

Although the region is significantly shaped by the global power as mentioned above, interstate relations cannot be fully understood without looking at regional factors and issues peculiar to the MENA (Carkoglu, Eder & Kirisci, 1998). In this matter, Liberals, Institutionalists and Constructivists tend to detect more regional and domestic autonomy. Brown’s (1984) historical review and Perthes’ (2000) analysis of regional policies emphasise on regional autonomy, for example the way of governance and the issue of identity instead of focusing only on dependency.

On the other hand, Hudson (1999), Nonnemann (2005) and Fawcett (2005, p.174) outline a multi-dimensional approach, taking into consideration the international and domestic environment of MENA politics. Fawcett (2005) holds that cooperation can be attributed to the special nature of the region’s security dilemma and conflicts which operates on interrelated levels and is closely linked to the relative situation of MENA states (Fawcett, 2005, p. 177). Aarts (1999) argues that the dominance of national interests over cooperation interests, the limited orientation towards reform of the regimes (which represents governance) and the rent-economies and their demobilising social pacts constitute the main reasons for determining the degree of regional cooperation.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the literature reviewed. These are: Most of the studies deal with forces and factors shaping regionalism, yet the emphasis is on external factors. External forces have shaped and continue to shape the development of the region’s politics, economics, and societies, or indeed how the region itself has contributed to framing and shaping the global environment. If the former colonial powers were involved in the very creation of states, post-colonial powers have maintained extraordinarily high levels of interest in their politics, economics, and security, for reasons that have to do with resources, geographical location, and people. There is no study that examines the MENA region linking both the external and internal factors influencing regionalism, and no emphasis has been given to Islam as a characteristic. This study hopefully fills this gap.

3. Method and Research Frame

In this study, the historical context is very important in identifying the common features underlying the situation of regionalism in MENA. The study adopts qualitative method of research. This study relies on secondary sources and data. The sources include reports and documents released by regional and international organisations such as the United Nations, the Arab League (AL), Arab Maghreb Union (Union du Maghreb Arabe UMA), the Gulf Co-

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operation Council (GCC) and foreign affairs of member countries. It also uses documents released by the World Bank, World Trade Organisation, OPEC and the United Nations (Human development reports, for example). The secondary sources include scholarly books, journal articles, some previous surveys, and magazines. The data are reorganised in the form of notes and transcriptions. These are categorised into segments to establish a pattern by relating the categories to one another so that they can be interpreted and analysed thoroughly.

3.1 Framework of the Study

Colonialism, conflicts, identity issues and governance are the main factors that influence regionalism in the MENA region. Historical legacies (colonialism) as well as other factors have an impact on regional cooperation and integration in MENA. In the f, these factors will be defined. Many regional studies have determined and examined different characteristics that are likely to constitute the outlines of new regionalism (Tsardanidis, 1997; Ethier, 1998a, 1998b; Mansfield & Milner, 1999; Chapra, 2001; Soderbaun, 2001; Devlin & Estevadiordal, 2001; Vayrynen, 2003; Burfisher, Robinson, Thierfelder, 2004; Das, 2004; Evans, Holmes, Iacovone & Robinson, 2004; Tsardanidis, 2005; de Hanlon, 2011; Telo, 2014). We will use different characteristics that have been affected by the four factors. For example, how the colonialism has affected geographical proximity as a main characteristic of regional cooperation? Also, how conflicts processes has affected the interdependence characteristic of regionalism in MENA. Figure 1 shows the main factors that influence regionalism in the MENA region and Table 1 shows the definition of the four factors.

Figure 1 the Main Factors that Influence Regionalism

Note: The Research Design of the Study

Table 1: Definition of the Factors

Sources: Kortright, 2003; Peek, 2005; Magen, 2013

4. Results and Discussions

MENA continues to face problems caused by the four factors. In this section, the results of colonialism, conflicts, identity issues and governance in MENA region will be determined and discussed.

4.1 Results

Colonialism: has had a negative impact on MENA's politics, social and economic life and development for each individual state as well as a negative impact on regionalism within the region as a whole. Firstly, the impact of colonialism and the subsequent relationship and exchange between MENA countries and the Western colonisers has seen the region moved from post-independent political and economic hope for prosperity, to despair and dependence on the West. This dependence in political processes, economic development and sustainability has continued to preserve the region as an underdeveloped and less integrated region with poor regionalism, after seen as a fasted region of the globe. Secondly, Newly-independent states were generally established with borders that were drawn under colonial rules. Political boundaries were drawn for purposes of colonial convenience of intra-imperial trade-off, and cut across ethnic, tribal, religious and linguistic ties, dismembered established political units, and joined more than one pre-colonial political entity into uneasy administrative unions. Examples of this can be seen in the case of the Berbers in North Africa, and the Kurds in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey (Korany, Noble, and Brynen, 1993, p. 34).

Conflict: researchers like Korany (1992), Noble and Brynen (1993) argue that the problems of

Factor	Description
Colonialism	Colonialism is the establishment and control of a territory for an extended period of time by an outside power over a subordinate and <i>other</i> people who are isolated and separated from the natural ruling power.
Conflict	In the <i>International Encyclopaedia of Government and Politics</i> (1997), conflict is viewed as a confrontation in which two or more actors favour alternative actions. Conflicts are usually complex, concerned with personal, domestic, regional and international issues in which there are several interrelated disputes.
Identity	Identity is generally used to define and describe an individual's sense of self; group affiliations; structural positions; and ascribed and achieved statuses. Identity results from internal subjective perceptions, self-reflection and external characterisations.
Governance	Governance can be understood to mean all co-existing modes of collectively regulating political, economic and social matters. According to Risse and Lehmkuhl (2006), this covers both sovereign action on the part of a functioning state (governance by government) as well as governance through networks of public and private actors (governance with government).

MENA countries go beyond an alien state structure on a forged nation. The result is the impression of states in conflict with its own societies and with each other (the chronic

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problem of political instability). These societies are at war with themselves (the praetorian societies). The praetorian society is essentially a society 'out of joint' because of the gap between the relatively high levels of participation and the low level of institutionalisation to channel popular demands in an orderly way. As a result of political instability, when there are no political institutions, where no corps of professional political leaders are recognised or accepted as legitimate intermediaries to moderate group conflicts, the social forces within one state or the states themselves confront each other uncovered (Huntington, 1968). Figure 2 shows the conflict cycle in the MENA region.

Figure 2 Conflict Cycle in the MENA Region

Source: Korany, Noble & Brynen (1993)

The context of under-development and the gap between rich and poor countries as well as the gap between societal demands and state capacity to cope with them, create a situation of an almost permanent (domestic and regional) conflict in MENA. Also, this conflict has foundations that are multidimensional and inextricable: ethnic, religious, and socio-political at the same time. The result of the conflict situation in MENA region is a proliferation of conflict processes, to other social areas and their extreme politicisation as well as the aggravation of the state's deficits both in legitimacy and in development and to other neighbouring countries by spreading the threat of war and instability. It may take different forms of regional negative effects and it may create different issues like: the matter of refugees and the military expenditure to secure the borders rather than focus on development and others.

Governance: Most MENA states suffer from weak governance and political instability. The quality of governance is not only a key casualty of dependency but also a major driver of conflict and fragility. Indeed, with few exceptions, the region is below the world level in terms of government effectiveness and political stability. In addition to this, most MENA countries rank very low in terms of corruption (Drine, 2012). Many reports, such as the IMF Regional Economic Outlook for Middle East and Central Asia (2013), ITC Consolidated Programme Document 2008-2009 (2009), World Bank's regional publications (2013), UNDP's regional human development reports and UNDG's Response Strategy and Framework for Action (2011) indicate that in most MENA states the relatively low level of economic diversification contributes to continued dependence on a handful of commodities, particularly oil, gas and minerals, and some labour-intensive manufacturing sectors. While these sectors remain the main development drivers, a large proportion of the population is

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employed in low value-added services and inefficient public enterprises. Several MENA countries have young and fast growing populations with large numbers of job seekers and a sizable proportion of educated people, many of them degree holders. The following pages will discuss and analyse the above consequences of bad governance on regionalism in MENA. Aspects of education, health and workforce in the MENA region. Based on statistics that cover 122 countries, some are doing well in terms of human capital like Qatar (workforce 7th/122; education 26th/122); however, the general results for the region are really worrisome. Countries like Yemen and Mauritania are the worst. This is followed by Egypt (education 113th /122; workforce 116th /122), Iran (workforce 119th /122) and Algeria (workforce 121th /122); these ranked among the last ten countries in the world. Other MENA countries are placed between 40th to 90th among 122 positions in the world.

Identity Issues: the MENA region, imperialism's arbitrary imposition of state boundaries produces a substantial incongruence between territory and identity, with the result that loyalty to the state is contested by sub-state and supra-state identities. This built irredentism into the fabric of the system: in many states, the trans-state connections of sub-state groups and dissatisfaction with borders generate protracted conflicts which spill over into sub-state and inter-state conflicts, for example, the ongoing misunderstandings and social conflicts between the Berbers and Arabs in North Africa and the role of the Kurds in the conflicts between Iran and Iraq. With the above in mind, some countries find it difficult to accept the existence or emergence of new states that had once been ruled as part of the colonisers' own lands. Syria, for example, never reconciled itself with the French decision to carve out Lebanon as an independent country and to demonstrate this opposition; it never opened an embassy in Beirut. Its official representative in Lebanon is often referred to as 'governor' rather than ambassador. This diplomatic situation, however, did not inhibit Syria from maintaining a large military presence in Lebanon until 2005 (Kumaraswamy, 2006). Moreover, with the British departure from the Persian Gulf in 1971, the Shah resurrected Iran's historic claims over Bahrain. Likewise, Saddam Hussein's desire to claim Kuwait to be the 19th province of Iraq resulted in the US-led military offensive in 1991. Even after the war and the eventual expulsion of its forces, Baghdad periodically referred to its historic rights over Kuwait.

4.2 Discussions

Colonialism: Most of MENA new-states experienced colonialism at some period during the last two centuries (Hensel, Allison & Khanani, 2008). Features of the colonial situation have included relations of economic and political dependencies, and institutionalised racial and cultural inequalities. To impose their dominance, colonial powers may use physical force through military, expropriation of labour and resources, imprisonment and objective murders; exploiting of both the indigenous people and their land is the primary goal of colonialism (Horvath, 1972). To understand the current regional situation of MENA, it is necessary to analyse the history to ascertain how important colonisers such as Great Britain and France have influenced the unity and the integration of this region. There are four elements of colonialism which are colonial legacy, inequality and rigidities in the distribution of wealth and social rights, continuing exploitation and dominance that affected regional cooperation in different ways and levels.

Conflicts: Several conclusions can be made based on the impact of conflicts. For example, conflicts have resulted in a decline in real GDP and consequently, the possibility of an economic decline since conflicts lead to a direct output reduction and a gradual loss of capital

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stock and capacity. Also, political instability in neighbouring countries has had an adverse effect on a country's economic growth in the MENA region. Moreover, conflicts reduce the demand for domestic currency and reduce investments, which result in weak financial regulation and negative impact on financial development. This is further exacerbated by more intensive conflicts, thereby leading the region towards further fragmentation rather than cooperation and integrity.

Governance: Weak governance is when governments are unwilling or unable to carry out their responsibilities and duties toward their people and toward their countries in general. This means, according to OECD (2005), that the authorities of those countries do not protect people (lack of security and stability), sometimes they do not protect people's rights and may even fail to provide basic services, food and commodities, social help, infrastructure development and welfare. These government's failures lead to broader failures in political, economic and social institutions that are referred to as "weak governance" (OECD, 2005).

Identity: Most countries of MENA suffer from the fundamental problem of their national and regional identity. Processes of regional integration are driven by people with a national background and affect people that are citizens from existing nations (Kumaraswamy, 2006). For example, why is it that some Egyptians are promoting MENA regional projects? Is it because they feel more Arab than others? Or is it because they do not identify themselves enough with other Egyptians? These questions are interesting because they start from the assumption that regional identity exists and that it is 'something' that needs to be linked to states and nations on the one hand, as geographical and political entities, and to the people (as citizens) on the other hand (Slocum & Langenhove, 2005).

5. Conclusion

The unification of formerly divided states is always more costly, more complex and takes longer than originally thought. After implementing the regionalism theory on the MENA region, it seems that to realise cooperation and integration, is a really hard task. Therefore, the research has tried to find the reasons behind those weaknesses and to clarify their role in curbing cooperation in MENA. The factors contributing to poor regionalism are colonialism, conflicts, weak governance and identity issues. MENA countries need a new primitive unification that must be based on something that unites people in such a way that it will make better results possible. Cooperation and integration cannot take place if there are no plans to pull the people of the region together, starting from within the countries and ending at regional level. Leaders of the region must know that conflicts and the continuous dependence on colonialism are weakening their position, as well as the region.

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