LOUISE FAWCETT

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST

FIFTH EDITION

OXFORD

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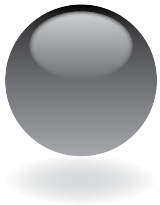

International Relations of the Middle East

FIFTH EDITION

Edited by

Louise Fawcett

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

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and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
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First edition 2005
Second edition 2009
Third edition 2013
Fourth edition 2016

Impression: 1

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018964752

ISBN 978–0–19–253739–3

Printed in Great Britain by
Bell & Bain Ltd., Glasgow

In memory of Peter Sluglett 1943–2017

Preface to the fifth edition

In the few years that have passed since the fourth edition was published, the Middle East has continued to experience momentous changes. Notably, the consequences of the 'Arab Spring' uprisings, which started late in 2010, continue to reverberate across the region and the wider world. In revising their chapters for this edition, the different authors have fully taken on board the possible impact of these, as well as other, recent developments on the international relations of the region. In addition, there is one new chapter which looks specifically at the relationships between Russia, China, and the Middle East. The online resources that accompany the book have been revised and brought up to date to offer students continuing additional support.

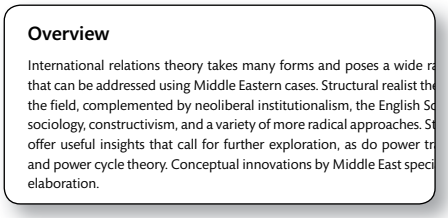
As with the previous editions, a number of people have been involved in assisting the smooth progress of this manuscript. I have benefited from the expert assistance of the OUP editorial and production teams and I would like to thank them for their efficiency and support. I am particularly grateful to Francesca Walker for her careful editing and many suggestions for improvement. And, as before, I am also grateful to all those authors who have been generous and forthcoming with ideas and suggestions for this revised volume. I'd like to take the opportunity belatedly to acknowledge the contribution of my son, Carlos Posada, to the fourth edition of the volume, where his proof reading and editorial skills were much appreciated. For this, the fifth edition, I have been extremely fortunate to count on the editorial support of Andrew Payne, currently a doctoral student at Oxford. Andrew has not only stepped in as contributor/co-author for the chapter on the Cold War by Peter Sluglett, who very sadly passed away in 2017, but he has also been fully involved in all stages of the editing process. From proofreading chapters and communicating with authors to suggesting and implementing changes, updating the bibliography, and multiple other tasks, his support has been invaluable. While I take full responsibility for any errors that remain, Andrew shares the credit for what is, I believe, an improved and streamlined new edition.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford which hosted the original seminar series at which many of the chapters of this book were first discussed.

Louise Fawcett
Oxford
August 2018

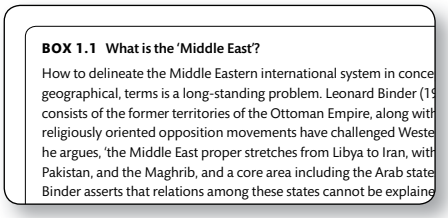
How to use this book

This text is enriched with a range of learning features to help you navigate the text material and reinforce your knowledge of the international relations of the Middle East. This guide shows you how to get the most out of your textbook.



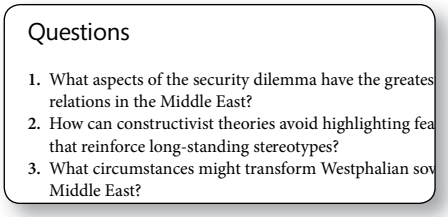
Overview

Identify the scope of the material to be covered and what themes and issues you can expect to learn about with overviews at the beginning of each chapter.



Boxes

Gain further insights into specific topics and issues with boxes interspersed throughout the chapters.

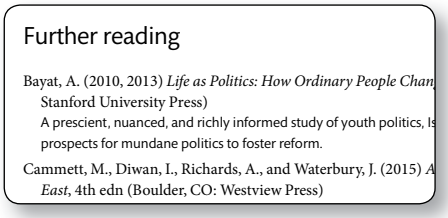


End-of-chapter questions

Check your understanding and develop your analytical skills with critical end-of-chapter questions.

Key events

Strengthen your understanding of regional history with chronological lists which draw out key Middle Eastern events.



Further reading

Broaden your learning with guided further reading, where the authors highlight additional resources you may wish to read, with explanations of why these texts are helpful.

How to use the online resources

The book is supported by online resources designed to help students take their learning further.

For students:

- Expand your knowledge of the region with an interactive map of the Middle East, which provides key information about each state.
- Take your learning further with web links to useful sources of interest and information.
- Test your understanding and extend your knowledge with web-based chapter exercises.
- Keep up to date with current events in the Middle East with links to relevant news sites.

For registered lecturers:

- Use the adaptable PowerPoint slides as the basis for lecture presentations, or as hand-outs in class.

Contents

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The late Peter Sluglett was Director of the Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore. He is co-author (with Marion Farouk-Sluglett) of *Iraq since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*, 3rd edition (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001).

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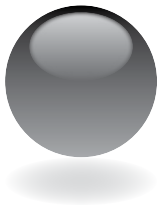
New to this edition

- A new chapter on Russia, China, and the Middle East examines the role of these increasingly important actors in the region.
- All chapters have been updated to include coverage of the most recent developments, including those relating to the conflict in Syria, the refugee crisis, so-called Islamic State, and the impact of the Trump administration.
- Additional examples and case studies have been introduced to help students link theory with real world events and scenarios.



Introduction: The Middle East and International Relations

LOUISE FAWCETT

The book and the title

This book aims to provide the reader with a comprehensive, up-to-date, and accessible guide to understanding the international relations of the modern Middle East. Few parts of the world have been quite so buffeted by conflict and war; few parts of the world have been so much written about and debated in recent times, while remaining subject to misunderstanding and stereotype. As one scholar, reflecting on the legacy of fifty years of academic study of the region, claimed: 'Middle Eastern political processes defy observation, discourage generalization and resist explanation' (Bill 1996: 503). This observation has been borne out by the unpredictable series of events since the start of the twenty-first century, including 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks; the Iraq War of 2003; the 2011 Arab uprisings and their consequences, involving devastating civil conflicts; the phenomenon of so-called Islamic State (IS)[1] and a refugee crisis of enormous proportions. These have deeply unsettled the region, bringing about the fall of long-established regimes and causing a 'deep structural transformation' (Lynch 2012).

The two major disciplines of international relations (IR) and Middle East studies with which this book is mainly concerned are highly interdependent, as any cursory survey of major works shows. No book on the contemporary politics of the Middle East can possibly ignore the way in which external forces have shaped the development of the region's politics, economics, and societies. If the former colonial powers were involved in the very creation of states, post-colonial powers have maintained extraordinarily high levels of interest and involvement in their politics, economics, and security, for reasons relating to resources, geographical location, and culture (Milton Edwards 2018). Similarly, no international relations text can ignore the rich cases that the Middle East has supplied, and how they illuminate

different theories and concepts of the discipline (Binder 1958), whether in respect of patterns of war and peace, identity politics, or international political economy. Many works have been published on either side of the Middle East studies–international relations divide, but until recently there were rather fewer titles that took on the challenge of integrating the two disciplines. There has been a rather standoffish attitude between political scientists and area studies scholars, which has held back joint enterprises. Area studies specialists criticize IR and social science methods for ignorance or selective use of facts to suit their theoretical purposes. IR specialists criticize area studies scholars for being unscientific, too descriptive and empirical, and 'methods light' (Fawcett 2017a). This state of affairs contributed to what scholars have called a 'crisis' in Middle East studies, in part the product of such disciplinary divides, but also because academic research on the Middle East has mostly failed to provide a good template for policymakers (Kramer 2001; Gause 2011; Lynch 2014).

Notwithstanding such criticisms, this situation has changed in recent years, with a growth in efforts to integrate political science and Middle East studies. This is evident in the area of comparative government (for example, Anderson 1987; Tessler et al. 1999; Bellin 2004; Posusney and Angrist 2005). As regards the international relations of the region, there have been, since the 1980s, some significant works, including L. C. Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East* (1984), T. Y. Ismael, *International Relations of the Contemporary Middle East* (1986), F. Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations* (2005), and R. Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East* (2015b). Together, these books have made important contributions to the subject, offering different approaches and perspectives informed by contemporary international relations debates. Yet it is probably fair to say that, despite such advances, there is still something of a gap in the literature, which suggests that work remains to be done in bringing the subject areas together, to close an imaginary fault line that has for a long time held them apart (Valbjorn 2004b). Further, and to state the obvious, there is enormous contemporary interest in a subject and a region that poses some of the central security challenges of the first half of the twenty-first century. These include the destabilizing regional and international effects of the Iraq War (Fawcett 2013), the Arab Spring (Gerges 2014), Iran's foreign policy orientation and nuclear programme (Nasr 2018), and the intractable Palestine–Israel conflict (Shafir 2017). This volume is therefore a direct response to this interest and to continuing demand for further scholarly engagement between the two disciplines, in order to help us better understand the international politics of the region.

In moving beyond the international relations–area studies divide, it seeks also to challenge arguments of 'exceptionalism' that have been applied to the Middle East. Such arguments, which are addressed in Edward Said's classic text *Orientalism* (1978), find in it unique qualities—such as its Arab and Islamic character—that make it different, explaining, for example, gender inequality or the stubbornness of authoritarian rule—even beyond the Arab Spring (Kedourie 1992; Springborg 2011). Rejecting such approaches, it seeks to offer a nuanced and integrated approach in which key ideas and concepts in international relations and key themes and developments in Middle East studies are brought together and discussed in a systematic way. In this new edition it responds to a call from those who engage in 'Global International Relations' (Acharya, 2014), which incorporates more critical and expansive approaches to international society. Global IR demands that we consider the contributions of the entire globe in the making and remaking of IR (as opposed to focusing on

the advanced industrialized countries of the West). Such a view is becoming more and more relevant, not only because the West is no longer the only or even the most important centre of power, but also because voices from the 'non-West' have proved to be equally important in illuminating the pathways of modern international politics. In the world of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the West is no longer held in 'awe' (Fawcett 2018b).

Studying the international relations of the Middle East

With this in mind, it is useful further to explore some of the particular problems that arise in studying the international relations of the Middle East and how this volume tackles them. Two issues are relevant here: the first relates to the nature of the subject matter itself; the second, to the scholarly approaches on offer. All of these are dealt with in different ways by the different authors, but a few common points emerge.

One difficulty in discussing the international relations of the Middle East lies in the very definition of the region itself. This is not a problem unique to the Middle East: common to many world regions is the question of identifying the territorial space that any region occupies and classifying its 'regional' characteristics. For example, despite obvious commonalities, scholars have long debated whether or not Latin America constitutes a distinct region or is better understood as a set of subregions; there is currently debate about whether or not East Asia can be classified in this way, one that has produced conflicting views about the nature and quality of 'regionness'.

The term the 'Middle East' slipped into common use after the Second World War, replacing the more limited definition of the 'Near East', but interpretations over its extension have varied over time. Both terms, it should be noted, derive from the West's perspective of the region for the 'East' was, obviously, conceived of in relation to its geographical position to the 'West'. Today, it is commonly understood to include the Arab states of West Asia and North Africa (members of the Arab League), and the non-Arab states of Iran, Israel, and Turkey (see **Figure 0.1**). Some have argued in favour of narrowing the region to exclude the African Arab states west of Egypt; others suggest further expansion to include the Muslim republics of Central Asia, with close links to the region since the break up of the former USSR. With so much geographical, historical, and cultural variety, one might well ask whether it is meaningful to speak of the Middle East as a coherent region. Can we make general claims about the international relations of such a diverse group of states?

Although there are a number of problems with this definition it may be argued that the region, as currently defined, does indeed possess some common properties and unifying characteristics, whether political (low levels of liberalization/high levels of authoritarianism), economic (rentier economies/low levels of economic liberalization), or cultural (predominantly Arab/Islamic), such that we may consider it a distinguishable unit, or a 'subsystem' within the bigger international system (Gause 1999). It also shares a common security dilemma, making it therefore a regional security 'complex' (Buzan 1991: 210). If we consider the effects of the Arab Spring, which included countries from North Africa (Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya), the East Mediterranean (Syria and Iraq), and the Gulf (Bahrain), but also resonating in the non-Arab states of Iran and Turkey, this notion of an inter-related system is again demonstrated. This does not, however, imply that the region behaves in a

Figure 0.1 The modern Middle East

uniform way, as the different contributions to this volume demonstrate. Some would argue that elements of regional cohesion visible in the Cold War period have been weakened, with the Gulf states, mostly immune from the Arab uprisings, for example, forming a distinct regional subsystem characterized by strong economies based upon oil income, conservative monarchical rule, and close Western links. However, the notion of the Gulf states operating as a kind of regional fulcrum, or power balancer, in respect of the region's international relations was ruptured by the divisions that emerged over the fall out from Arab Spring (see **Chapter 14**).

If defining the Middle East presents challenges, international relations, for its part, is an evolving and often imprecise term to describe an evolving and imprecise social science. Once limited to the analysis of interstate relations, recent international relations scholarship moved beyond this traditional state base encompassing a broader range of interactions between peoples, societies, and governments, to include webs of transnational politics and trans-governmental networks (Frankel 1988; Slaughter 2003). Global IR, as noted above, contributes to this development by expanding still further the range of enquiry.

This expansive and expanding notion of international relations is useful for this book in many ways. Much of the volume is concerned, of course, with the mechanisms and institutions of formal interstate relations, but also with less formal interactions and patterns of behaviour operating above and below the level of states. The consequences of the Arab uprisings are particularly relevant here as states have been weakened by civil war and external intervention and the region has seen the rise of new non-state actors which operate across state boundaries and challenge the foundations of the system (see **Chapter 5**). These seem

especially pertinent: for many regional scholars, the non-state domain has often been the default position from which to approach the Middle East.

To illustrate this point, much of the territory of the modern Middle East was formerly part of the Ottoman Empire. Few recognizable states existed. For sizeable parts of the twentieth century, even after the emergence of a states system, the two linked ideologies comprising Arabism and Islam constituted important elements in the international relations of the region. Tribal and religious identities both preceded and transcended state boundaries in shaping regional behaviour (Khoury and Kostiner 1990). In the early twenty-first century, although some states looked stronger than before, such ideologies, particularly that of Islam, have remained salient. As two leading scholars argue, 'No student of Middle East international politics can begin to understand the region without taking into account the ebb and flow of identity politics' (Telhami and Barnett 2002: 2). This point was forcefully brought home by the rise and increased significance of transnational Islamic movements (see **Chapter 8**), particularly evident after the turn of this century and again after the Arab uprisings. Such groups and their actions, facilitated by sophisticated communications networks, both challenge and erode the fragile legitimacy of many states, while making them subjects for external intervention. The charge, for example, that Afghanistan and Iraq had encouraged such networks contributed to the US-led interventions in 2002 and 2003, respectively, and the subsequent dismantling of incumbent regimes. In the twenty-first century, in contrast (alongside continuing radicalism), more moderate voices of Islam have been heard, as witnessed in Turkey, for example, and through the success of Islamic parties in post-Arab Spring elections.

However, it is a finding of this volume, as well as of other scholarly works on the Middle East, that the transnational or subnational case, while important, should not be overstated (Brown 2001; Owen 2004). Despite its contested and at times fluid properties, the state system in the Middle East has proved remarkable for its survival and durability (Fawcett 2017b), and it is the contention of some that the older features of regional identity—notwithstanding their recent and sometimes violent manifestations—have increasingly surrendered to, or at least been conditioned by, more powerful considerations of *raison d'état*. Pan-Arabism has slowly declined as a dominant ideology (Dawisha 2005) and the Arab Spring, despite resonating among Arab publics, gave rise to further fragmentation visible in inter-Arab sectarian divides. While political Islam has captured spaces once occupied by Arabism, it has also emerged as a fragmented force, one that must coexist with, not replace, the existing state system—the demise of IS makes this point. There are different versions of political Islam on offer, from the statist and more moderate Turkish or Tunisian example, or the stricter Saudi and Iranian interpretations, to those of so-called Islamic State, that envision the end of the state system itself. Still, it remains clear that a wholly state-centric or 'realist' approach is inadequate, or at least needs balancing with a thorough consideration of other actors and movements that compete with states for authority and popular support. This argument applies to any region, but the Middle East can arguably be singled out for the interconnected relationships that its peoples and societies have enjoyed, and their often poor fit with a still relatively new system of states, an argument frequently heard in the post-Arab uprisings environment.

Strong criss-crossing currents of regional homogeneity thus persist in a variety of forms, and are reflected in repeated patterns of cooperation within the region and in its interactions

with the outside world, from people power in the Arab Spring (see **Chapter 15**), to continuing Arab solidarity in the face of external challenges (see **Chapter 9**). Modern technology has facilitated these interdependences; however, it has also exacerbated conflicts. The themes of homogeneity, cooperation, fragmentation, and conflict are prevalent throughout the region and it is precisely this juxtaposition of conflict and cooperation that provides a prominent thread running through the different chapters of the book.

Indeed, for IR scholars the term 'conflict' appears unproblematic, even natural when applied to the Middle East and its international relations. Conflict is seen as the default state of affairs in international relations; cooperation is a realm entered only with caution, and where certain observable criteria and conditions are in place, offering material benefits for all. The widespread and persistent perception of the region, and one that has pervaded academic as well as popular circles, is that of a zone of conflict and war. It provides, for some, an illustration of an international analogy to the state of nature described by Thomas Hobbes: a world that, in the absence of a powerful Leviathan, sees the prevalence of anarchy and power struggles. It is characterized by both 'old' and 'new' wars (Kaldor 1999). The Middle East is still an 'unfinished' region, like other parts of the developing world, with weak states and regional institutions, where territory and borders are contested, and interstate conflict persists. The kinds of cooperation of rational actors seeking maximum payoffs in terms of security and power, identified and parsimoniously explained by international relations scholars, are rarely seen. Yet against this vision of disorder there is a contrasting and equally compelling vision of order, one long familiar to regional scholars: of peoples cohabiting a relatively seamless space, of tolerance and diversity—cultural, linguistic, and religious (Hourani 2002). Although this vision was often obscured by events in the twentieth century, it was recaptured in the spirit of the Arab Spring when Arab peoples joined in expressing their disapproval of governing regimes, calling for dignity and freedom.

These observations lead directly into identifying the second problem in undertaking a study of the international relations of the Middle East. This relates to the appropriateness of the scholarly approaches on offer: their shortcomings help to explain the longstanding reluctance of area studies specialists to engage with international relations scholarship. As noted, international relations theories are often too crude, regionally insensitive, and ill-informed to be of real service, a problem arguably exaggerated by trends in quantitative analysis which lose sight of real-world relevance. Indeed, those scholars brave enough to span the divide—and this includes a number of contributors to this volume—have found themselves obliged to wear 'two hats', as Avi Shlaim once eloquently expressed it. Middle Eastern hats are exchanged with international relations hats to suit different fora and publics.

A particular difficulty that has arisen in observing the international relations of the Middle East—one that the region shares with other parts of the developing world—is that, traditionally, most of the observers have come from, or were trained, outside the region, and their observations are based on rather different understandings of the traditions and practices of states (Neumann 1998; Tickner 2003): international relations theory was made *for* the Middle East, but not *by* the Middle East. Although the very creation of the modern states system in the Middle East—part of the territorial settlements that took place after the First World War—closely coincided with the development of international relations as an independent discipline, the two have hardly grown up together; rather, they have long resisted constructive engagement. Until quite recently, international relations was mostly the

preserve of scholars from English-speaking countries. Indeed, it was not that long ago that Stanley Hoffmann (1977) described international relations as an 'American Social Science'.

The early language and vocabulary of international relations were designed to fit and to explain the experience of the United States and its allies, or those who had closely followed the US and European paths. When applied to the Middle East and other parts of the developing world, it had a certain resonance, of course, not least because it was the language used by dominant states and other states felt obliged to use it also. Western IR is widely taught in universities across the developing world, and the Middle East is no exception. Few would disagree that there are certain features that all states share. But, in its attempt to describe state behaviour, to devise universal theories to fit all state types, early international relations theory has failed to capture difference. It ignored the importance of local circumstances and actors whose influences lent a distinctive flavour to a region's interactions with the outside world (Acharya and Buzan 2010).

The original realist and liberal paradigms—the mainstays of international relations theory—were both guilty of observing the world in this way, leading to the kind of generalization critiqued in the foregoing paragraphs. Generations of international relations scholars were content to view the Middle East, and indeed the rest of the world, through the realist lens of anarchy and balance-of-power politics. Liberal views of cooperation, order, and institution-building appeared of minor relevance, except as thinly disguised attempts by strong powers to bring order and to discipline the weak. States were the main focus of attention and were catalogued precisely according to their relative strength and weakness, highlighting the importance of the distribution of power in the international system. There was little interest in exploring the particular conditions under which states developed, or the nature of regional society. A classic work on international conflicts by a leading scholar, Joseph Nye (1997: 163–73), describes how the pattern of conflict in the Middle East is 'consonant with the realist model'. Another work by Stephen Walt on alliance behaviour (1987), using the Middle East as its case study, argues for a modified balance-of-power approach in which the behaviour of states is based on threat assessment.

As noted, some of the elements of realism were always useful and remain so. The Middle East must make its way in the world, as other regions do, in an international system in which power and security remain an important currency. Middle Eastern wars have borne similar attributes to the wars of other regions; the Arab–Israel Wars, or the Iran–Iraq War, for example, both set in the context of the bigger Cold War, obeyed many of the rules of balance-of-power politics. So too, arguably, have the Western powers' more recent wars with Iraq. The post-Arab Spring Middle East also demonstrates power politics at play. However, as Middle East scholars themselves have frequently noted, much international relations theory often seems strangely irrelevant or peripheral to their concerns. While international relations scholars have retained a tight focus on the unitary state as the primary object of analysis, Middle East scholars have told and retold a different story, one that places material interests alongside identity and domestic concerns at the centre of their analysis.

Their impatience is understandable. As Arnold Toynbee wrote in his critique of Western historians:

> [They] have gone wrong because they are egocentric, in diverse ways: because they deal only with Western history, or because they consider other histories only in so far as they are relevant to Western history, or because they look at other histories through categories applicable only to

> Western history, or because they think of themselves as somehow standing outside history and so able to judge it.
>
> (Quoted in Hourani 1961: 3)

Toynbee's views were controversial (and he was a Western historian!), but his statement remains pertinent to many contemporary interpretations of the modern Middle East, with obvious consequences for policymakers.

From a somewhat different perspective, Edward Said, in his essay 'Travelling Theory', notes how explanations that have developed in a particular context evolve and change as they move through space and time, and may lose their original meaning and purpose:

> A theory arrives as a result of specific historical circumstances . . . What happens to it when, in different circumstances and for new reasons, it is used again and . . . again? What can this tell us about theory itself—its limits, its possibilities and inherent problems?
>
> (Said 2000: 199)

Again, the uncritical export of dominant international relations theory to different parts of the world, including the Middle East, has been often problematic.

Despite such limitations, the positions of the two camps have not remained static, and much has changed in recent years. Notably, both sides have responded positively to the demands of scholars and policymakers alike to address the shortcomings of their respective approaches. On the one hand, Middle East studies has reacted to increasing criticism for isolating itself from mainstream social science; on the other hand, international relations scholarship has increasingly freed itself from its Western origins (Bilgin 2008): it has slowly become 'globalized', with more and more critical voices getting heard, and thus can no longer be described as an exclusively 'American' social science. It has also expanded into newer areas of cultural and social enquiry, making possible in particular a more region-sensitive approach. The much-talked-of crisis in Middle East studies is not over, at least from a policymaking viewpoint, but new templates have been devised for breaching the interdisciplinary divides.

The explosion in international relations theory that followed the end of the Cold War has facilitated this bridge-building in the sense that it has provided scholars with a bigger array of theories upon which to draw. Constructivism, in particular, has helped to open up the possibility of a more nuanced approach to the roles that culture or identity may play in international politics. International anarchy and the self-help behaviour that characterizes it, as one of the early constructivist works reminds us, is not a given; rather, it is socially constructed, that is the product of different societies' histories, beliefs, and interactions (Wendt 1992). Leading the way in making the connection between the roles that identity may play in defining the behaviour of Middle Eastern states, Michael Barnett (1998: 5) has offered 'a narrative of politics that is theoretically distinctive and historically instinctive' (see also **Chapter 1**).

While most scholars welcome the opening up of the field that constructivist accounts have offered, for some constructivism is too modest in its goals— it is only a facilitator for realist accounts that continue to reify the state and its actions. Critical theorists would thus resist the notion that the Westphalian state model, with all its familiar attributes, should be enthusiastically accepted as the central unit of analysis (Seth 2013). Others remain cautious of embracing wholeheartedly constructivist claims. As Ray Hinnebusch (2003) reminds us, the

debate about *how much* identity really matters remains unresolved; elsewhere, he has advocated a form of 'modified realism'. There is no such thing as an 'Arab' or an 'Islamic' foreign policy, for example, and neither the major Arab institution, the Arab League, nor the Islamic Conference Organization have so far aspired to promoting one beyond some very broad operational guidelines. Hence identity clearly does matter, but as a means of influencing popular perceptions and thus state behaviour, rather than displacing states and state power.

Other scholars of the region remain cautious of new paradigm shifts, as work by the late Fred Halliday (2005) reveals. Critical of what he calls the post-realist 'fetish' for culture, he forcefully reminds us that, when it comes to the Middle East, 'the cultural perspective was always there'. He advocates, as in his previous works, a firm grounding in historical sociology as an essential starting point for any analysis of the region. Many contributors to this volume would agree.

In sum, it would be wrong not to recognize recent advances in the attempt to bridge the divides between international relations and area studies; the theoretical and analytical gaps have narrowed. This book continues and develops this trend by demonstrating above all that the international relations of the Middle East are incomprehensible without appreciating first the regional and domestic, as well as the international, frame within which states operate, and second the juxtaposition of the features of cooperation alongside persistent conflict. Understanding these relationships provides in turn important clues to interpreting patterns of both war and peace, as well as the continuing story of state-building in the region.

Organization of the volume

Given the subject matter and the diverse array of approaches on offer, the organization of a volume such as this presents a number of challenges. As the existing literature demonstrates, there are a variety of alternative routes to approaching the international relations of the Middle East. Hence different entrées to the subject have been provided, for example, through a history of its societies and peoples (Hourani 2002; Rogan 2009), its political economy (Cammett et al 2015), or its foreign policy or diplomatic practices (Brown 2004; Korany and Dessouki 2008; Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2014). There are many fine case studies of individual states and crises, and of 'great power' relations (Gerges 1994; Sela 1998; Lynch 2012; Ryan 2018). Finally, there is the growing trend towards bringing core international relations approaches and themes to the Middle East in discussions of the roles of identity, security, globalization, regionalism, resources, and power (Telhami 1990; Yergin 1991; Korany et al. 1993; Barnett 1998; Hudson 1999; Henry and Springborg 2001; Lawson 2006; Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelanez 2009). Studies on contemporary topics, including gender (Joseph 2000), IT (Zayani 2018), and water (Amery 2015) have also made an appearance.

While all such approaches are helpful in illuminating different aspects of the international relations of the region, this book aims to bring them together in a single, all-encompassing volume. It is deliberately designed to reach a wide student public drawn from different disciplines. It is also designed to draw on the strengths of individual authors, all well-known scholars in their respective areas of study. The objective therefore has been to include a range of perspectives, rather than to favour any single approach, or indeed to try to apply a set

of uniform questions across the different chapters of the volume. If there is one guiding principle, it is that approaching MENA IR merits an historically grounded and analytically eclectic approach (Sil and Katzenstein 2010).

With the above in mind, the book is divided into three parts, as follows.

1. **Part 1** offers a broad theoretical, historical, and thematic overview of the international relations of the Middle East. The first theoretical chapter is designed to provide the reader with a solid and accessible background to diverse international relations theories and their application to the region. The historical chapters that follow also provide vital and enduring points of entry into understanding the international politics of the region: 'All history is contemporary history', as one historian of the early twentieth century observed (Croce 1941: 19). The historian's eye for detail and analysis can tell us much of what we need to know about the present by engaging us, in the words of E. H. Carr (1961: 30), with 'an unending dialogue' with the past. The importance of such a dialogue today is of particular relevance in understanding the course of events leading to the Arab uprisings. The call for a revision of the post-First-World-War boundaries is embodied in the demands of radical groups, particularly those demanding a return to the Islamic Caliphate of the Ottoman period.
2. **Part 2** of the book covers important contemporary themes in Middle East international relations. These include topics such as political economy, the role of ideas and identities (particularly Arabism and Islam), democratization and political reform, the management of regional relations, and patterns of war and security. In considering these themes, the different authors utilize a variety of international relations theories and approaches, and assess their relative usefulness in understanding the region and its interactions with the rest of the world.
3. **Part 3** looks at key regional case studies incorporating historical, contemporary, and theoretical perspectives. It covers both region-specific conflicts and events and the role of different internal and external actors in shaping the international relations of the region. Included here are the foreign policy practices of different states, the Arab–Israel conflict and attempts at its resolution, the international relations of the Gulf, the Arab Spring and its consequences, and finally the policies of the US, Russia and China, and European powers in shaping the region's political and economic development.

Although not exhaustive in their coverage and highly interdependent, the three parts provide a set of discrete, yet interconnected, insights. In offering this wide menu for choice, the volume aims to reach a broad readership among graduate and undergraduate students of Middle East politics and international relations. For the former the chapters will provide useful introductory material; for the latter a set of core readings and entry points to understand the IR of the region. The different chapters are intended to stand alone for those who wish to focus on a particular historical period, event, or theme, but can be read together, and thus provide the opportunity of acquiring a solid, well-rounded perspective on any given question.

Within the three parts of the book, the selection of individual chapters was necessarily a difficult and subjective one, and there are some obvious pitfalls of overlap, repetition, and exclusion. Following current fashions in political science and international relations might

suggest a different choice. In a world in which the state, for some, has become an outmoded concept, or in which security may be viewed through a different lens—for example, that of environmental security, or of 'human security', as suggested by former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan and in the 2008 *Arab Human Development Report* (UNDP 2012)—the subject might be approached in a different way. Here, rather than current trends, the relative weight or salience of topics *over time* has been a guide. A central question asked in the organization of the volume is: which are the topics and issues that students of international relations and Middle East studies most commonly seek to address? In contemplating the contemporary region in broad terms, we find that traditional, alongside newer, security concerns—notably, issues of war and peace, relations with external powers, the processes of economic and political liberalization, and the politics of identity and alliance formation—all feature prominently. This book tackles such questions while acknowledging that the questions themselves may change, or may already be changing. A book on the international relations of the Middle East written in 2050 might read rather differently.

Chapter outlines

Part 1: Theoretical and Historical Overview

In **Chapter 1**, Fred Lawson offers a comprehensive overview of the different theories and approaches that characterize the study of international relations, and then considers their application to the region. Wide-ranging in theoretical terms and extensively referenced, the chapter constitutes both an essential starting point and a useful set of tools for students wishing to understand the region's international relations and the relevant theoretical underpinnings.

In **Chapter 2**, Eugene Rogan traces the origins and the entry of Middle East states into the international system after the First World War. His analysis is influenced by the ideas of the 'English School' of international relations, for whom international relations is understood in terms of an 'international society', one in which shared norms, values, and practices develop that states find in it their interests to nurture and preserve (Bull 1977). The emergence of the Middle East saw states entering and participating in this society. Against this backdrop, however, there were elements of resistance and revolt, where the state system failed to meet the needs of different peoples and became synonymous with oppression and inequality, the consequences of which still reverberate today.

Chapter 3 continues with the story of the Cold War in the region. Here, the evidence regarding which factors drove regional developments has been contested by international relations and regional scholars alike. In the historiography of the Cold War, traditional interpretations attribute importance to external agency and are linked to the dominant realist paradigms in international relations. US policy was seen both by contemporaries and subsequent scholars as a reaction to the Soviet threat—and vice versa—and moulded accordingly in balance-of-power and containment terms (Rostow 1971; Gaddis 2005). Later accounts, informed by the release of post-Cold-War archives, add nuance and detail, highlighting the role played by domestic actors in shaping the conflict. Peter Sluglett and Andrew Payne's account emphasizes the persuasive power of realism and the dominance of material interests.

Illustrated by a case study of Iraq, they argue that while relations between the superpowers and regional actors were complex and changing, it is clear that their influence left an indelible mark on the internal politics of the states of the Middle East.

Chapter 4 deals with the post-Cold-War era. Rather than providing a chronological record of historical events and developments, the chapter introduces some the key themes that have come to dominate the contemporary international relations of the Middle East: oil; new and old conflicts; the impacts of globalization; and religio-politics. It therefore provides a bridge between the first and second parts of the book. In sorting what he calls our post-Cold-War 'conceptual lenses', Bahgat Korany advocates the use of the term 'intermestic' to highlight the multiple linkages between domestic and international politics—linkages vindicated long before but also reinforced by the events of the Arab Spring.

Part 2: Themes in International Relations and International Political Economy

The chapters in the second part of the volume explore some of the topics introduced by Korany in more detail. In **Chapter 5**, Giacomo Luciani tackles the omnipresent question of oil and its relation to the region's political economy. If oil is at the centre of debates about the domestic politics of the region, it is also at the heart of its international relations. Luciani demonstrates the compelling links between oil and the consolidation and evolution of the modern state system. Yet he also finds that, while outside powers have invariably used oil in their calculations of Middle East policy, it has figured less prominently in the foreign policies of Arab states, whose concerns remain of a more parochial kind, regime security being one. Surprisingly, the oil weapon has been little used. As regards domestic politics, the rentier model developed by Luciani shows how oil has conditioned economic *and* political outcomes in oil-rich and oil-poor states, slowing down the prospects for reform. However, following the effects produced by the Arab Spring, even the wealthy Gulf states have felt the winds of change.

In **Chapter 6**, Augustus Richard Norton tackles the critical issue of political reform in the light of these winds of change. He avoids the term 'exceptionalism', but acknowledges that the Arab world has been slow to respond to the global processes of democratization, and here highlights the political economy of states, the persistence of conflict, regime type, and the ambiguity over the relationship between democracy and Islam. This relationship is not necessarily a contradictory one. Norton points out how much Islamic discourse—past and present—is marked by participation and diversity rather than by rigidity and intolerance. Further, as the Arab Spring has illustrated, civil society is vibrant and growing in many states across the region. Meanwhile, responses from the West to political reform have been lukewarm, with stability and regional alliances privileged over democracy. The evidence from the region, even before the Arab uprisings, is that peoples want better, and more representative government, even if they remain unclear as to what type of government that should be. Despite multiple setbacks and mixed outcomes, that desire remains.

Chapter 7 by Raymond Hinnebusch and **Chapter 8** by Peter Mandaville offer critical reviews of the explanatory power of identity and culture in understanding the region's international relations. In **Chapter 7**, Hinnebusch focuses on Arabism and other regional ethnicities as sources of political identity. The importance of these identities within the region has been accentuated because of the poor fit between identity and states and regimes—a colonial

legacy, but one that remains pertinent today, as revealed in the Arab uprisings. Indeed, he argues that the persistence of conflict in the Middle East must be understood through this 'incongruence of identity and material structures'. Focusing on pan-Arabism, as well as the irredentist and separatist movements that have characterized the history and political development of the region, such as the Kurds in Turkey or Iraq, Hinnebusch shows how the interaction of identity with state formation and development has contributed to numerous wars, and most recently to the evolution of regional developments following the Arab Spring.

In **Chapter 8**, Peter Mandaville takes up the story of identity from an Islamic perspective. In a historically informed account, he shows how Islam, in a variety of forms, has interacted with the domestic, regional, and international politics of the region. Its influence, however, has ebbed and flowed alongside different currents in regional and international relations. In this regard, globalization has been a facilitator of transnational Islam, but by no means a force for union. Notwithstanding its evident importance, there has been little substantive presence of religion in the foreign policies of Middle Eastern states, even in those more overtly Islamic ones such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. However, the popular uprisings in the Arab world created new opportunities and challenges for the Islamic movement, which continue to affect states' foreign policies notably through the phenomenon of 'sectarianization' (Hashemi and Postel 2017).

Identity also features in **Chapter 9** by Louise Fawcett, which offers an overview of the changing dynamics of regionalism and alliance-making in the region, processes that are closely related to and reflect states' foreign and domestic policy choices. The idea and practice of regionalism, broadly interpreted, are examined alongside international relations approaches that focus on the role of ideas, interests, and domestic and external agency in explaining efforts to build consensus and cooperation around core issues. In considering the history of such efforts in comparative perspective, the chapter demonstrates the loose fit between traditional, international relations-type concerns and regional realities: the EU, for example, cannot be considered an obvious model for a region like the Middle East. Domestic-, regional-, and international-level factors combine to explain the region's slow record in terms of successful institution-building, although some recent precedents have suggested some alternative regional scenarios.

Chapter 10, by Marina Calculli, offers a contemporary analysis of the region's security dilemmas. Its perspective is informed by a critical reconsideration of the security landscape in the post-9/11 era. In this environment, external actors are still important, as is regime security. However, a key feature of the current scene is the strategic politicization of violence that rival actors employ to legitimize the use of force in pursuit of competing political agendas. In particular, the chapter explores how regional and international regimes have been able to contest and remake sovereignties, territories, and the balance of power through the use of the 'war on terror' rhetoric. Calculli argues that such patterns of insecurity are both cyclical in nature and likely to endure for the foreseeable future.

Part 3: Key Issues and Actors

This final part comprises a number of more focused and issue-based case studies that are designed to inform and illuminate further aspects of the region's international relations. **Chapter 11**, by Ray Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, offers an analysis of foreign

policymaking by regional states based on a 'complex realist' approach. This acknowledges the weight of realist (or power-based) arguments, but highlights other factors such as the level of dependency on the US, processes of democratization, and the role of leadership in informing states' foreign policy choices. To illustrate this approach, it examines decision-making by four leading states—Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and Egypt—in relation to the key events and crises of the last decade.

The following two chapters deal directly with what has been—at least until the present decade—possibly the most central and contentious security issue in the international relations of the modern Middle East: the Arab–Israel conflict, and attempts at its pacification and resolution. There are many lessons here for international relations scholars concerned with questions of war and peace. In **Chapter 12**, Charles Smith explores the different aspects of the Arab–Israel conflict over time—military, political, and economic. In line with other chapters and themes already set out, he demonstrates how both realism and the contours of identity politics inform the position of different states party to the conflict. Even the high point of the conflict, the 1967 war, was as much about Arab identity and leadership as it was about the struggle with Israel. Tracing the conflict from its origins in 1948 to the present, Smith shows how the Palestinian question remains today at the heart of debates about the normalization of regional relations, yet progress has been stalled since the Arab uprisings with the proliferation of other regional conflicts demanding attention.

Following this analysis, we turn to **Chapter 13**, in which Avi Shlaim covers the landmark series of negotiations between Arabs and Israelis in the early 1990s, culminating in the Oslo accords (1993), which marked the first and so far the only sustained effort at peaceful resolution of the Arab–Israel conflict. These events, which dominated the regional panorama and captured the international imagination, assist our understanding not only of the nature and direction of Middle East politics, but also their positioning within the emerging international order as outlined by then US President George H. W. Bush. At first, it seemed that the accords, in reconciling the two major parties to the conflict—the Israelis and the Palestinians—were a demonstration of an emerging and more liberal international system. Yet the fragility of this system, in the Middle East as elsewhere, was soon exposed. Domestic, regional, and international politics conspired against peace in the Middle East; the opportunity was lost and some twenty-five years on has yet to be regained.

The Gulf states have faced different challenges in addressing their own pressing security dilemmas, as M. Legrenzi and F. Gregory Gause III demonstrate in **Chapter 14**. Considering the shifting security dynamics in this crucial region, they closely examine the policies of two major players, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as well as the pattern of US involvement. Iran's roles, its nuclear programme, and complex relations with the Arab Gulf states are also examined. In line with other chapters, Legrenzi and Gause argue that the classical realist tool, the balance of power, only partly explains the positioning of states. The domestic framework and its (positive and negative) interactions with transnational influences and external actors are crucial to understanding the environment within which local states operate—whether revolutionary Iran, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, or the Gulf monarchies themselves. Given that regime security drives states in their foreign policies, the need to cope with both internal and external threats is compelling. Outside actors are important in as much as they supply or help to combat such threats. The withdrawal of US forces from Iraq and the relative immunity of the Gulf monarchies from the effects of the Arab Spring have afforded these

states greater regional influence and autonomy but events since 2015 also reveal deep divides among them over issues like IS, Iranian foreign policy, and the war in Yemen.

In **Chapter 15**, the Arab uprisings and their outcomes are given detailed attention. Larbi Sadiki approaches them from the perspective of the peoples of the region. They are conceived of as popular uprisings against aged and mostly despotic governments, which have long silenced popular dissent. Larbi Sadiki argues that the Arab uprisings demonstrate the weakness of traditional IR, with its focus on states and power, by showing how much the people matter. Even if the Arab uprisings have not yet delivered on popular expectations, and the Arab world continues to be subject to external interference and persistent authoritarian rule, they are part of a process of global protest and change, facilitated by new media and technology, which challenges the dominant IR theories.

In **Chapter 16**, Michael Hudson offers an in-depth study of the evolution of US policy towards the region. Starting with a review of its origins and development over the past century, he stresses the crucial and interdependent relationship between different domestic constituencies in the US, and the conduct of US foreign policy, in an implicit critique of realist approaches. After analysing the 'neo-conservative revolution' which this dynamic produced under George W. Bush, the chapter offers assessments of the records of the two most recent administrations. President Obama's attempt to reset relations with the region produced mixed results: he reached an agreement to limit Iran's nuclear program, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and oversaw the successful Bin Laden raid in 2011, but failed to offset continuing regional turmoil following the Arab uprisings and the rise of IS, or to make any progress on the Israel–Palestine question. While there are some observable continuities, Hudson argues that President Trump has already upended US Middle East policy in several significant ways, as advisors attempt to restrain his apparent desire to undo his predecessor's legacy.

Chapter 17 is a new chapter for this edition by Roland Danreuther. It analyses the important relationships that are currently evolving between Russia, China, and the region. While both states have had longstanding historical links with the region, the twenty-first-century panorama is a quite distinctive one, with new economic and geopolitical factors driving a return to MENA. In addition, significant Muslim populations in both countries add another dynamic to contemporary Russian and Chinese relations with MENA.

Chapter 18, by Rosemary Hollis and the last of the volume, explores the evolution and development of European approaches to the Middle East. A central question relates to the relevance and significance of Europe as an actor in influencing patterns of politics and development in the Middle East. Why is it that Europe, despite its economic and soft power resources, remains a political pygmy in a region of such profound historical and contemporary interest? Realism would point to the relative irrelevance of institutions such as the European Union and the limits to cooperation. Yet medium powers, if Europe can be understood thus, can influence outcomes in international relations and there are Middle Eastern states that have looked to Europe to supply this balancing effect, in both normative and policy terms. This potential has been demonstrated in the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Programme (1995) and subsequent initiatives, which may yet provide a cornerstone for further development. Yet Europe has been slow and often clumsy in responding to the events of the Arab Spring, caught between conflicting loyalties and interests. A common security policy with respect to the region is yet to emerge and the 2015 refugee crisis exposed new divisions.

Within this framework, the different chapters in the three parts of the book offer a balance between Middle Eastern studies and international relations perspectives. The authors do this in different ways, reflecting their own interests and preferences. There has been no attempt to turn area specialists into international relations scholars, or vice versa—an exercise that would run the risk of being artificial and superficial. Rather, in locating their chapters within the broad remit of the international relations of the Middle East and considering different axes of conflict and cooperation, continuity, and change—themes that run throughout all of the chapters of the volume—there is an invitation to each author to play to his or her respective strengths, but with an eye to developing a theme or idea that is intelligible to both disciplines. The result is a blend that aims to bring them a little closer together. Each chapter, in its own way, thus contributes to a broader understanding of the patterns of relations between Middle Eastern states and societies and other states and societies, at different moments and in different settings.

The international relations of the Middle East and the future

In place of a concluding note, it may be helpful briefly to highlight a few general points that emerge from the volume that could inform thinking about the future direction of studies on the international relations of the Middle East. All of these points are reinforced by a consideration of the momentous changes taking place in the region that scholars and policymakers failed to predict, and which they are still struggling to understand (Lynch 2012).

- History provides an enduring and essential entry point to understanding the contemporary region, its politics, and society.
- The region's international relations cannot be understood without close and constant reference to domestic actors, regimes, and an array of local factors that make each region unique in its own way.
- Models derived from the experience of Western states do not necessarily provide a good fit with local conditions and practices.
- Western policymakers (whether US or European) have as yet failed to devise successful and acceptable strategies to promote economic and political development and security.
- A regionally sensitive and regionally informed approach is an essential starting point for scholars and policymakers. Such an approach has often proved elusive at the cost of regional stability and development.

Describing the region's experience with modernization in the nineteenth century, the historian Albert Hourani wrote:

> It would be better . . . to see the history of the period as that of a complex interaction: of the will of ancient and stable societies to reconstitute themselves, preserving what they have of their own while making the necessary changes in order to survive in a modern world.
>
> (Hourani 1993: 4)

And writing of the region at the end of the twentieth century, another historian, Avi Shlaim, a contributor to this volume, notes how the Middle East has yet to overcome its 'post-Ottoman

syndrome' in reference to the settlement that was imposed on the region by the European powers after the First World War (1995: 132).

At the start of the twenty-first century, when the idea behind this volume was first conceived, such reflections had lost none of their relevance, and continued to inform the region's politics and international relations. They are all the more appropriate from the perspective of 2019 as the region continues to wrestle with the implications of its colonial past, its fractured modern history, and multiple encounters with globalization.

Further reading

Gerges, F. (2014) *The New Middle East. Protest and Revolution in the Arab World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
A valuable recent addition to the post-Arab-Spring literature.

Halliday, F. (2005) *The Middle East in International Relations: Power Politics and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
A survey of the region's history and politics informed by different international relations approaches.

Hinnebusch, R. (2015) *The International Politics of the Middle East*, rev. edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press)
An interpretation of the international politics of the region, offering a 'modified realist' approach.

Lynch, M. (2012) *The Arab Uprisings. The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East* (New York: Public Affairs)
Historically informed analysis of the uprisings that have swept the Arab world.

Milton Edwards, B. (2018) *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, 4th edn (Cambridge: Polity Press)
A comprehensive introduction to contemporary regional politics.

Owen, R. (2004) *State Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, rev. edn (London: Routledge)
An authoritative text offering an excellent introduction to the history and politics of the region.

Notes

1. Also known as IS, ISIL, or Daesh. In this volume these terms are used interchangeably.

Part 1

Theoretical and Historical Overview

International Relations Theory and the Middle East

FRED H. LAWSON

Overview

International relations theory takes many forms and poses a wide range of puzzles that can be addressed using Middle Eastern cases. Structural realist theory dominates the field, complemented by neoliberal institutionalism, the English School, historical sociology, constructivism, and a variety of more radical approaches. Statistical studies offer useful insights that call for further exploration, as do power transition theory and power cycle theory. Conceptual innovations by Middle East specialists also merit elaboration.

Introduction

International relations is a broad field of academic inquiry that has generated a wide range of theoretical approaches. Mainstream theories focus on the ways that states interact with one another in circumstances where no overarching authority governs their behaviour—in other words, under conditions of anarchy. For structural realists, also known as neorealists, the anarchic character of the international arena compels states to look out for their own security, and to distrust the motives and actions of others. Neoliberal institutionalists, by contrast, recognize the importance of self-interest and suspicion in world affairs, but expect states as rational actors to create institutional arrangements that reduce tension and facilitate cooperation. Such institutions clarify the objectives and intentions of the states involved,

and reduce the incentives to engage in self-aggrandizing behaviour. Similarly, scholarship on relational contracting suggests that, even though the world looks anarchic, there are mutually agreed bargains that lay the foundation for international hierarchies. These may involve power, wealth, or prestige, and generate relations of patronage and dependence between great powers and subordinate states.

An important alternative perspective—the English School—argues that, even under anarchic conditions, there is a high degree of orderliness in world affairs. English School theorists posit that, at any given time, there exists a society of states that operates according to accepted norms and shared conventions, most notably ones governing diplomacy and warfare. This tradition of scholarship sets out to explain why one cluster of norms and conventions—rather than any other cluster—regulates international relations at a specific moment, as well as why different kinds of international societies, or states-systems, emerge, flourish, and deteriorate.

Most constructivist writers criticize structural realists, neoliberal institutionalists, and the English School alike for assuming that states constitute the elemental and fixed actors in world affairs. Constructivists assert that states take shape in specific historical contexts, and that the conditions under which states coalesce and become socialized to one another play a crucial role in determining how they conceive of themselves and formulate their basic interests. Moreover, constructivists claim that there can be many different sorts of international anarchy: sometimes, the absence of an overarching authority accompanies pervasive rivalry and mistrust among states, but under other, equally anarchic, circumstances, states become accustomed to interact in a more benign and collaborative fashion.

Constructivist theories are sometimes associated with the philosophical position that all knowledge is bound up with concepts that dictate what is considered factual and what is not. In other words, radical constructivists reject the positivist claim that theories can (and indeed must) be tested against empirical data; they assert instead that understanding comes from deriving principles and strategies that can promote justice, equality, or peace. A growing body of scholarship that declares itself to be post-structuralist, or even post-modernist, insists that interpretive theories provide the only meaningful insights into world politics. For scholars in this research programme, the quest to build a scientific discipline of international relations is at best wrong-headed and at worst masks—and advances—the agendas of statespeople.

At the other end of the spectrum from such radical approaches stands an assortment of quantitative studies that offers an impressive body of empirical findings about international relations, accumulated through the meticulous collection of events data and the employment of sophisticated statistical techniques. Quantitative research at first focused almost exclusively on the association between alliances and war, but has gone on to address more complex dimensions of international conflict. Among these are the dynamics that characterize militarized interstate disputes, territorial conflicts, and enduring rivalries. Equally empiricist in nature is a handful of quantitative and qualitative—that is, case study—explorations of power transition theory and power cycle theory.

There thus exist a great many alternative theories of international relations that can be investigated, debated, tested, elaborated, and refined by examining events and trends in the Middle East **(see Box 1.1)**. Some general theoretical controversies have already trickled into the scholarship on regional affairs. Raymond Hinnebusch (2015), for instance, incorporates

BOX 1.1 What is the 'Middle East'?

How to delineate the Middle Eastern international system in conceptual, rather than purely geographical, terms is a long-standing problem. Leonard Binder (1958) proposes that the region consists of the former territories of the Ottoman Empire, along with neighbouring countries in which religiously oriented opposition movements have challenged Western-style nationalism. 'On this basis,' he argues, 'the Middle East proper stretches from Libya to Iran, with fringe areas including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Maghrib, and a core area including the Arab states and Israel' (Binder 1958: 416). Binder asserts that relations among these states cannot be explained in terms of the dynamics of the global order, but require close attention to local history and internal politics. 'If power were to be likened to rays of light', he observes, 'we might say that extra-area power is "refracted" when projected into the Middle Eastern element' (Binder 1958: 415).

Paul Noble (1991), by contrast, focuses on relations among the Arab states, excluding Iran, Turkey, and Israel on the grounds that they do not share the weak state institutions, common values, and ideologies—in particular the affinity for pan-Arabism, or permeability of political boundaries—that one sees in the Arab world. Gregory Gause (2004) counters that the Middle East consists of states that are held together by bonds of asymmetrical interdependence. Alternatively, it has been proposed that the Middle East forms a regional security complex: a set of states in which policies carried out by one state generate externalities that ignite, escalate, or mitigate conflicts with other states (Lake 1997). In these terms, the Middle Eastern regional system has expanded to incorporate the Caucasus, Central Eurasia, South Asia, and Northeast Africa (Lawson 2007b; al-Hariri 2011; Kamrava 2017; Lawson 2017).

constructivist notions of identity and structuration into his survey of Middle Eastern developments; Fred Halliday (2005) wrestles with the reciprocal impact of state institutions and transnational processes, as well as with influential theories of nationalism; Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Pelanez (2009) have made a preliminary attempt to apply English School concepts to this part of the world. But for the most part, international relations and Middle East studies remain strictly segregated from each other. One of the major tasks for future scholarship is to combine state-of-the-art theorizing with up-to-date analysis undertaken by specialists in this particular region.

Structural realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and relational contracting

Under anarchic circumstances, states look out first and foremost for their own security. For structural realists, this means that states give top priority to maximizing their individual well-being, and do their best to guard against being attacked, conquered, or otherwise exploited by others (Waltz 1979). In pursuit of this objective, states can be assumed to act rationally, primarily because the most pressing dangers they confront are so glaringly obvious that leaders can easily figure out the broad outlines, and secondarily because states set up dense networks of government agencies to gather information and interpret what is happening around them.

Unfortunately, the policies that states adopt to maximize their own security jeopardize the interests of other states. The others take steps to parry the threat, and their responses undermine whatever advantage might have been gained by the first state. Consequently,

all states end up no better off than they were at the outset or—as a result of the expense of armaments and the animosity created by the cycle of hostile action, and reaction—actually worse off. This dynamic is known as the 'security dilemma', and structural realists argue that it drives interactions among states under anarchy (Jervis 1978; Glaser 1997; Booth and Wheeler 2008). Most academic writing on the Middle East uses the term 'security dilemma' simply as a synonym for 'security problem' or 'security challenge'. Only a handful of studies employs the concept in a rigorous way (Yaniv 1986; Stein 1993; Lawson 2011).

Even though the security dilemma tends to spark arms races and aggravate mistrust among states, it does not necessarily lead to war. A major puzzle that structural realists investigate concerns the precise circumstances under which interstate wars break out in an anarchic environment. The literature on this topic is enormous, and much of it deals with comparisons of relative power (Levy and Thompson 2010). Geoffrey Blainey (1973), for example, argues that war is more likely to erupt when statespeople disagree about how power is distributed, while the chances for peace improve markedly whenever leaders agree about the distribution of power. Structural realists still argue about whether war is more likely when two major antagonists confront one another (Deutsch and Singer 1964) or when there are more than two powerful states (Waltz 1964). Other neorealist scholarship explains the outbreak of war in terms of the 'offense–defense balance'—that is, whether weapons and strategies that improve states' ability to strike are more effective than ones that protect against attacks or limit the damage if an attack comes (Van Evera 1999).

Structural realists claim that states can be expected to block or undercut any adversary that pursues an aggressive foreign policy or tries to alter the structure of the international arena. This implies that countries will engage in balancing behaviour when they confront actual or potential aggressors, and that this plays a crucial role in preserving the stability of the system (Vasquez and Elman 2003). A minority view posits that weaker states occasionally align themselves with the aggressor, in the expectation that they will be rewarded for their support or spared the costs of resisting—a policy known as 'bandwagoning' (Labs 1992; Schweller 1994). Large-scale, quantitative studies indicate that balancing predominates in the modern era (Fritz and Sweeney 2004; Levy and Thompson 2005). Systematic analyses of historical cases reach the same conclusion (Wohlforth et al. 2007), although methodological shortcomings cast doubt on these results (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni 2009).

Scholars of the Middle East have contributed a good deal to our understanding of balancing and bandwagoning. Stephen Walt (1987) demonstrates that states in the Arab world most often try to stop any one country from gaining a dominant position, despite calls for Arab unity, attempts by one government or another to exert regional leadership, and the presence of the State of Israel as a common adversary. Alan Taylor (1982) describes the kinds of balancing that have characterized regional affairs, as do Patrick Seale (1965) and Malcolm Kerr (1971). Elie Podeh (1993 and 2003) surveys the shifting alignments that permeated inter-Arab relations during the era of Egypt's greatest influence. James Lebovic (2004), by contrast, asserts that Walt overstates the centrality of inter-Arab balancing. Laurie Brand (1994) adds that fiscal considerations play a pivotal role in determining how Middle Eastern states ally with one another, while Richard Harknett and Jeffrey VanDenBerg (1997) account for Jordan's puzzling 1990–91 alignment with Iraq in terms of a convergence of foreign and domestic threats.

Gregory Gause (2003) advances the argument that Arab states give higher priority to some threats than they do to others. Threats that put a country's domestic stability in jeopardy are more salient than those that involve foreign affairs alone. Consequently, 'Middle Eastern leaders balance against the state that manifests the most hostility toward their [respective] regimes, regardless of that state's aggregate power and geographic proximity' (Gause 2003: 283; see also Ryan 2009). Similar reasoning has been used to account for the emergence of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (Priess 1996), although the formation of the GCC can also be explained in terms of overlapping internal and external threats (Lawson 1999; Cooper 2003–4).

Structural realists expect states to form an alliance only if it improves their capacity to protect themselves. Alliances that coalesce around shared ideology will be rare and fragile, since security alignments entail substantial costs and impose significant restraints on the freedom of action exercised by alliance partners (Snyder 1997). Moreover, it is hard for states to manage relations with allies and adversaries at the same time. Strengthening the alliance may enable a state's partners to drag it into unwanted conflicts, while attempts to conciliate the adversary may prompt a state's allies to abandon it. The dilemmas associated with alliance management are just beginning to be explored using Middle Eastern cases (Lawson 2007a).

Evidence from the Middle East lies at the heart of an earlier, but now largely forgotten, literature that emphasizes states' efforts to preserve regional stability by creating counterpoised coalitions. Brian Healy and Arthur Stein (1973) assert that states form alignments that exhibit structural balance—in other words, that consist of even numbers of antagonistic linkages. Frank Harary (1961) shows that structural balance propelled Egypt, Israel, Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union into the 1956 Suez War; David Lai (2001) delineates similar patterns among the Arab states, Israel, the US, and the Soviet Union. Vestiges of this research programme can be discerned in studies of the strategic triangles that characterize successive periods of Middle Eastern diplomacy (Mojtahed-Zadeh 1994; Fuertig 2007). Whether or not more recent conflicts, most notably the one between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia, tend to produce balanced configurations of regional alliances is a question worth exploring.

Another major debate among structural realists concerns whether states are primarily concerned with maximizing their overall security, wealth, and prestige (Snidal 1991), or instead worry most about their position compared to others (Grieco 1988). This controversy lost some of its intensity after Robert Powell (1991) put forward the sensible proposition that states worry about relative gains whenever war looks imminent and give greater consideration to absolute gains if the prospects for war seem slight. Nevertheless, the debate over absolute versus relative gains leaves open the question: under what conditions will leaders emphasize the general well-being of their respective countries and what circumstances induce leaders to put greater weight instead on their state's position vis-à-vis others? Investigating the foreign policies that Egypt and Israel or Jordan and Israel pursued in the years before and after their respective peace treaties could shed new light on this controversy.

Neoliberal institutionalists make the same theoretical assumptions that structural realists do but shift attention away from conflict and highlight the factors that facilitate interstate cooperation (Keohane and Martin 1995). If a state's worst possible outcome occurs

when it acts cooperatively and another state takes advantage of it, and its best outcome happens when it exploits the cooperativeness of the other state, then—under anarchic circumstances—neither state has an incentive to cooperate. This situation is called the 'prisoner's dilemma' (Oye 1985). If, however, circumstances make it much more costly for the two states to exploit one another, and the best possible outcome is either mutual cooperation or mutual non-cooperation, then each one will make an effort to coordinate its actions with those of the adversary. Situations like these are known as 'assurance games' (Martin 1992).

For neoliberal institutionalists, the key analytical task is to examine the context in which states interact, in order to determine what sort of incentive structure they face. Because states act rationally, conditions that reduce the level of mistrust will encourage them to set up formal or informal institutions (Martin and Simmons 1998; Martin 2017). When institutions emerge, interstate cooperation becomes more prevalent and robust. Institutions that promote cooperation take many different forms: countries gravitate toward a single major currency; airline pilots around the world speak English; the Arab League takes decisions on the basis of consensus among member states, whereas the short-lived Arab Cooperation Council was constructed on the principle of majority rule (Lawson 2008). How and why various institutional arrangements come into existence and evolve over time constitutes the core of the neoliberal institutionalist research programme (see **Box 1.2**).

BOX 1.2 Conflict over the Nile River

In April 2011, Ethiopia announced that it was starting work on a massive dam across the Blue Nile River, which would eventually store some 60 billion cubic metres of water—approximately the same amount that Egypt had been guaranteed each year under the terms of the 1959 water-sharing agreement that governed the distribution of Nile water among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. Officials in Cairo quickly accepted an Ethiopian proposal to set up a technical commission to assess the dam's overall impact. No progress toward resolving the dispute took place, however, and in May 2013 the Ethiopian government started diverting the flow of the river to complete the project.

For structural realists, what matters most about this episode is the detrimental effect of Addis Ababa's actions on the security of Egypt. Members of the Egyptian national assembly strongly opposed the construction of the dam and eventually compelled President Muhammad Mursi to speak out against the project. Egyptian diplomats asserted that no change in the distribution of Nile water would be tolerated and took steps to rally other governments in the region to resist the dam. Cairo's intransigence engendered an equally firm commitment from Addis Ababa to complete the project, and persuaded Sudan to pull away from Egypt and take steps to conciliate Ethiopia. By the fall of 2016, Sudan and Egypt had rekindled a long-dormant conflict over a disputed border district, Northeast Africa had polarized into an Egypt-led camp and an Ethiopia-aligned camp, and there were credible reports that Cairo was encouraging anti-regime protests inside Ethiopia. No clearer illustration of the security dilemma and interstate balancing behaviour can be imagined.

Neoliberal institutionalists would point instead to the initiatives that the Egyptian government undertook to create a multilateral framework in which the conflict over the Nile could be effectively managed. The technical commission operated under several severe handicaps: it involved too many states; there were few if any ancillary disputes that could be used to make trade-offs' and Egypt had nothing to offer as compensation for Ethiopian concessions. Yet the conflict remained largely benign, and the spring 2013 crisis dissipated without shots being fired. Explaining this episode requires a careful tracing of changes in the underlying pay-off structure, which shifted from something like a prisoner's dilemma to something resembling an assurance game.

One offshoot of neoliberal institutionalism analyses the emergence and consolidation of regional organizations (Mansfield and Solingen 2010). Studies of Middle Eastern regionalism remain almost entirely descriptive, rather than explanatory (Aghrout and Sutton 1990; Tripp 1995; Zorob 2008; see also **Chapter 9**). Moreover, existing work tends to lump together regionalist projects that differ profoundly from one another. Thus Paul Aarts (1999) presents the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as equivalent regionalist formations; Michael Hudson (1999) puts the United Arab Republic (UAR), Federation of Arab Republics, AMU, ACC, and the Joint Arab Economic Action Initiative into the omnibus category of 'subregional groupings'. Melani Cammett (1999) makes a more nuanced comparison of the AMU and the GCC, which argues that these two organizations exhibit what Andrew Hurrell (1995) calls bottom-up 'regionalization' rather than the state-sponsored initiatives that one finds in other parts of the world.

International governance structures have been analysed somewhat differently by scholars who apply the concept of relational contracting, drawn from neo-classical economics. David Lake (2009) asserts that states constantly bargain with one another, and repeated negotiation over time generates mutually agreed outcomes (see also MacDonald 2017). States do their best to keep transaction costs and governance costs to a minimum, so as soon as it becomes too expensive to administer a specific territory, whichever state controls that territory will accord it a degree of autonomy. Empires emerge when governance costs are particularly low; protectorates take shape as governance costs increase; spheres of influence come into being as governance costs rise even higher. Relational contracting can be used to analyse the origin, transformation, and collapse of regional institutions throughout the Middle East, from the Ottoman Empire, to the European protectorates of the early twentieth century, to today's Greater Arab Free Trade Area. The trick is to come up with ways to define and measure transaction and governance costs that are not inherently circular.

International society, political culture, and historical sociology

Hedley Bull (1977) famously postulates that even though individual human beings cannot exist under anarchic circumstances, because any single person can be killed at one blow by any other individual, states can survive in anarchy, since they are much harder to destroy. As a result, the anarchic international arena gives rise to some form of social order among states, albeit one that is fundamentally different from societies made up of human individuals. Societies of states are characterized by significant levels of rivalry and mistrust, but the degree of conflict that they exhibit can be, and most often is, limited and managed by means of astute statecraft.

Later scholars in this theoretical tradition, known as the English School, claim that societies of states, or states-systems, entail rules and conventions that prevent governments from engaging in what Thomas Hobbes calls a 'war of all against all' (Watson 1992; Little 2000; Linklater 2009). The most important of these rules and conventions are bound up with the

concept of sovereignty—the notion that states, as a matter of principle, respect each other enough to refrain from interfering in one another's internal affairs. States-systems in which sovereignty operates exhibit much less belligerence and conflict than ones in which sovereignty is absent. Sovereignty in this sense, which Stephen Krasner (1999) labels 'Westphalian sovereignty', arose in Western Europe at some point after 1648—precisely when remains in dispute (Osiander 2001)—and then spread to other parts of the world. Along with Westphalian sovereignty came the diffusion of other commonly accepted practices, most notably the legitimacy of armed intervention in countries outside the international society of the era (Keene 2013).

Investigating how regions beyond Europe became incorporated into the global, sovereignty-based states-system constitutes a major project for the English School. Early writing emphasized the transformations in diplomatic practice, political discourse, and alliance-making that accompanied the integration of particular regions, including the lands of the Ottoman Empire (Naff 1984), into the Europe-centred states-system. Newer work examines the local political-economic trends that caused the emergence and consolidation of Westphalian sovereignty throughout the Middle East (Kashani-Sabet 1999; Lawson 2006).

Precisely how sovereignty operates in the contemporary Middle East is a hotly debated topic. Observers of regional politics usually take at face value the pronouncements that have been made by generations of local leaders and assert that a desire for unity permeates inter-Arab relations. In other words, most observers consider pan-Arabism to be a cardinal principle of Middle Eastern diplomacy (Valbjorn 2009; Valbjorn and Bank 2012), and claim that the drive towards Arab unity contradicts the conventions of Westphalian sovereignty (Barnett 1998). A subtler reading of the statements made by Arab governments demonstrates that calls for unity almost always point towards a loose federation in which states retain a substantial degree of autonomy. The most prominent experiment in Arab unification, the UAR that resulted from the merger of Egypt and Syria in 1958, collapsed after only three years, largely due to the fact that Egyptian officials carried out policies that infringed on the autonomy of their Syrian counterparts (Podeh 1999).

Equally intense debate rages over the role of political culture, and especially religion, in shaping international relations in the Middle East. The conventional view asserts that Islam stands in stark opposition to Westphalian sovereignty, and that the basic incompatibility between these two clusters of governing principles injects a high degree of conflict into regional affairs (Hashmi 2009; Mendelsohn 2012). It seems more accurate to observe that Islam has, from the very beginning, accommodated a variety of political and diplomatic practices, including ones that resemble Westphalian sovereignty (Piscatori 1986). For the English School, religious doctrines and institutions make up a key component of international society—whether in medieval Europe, nineteenth-century East Asia, or the contemporary Middle East (Thomas 2000). The extent to which radical movements like the so-called Islamic State (IS) have altered such basic conventions as respect for territorial boundaries represents an aspect of Middle Eastern affairs that English School scholarship might fruitfully address (Dessouki 2015).

Alongside the English School's analysis of international society runs a research programme rooted in historical sociology. This approach plays down the centrality of the state and highlights the underlying political, economic, and social dynamics that shape the expansion and contraction of governmental capacity (Jarvis 1989). Two variants of this research

programme have appeared: one inspired by Max Weber (Hobson 2000), the other by Karl Marx (Gills 2002). Recent work in historical sociology explores the impact of multiple and competing modernities in shaping relations between imperialist Europe and parts of the world that fell under European domination (Duzgun 2018). John Hobson (2009) makes the provocatively counter-intuitive claim that Westphalian sovereignty came to Europe from East Asia, by way of the trade routes that crossed the Middle East. Studies of Middle Eastern international relations that demonstrate the usefulness of historical sociology have started to appear (Cummings and Hinnebusch 2014).

Constructivism, post-structuralism, and post-modernism

Perhaps the most energetic research programme in the field of international relations involves constructivist theories. Initially, constructivists claimed that political actors learn how to think about themselves and what they value through their engagement with one another. In other words, states develop identities and interests by means of an interactive learning process that can lead in dramatically different directions. The world of rivalry and mistrust that is envisaged by structural realists is only one possible outcome, which takes shape in a specific context and should not be generalized (Wendt 1992). More important, constructivists argue that structural realists, neoliberal institutionalists, and English School theorists alike overemphasize the importance of the international structures that are presumed to determine how states interact with each other. They insist to the contrary that states-as-actors and structural features of the international arena arise simultaneously and inseparably—in other words, that these phenomena are 'mutually constituted' (Hopf 1998: 172).

Constructivists go on to underscore the role of meaning in world affairs. States are not simply, to use a famous analogy, billiard balls that bounce against one another and come to rest in kaleidoscopic patterns; they are instead conscious actors that develop shared understandings that influence how they deal with each other (Ashley 1988). Such understandings provide the basis for common expectations, which spell out what kinds of interaction are appropriate under the circumstances ('norms')—and norms change as time goes by. In order to explain what happens in the world, scholars must pay close attention to meanings and other forms of 'intersubjective understanding' (Mitzen 2005). As Ted Hopf (1998: 173) remarks, 'Determining [any given] outcome will require knowing more about the situation than about the distribution of material power or the structure of authority. One will need to know about the culture, norms, institutions, procedures, rules, and social practices that constitute the actors and the structure alike.' Marwa Daoudy (2016) deploys such notions to explain changing relations between Turkey and Syria.

Central to constructivist theories is the concept of 'discourse'. Discourse refers not only to the language, rhetoric, and symbols that states use to express their identities and interests, but also to the practices that they undertake in order to carry out their strategic objectives (Bigo 2011; Hopf 2017). Whereas neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists conceive of power in terms of concrete resources, such as battleships and steel mills, constructivists claim that material power must be combined with 'discursive power' in order to understand why some countries prevail while others do not. In R. B. J. Walker's (1984: 3) words, 'it is important to recognize that ideas, consciousness, culture, and ideology are bound up with

more immediately visible kinds of political, military, and economic power'. Discursive power arises as part of a social process, in which the interpretations and responses of others play a part in conferring greater capabilities on one state or another. Egypt, for example, wielded considerable influence in Middle Eastern affairs during the late 1950s not only because it was the most populous and best-armed Arab state, but also, and more crucially, as a result of its dominant position in regional culture and the admiration that leaders and citizenries throughout the region accorded President Gamal Abd al-Nasser (Barnett 1996; Teti 2004).

Discourse lies at the heart of power, but also stands at the core of the manifestation and recognition of threats. Constructivists argue that changes in the distribution of power among states do not, by themselves, precipitate arms procurement, alliance formation, or economic mobilization; it is only when power dynamics get constituted as threats to a state's security that governments gear up for military action. Hopf (1998: 187) refers to this pivotal process as 'threat perception', but much more than perceptions are involved. Threats take shape in the context of conflicts of interest, cultural disharmonies, ideological incompatibilities, hostile rhetoric, belligerent activities, and a whole host of other circumstances that transcend perceptions. The question of how threats emerge has sparked the growth of securitization theory, a branch of constructivism that deals with the puzzle of why aspects of everyday life sometimes get transformed into matters of national security (Balzacq 2011). Dynamics associated with securitization have caught the attention of several scholars of Middle Eastern international relations (Aras and Polat 2008; Lawson 2016) (see **Box 1.3**).

BOX 1.3 Conflict over the Nile revisited

Constructivists might argue that the waters of the Nile River Basin became crucial for Egyptian security in the context of efforts by the leadership in Cairo to restore national unity and reaffirm the country's identity as a major player in regional affairs in the aftermath of the 2010–11 uprising. President Mursi did his best to stop the dispute from escalating but found himself vulnerable to charges from liberal and radical Islamist critics alike that he had neglected to protect citizens from a significant external danger. It would be imperative to investigate the rhetoric and symbols that critics used to voice their demands, in order to understand how they were able to appeal successfully to the Egyptian public.

Furthermore, the securitization of the Nile waters set the stage for heightened rivalry and conflict across the region. Simmering tensions inside South Sudan flared into violence as the dispute persisted, and opponents of the Ethiopian government in districts near the dam resumed their challenge to the authorities. Allegations of threat and the heightened salience of control over territory led to a resumption of armed skirmishes along the Ethiopia–Eritrea border and eventuated in military activity on the Sudan–Eritrea frontier as well. Hostile and suspicious engagement among the states of Northeast Africa transformed a previously peaceful international arena into a zone of endemic conflict.

English School observers would note that the basic conventions of diplomacy and conflict management remained operative, despite the surge in bellicosity. Egyptian, Ethiopian, and Sudanese diplomats met periodically to express their grievances and advance proposals to resolve the crisis. Cairo continued to honor the terms of the 1999 Nile Basin Initiative, although it demanded major revisions. Addis Ababa, by contrast, insisted that its actions conformed to the terms of the 2007 Nile Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement, which had been ratified by the other Nile Basin states. Both governments pledged to carry out the recommendations of the technical commission, although they emphasized aspects of the commission's preliminary findings that promoted their respective interests. A resort to military force was therefore unlikely to happen, given the principles enshrined in the African Union and the historical trajectory of the dispute.

Components of constructivist theories fit comfortably into structural realism and neoliberal institutionalism, and look perfectly compatible with the English School as well. Yet there exists profound disagreement among constructivists over just how much of the world is socially—or, more accurately, 'intersubjectively'—constructed (Guzzini and Leander 2006; see also **Chapter 7**). Does a country's gross national product or the size of its nuclear arsenal play any part in determining its power and interests? Or is the primary determinant the interpretations that a country's own leaders and the leaderships of surrounding states harbour and share among themselves? Radical constructivists reject the assumption that state identities and security interests have any solid basis in the world (Zehfuss 2002). The purpose of scholarly inquiry for radical constructivists is not so much to explain what happens as it is to expose and critique the meanings that have been attributed to particular events by scholars and statespeople alike.

For the most part, constructivist writing on the international relations of the Middle East retains an empiricist bent, and stands firmly anchored in what Emanuel Adler (1997) calls 'the middle ground' of the conceptual spectrum. Bruce Jentleson and Dalia Kaye (1998: 232), for example, argue that greater regional security cooperation took shape in the wake of the 1990–91 Gulf War as a result of the Egyptian leadership's worries that:

> Egypt's status interests . . . were being threatened by another Arab state, Jordan, delineating and seeking to legitimize an alternative Arab position. This became an additional impetus for Egypt to link all of the [Arms Control and Regional Security] agenda to the [Israeli] nuclear issue, as the very multilateral nature of the ACRS process was providing other Arab states a venue for asserting independent positions; that is, for genuinely multilateralizing the process in a manner that threatened the position and status of Egypt as [Arab] bloc leader and monopolistic interlocutor.

Michael Barnett (1996) connects the burst of regional cooperation that appeared in 1991–92 to a shift in norms that involved not only states' conceptions of their respective interests, but also emerging notions of 'the desired regional order'. Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (2006) likewise situates trends in the Gulf in the context of long-standing cultural attributes that have engendered conflicting norms and rival discourses between actors based on the Persianate northern coast and others located on the Arabian southern shore.

Radical constructivism bears a close resemblance to conceptual approaches to international relations that reject conventional notions of theory altogether. Attempts to find causal explanations for events and trends in world affairs may well turn out to be illusory. States—or, more precisely, the human beings who hold influential positions in government agencies—have little in common with the minerals, gases, and biological organisms that inspire the physical sciences. Furthermore, international relations deals with matters that affect people who are systematically excluded from the policymaking process every bit as much as they do the wealthy and powerful. Post-structuralists thus highlight the way in which certain topics get routinely overlooked or set aside by mainstream theories. These writers oppose theories that go hand in hand with any and all forms of domination, and do their best to encourage ideas and movements that expand the range of human freedom (Weber 1999).

At its core, David Campbell (2012: 234–5) declares, 'Poststructuralism is different from most other approaches to international politics because it does not see itself as a theory, school, or paradigm which produces a single account of its subject matter. Instead,

poststructuralism is an approach, attitude, or ethos that pursues critique in particular ways.' It is especially concerned with exposing how power operates across different levels of world politics. In the intellectual tradition of Michel Foucault, post-structuralists assert that there is an intimate connection between power and knowledge, and focus their energies on the task of unravelling the linkages that allow oppression and exploitation to persist and flourish (Edkins 1999). They also admonish scholars to recognize the reflexive interaction between theories of world politics and ongoing political trends (Hamati-Ataya 2013). Recent studies trace out the ways in which statespeople and scholars have unwittingly collaborated to produce the primary contours of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Coskun 2010; Hallward 2010; see also Nan 2010). Morten Valbjorn (2004a), Andrea Teti (2007), and Pinar Bilgin (2011) also exemplify broadly post-structuralist contributions.

Most post-structuralists bridle at the suggestion that their perspective is equivalent to post-modernism, which abandons theory entirely and celebrates ideas and practices that express the whole spectrum of human creativity (Bleiker 2001). Like post-structuralism, post-modernism abhors domination and exploitation, but, unlike the post-structuralists, post-modernists devote primary attention to issues of meta-theory and ontology rather than matters of epistemology or methodology (Brown 2012). Analogies or parables that elucidate some previously ignored or fundamentally misconstrued aspect of world affairs are, for post-modernist writers, perfectly acceptable contributions to academic literature and debate (Constantinou 1994).

Key findings from quantitative research

Arguably the most significant finding that has come out of the quantitative scholarship in international relations is the proposition that liberal democratic countries do not go to war with other liberal democracies (Ray 1995; Oneal and Russett 1999). Subsequent work shows that war is equally absent among market-based capitalist economies (Gartzke 2007; Mousseau 2018) and countries that have well-established territorial boundaries (Owsiak 2016). The robustness of these statistical results raises the question of whether interstate conflict in the Middle East might diminish in frequency or severity if liberal democracy were to gain a firm foothold in the region. Etel Solingen (2003) argues that it would; Michael Hudson (1992) intimates that it would not.

Optimism that the spread of liberal democracy would bring peace to the Middle East might well be tempered by quantitative studies that investigate the likelihood of war during the early stages of democratization. Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder (1995) show that even though mature democracies have almost no chance of going to war with one another, states that are just beginning to democratize face intense pressure to act belligerently. This finding has been brought into question (Narang and Nelson 2009). It would be useful to integrate the research programme on bellicosity in newly emerging democracies with studies of the connection between revolutions and outbreaks of war (Walt 1996; Colgan 2013). Looking at whether the democratic openings that appeared in Tunisia and Egypt during the spring of 2011 accompanied more hostile or more accommodative initiatives toward neighbouring countries might contribute to the debate over Mansfield and Snyder's hypothesis. By the same token, analysing the impact of post-2011 developments

in Bahrain, Libya, Yemen, and Syria will clarify the association between popular revolts and external conflict.

More recently, statistical studies have explored the dynamics of interaction among non-democratic states. There is strong evidence that dictatorships are just as likely to keep the peace among themselves as are democratic regimes (Peceny and Beer 2002). Elucidating the factors that promote peacefulness among authoritarian states is a particularly promising area of research for Middle East specialists. It appears, for instance, that membership in preferential trade agreements pacifies autocracies (Mazumder 2017). In addition, some types of dictatorships may be less bellicose than others. Military regimes exhibit a greater proclivity not only to initiate interstate crises (Siverson and Johnson 2016) but also to engage in armed intervention (Pickering and Kisangani 2010). And like newly emerging democracies, infant dictatorships are prone to act belligerently and then become more peaceful as they mature (Bak 2017). These findings remain provisional (Kim 2017), and would benefit from detailed case studies using Middle Eastern examples.

Statistical analysis requires a large number of cases in order to reach reliable conclusions. Since wars, even in a comparatively warlike region such as the Middle East, remain too rare to support sound quantitative research, scholars have turned their attention to militarized interstate disputes (MIDs). MIDs consist of instances of hostile action that involve the threat or possibility of war, but do not eventuate in armed conflict (Gochman and Maoz 1984). Bombastic public speeches, military exercises along the border, economic embargoes, and 'accidental' artillery discharges represent examples of MIDs of varying degrees of intensity. Most germane to the Middle East are the findings that states with military leaderships initiate more MIDs than do other types of authoritarian regimes (Lai and Slater 2006), and that single-party regimes engage in fewer MIDs with other single-party regimes than they do with countries that do not have that form of government (Peceny and Beer 2003). On the other hand, there is evidence that countries that have different kinds of military regimes engage in different types of external conflict (Peceny and Butler 2004; Weeks 2014; Colgan and Weeks 2015). Sorting out these divergent statistical results and formulating plausible explanations for them would be an important contribution that students of international relations of the Middle East could make to the field as a whole.

Whether or not oil-producing states are more prone to involvement in MIDs has been the subject of recent research. It seems clear that governments that derive a substantial proportion of their total income from non-tax revenues engage in a greater number of MIDs (McDonald 2007). Georg Struever and Tim Wegenast (2018) demonstrate that oil-producing countries are more likely to initiate MIDs than non-oil-producing countries, whether or not the oil states are liberal democracies. Such states possess the financial resources to purchase and deploy large quantities of high-quality weapons, and may be given greater leeway to brandish these armaments against actual and potential adversaries by the international community, most of whose members' economies rely on oil imports. Oil-producing states that experience a revolutionary upheaval are especially prone to aggressive behaviour (Colgan 2010).

Territorial disputes exhibit a particularly strong association with the outbreak of both wars and MIDs (Hensel 1996). For the years between 1945 and 1987, states that share a border with one another and that harbour some kind of boundary dispute are forty times

more likely than other countries to be involved in war (Kocs 1995). Disagreements over territory are highly likely to be associated with the escalation of MIDs to warfare (Huth 2000: 90). And the incidence of armed conflict over territory is just as high for the period after 1945 as it is for the era stretching from 1816 to 1945, despite all of the improvements in transportation and communication that took place after the Second World War (Hensel 2000: 66). Moreover, conflicts arising from territorial disputes turn out to be both more severe and substantially harder to resolve than other types of interstate conflict (Hensel 2000: 73).

Studies of territorial disputes in the Middle East remain few in number and largely descriptive in nature. Gwenn Okruhlik and Patrick Conge (1999) survey long-standing border conflicts around the Arabian peninsula, as do John Wilkinson (1991) and John Peterson (2011). Richard Schofield (2011) offers a detailed analysis of the dispute between Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia over the oasis of al-Ain/Buraimi, while Ahmad al-Ghamdi (1996) explores the boundary conflict between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Asher Kaufman (2001, 2006, 2009) details the simmering conflict among Lebanon, Syria, and Israel over a collection of contested villages in the Golan. One step beyond simple narrative can be found in Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp's (1993) explication of the connection between the consolidation of 'state-based nationalism' and territory-based conflicts among the Arab Gulf states.

Large-scale statistical studies have discovered that only a handful of countries accounts for most of the wars and MIDs that have occurred since 1815. In other words, participation in major international conflicts is not randomly distributed among states. There is a limited number of pairs of states (dyads) that fight each other over and over again, which can be labelled 'enduring rivalries'. Various operational definitions of enduring rivalries have been proposed; the most widely accepted version holds that an enduring rivalry exists whenever two states use, or threaten to use, force against one another at least six times over a period of at least twenty years. The finding that wars and MIDs cluster among a small number of states raises the question of why some armed confrontations get transformed into recurrent military contests (Mor 2003; Vasquez 2009), as well as why enduring rivalries eventually draw to a close. Surprisingly, and despite all of the quantitative work that has been devoted to the dynamics of enduring rivalries, these two crucial questions remain unanswered. Janice Gross Stein (1996), Zeev Maoz and Ben Mor (2002), Christopher Sprecher and Karl DeRouen (2005), and Karen Rasler, William Thompson, and Sumit Ganguly (2013) have extended the study of enduring rivalries to the Middle East.

Paul Huth (1996) finds that disputes over territory are particularly likely to set the stage for the emergence of enduring rivalries. Gary Goertz and Paul Diehl (2000) further assert that some kind of 'political shock' tends to accompany the initiation of an enduring rivalry, although they frame the notion so broadly that almost any substantial disruption in political, economic, or diplomatic affairs might count as such a shock. Two cases demonstrate the importance of territorial disputes for the origin and entrenchment of enduring rivalries in the Middle East. Recurrent warfare between Ba'ath Party-dominated Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran can be traced, despite obvious ideological incompatibilities between the two states, to profound disagreement over control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway (Swearingen 1988; Karsh 1990). Similarly, the enduring rivalry between Iraq and Kuwait grows out

of deep-seated grievances connected to the demarcation of permanent borders and other territorial matters (Rahman 1997).

Power transitions and the power cycle

Straddling the line between quantitative and case study research stands a sizable body of scholarship that elaborates power transition theory. This theoretical approach, which was initially formulated by A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler (1980), assumes that the international arena is organized in a hierarchical fashion, with no more than a handful of states situated at the pinnacle of power and prestige. Power transition theory hypothesizes that whenever the differential in power separating the dominant great power from its primary challenger starts to diminish—that is, whenever the challenger begins to overtake the dominant state—the chances of major conflict increase dramatically. If the challenger is profoundly dissatisfied with the existing international order or has interests that diverge sharply from those of the dominant state, then war becomes even more likely. By contrast, the possibility is virtually nil that major conflict will occur if the dominant state occupies a much stronger position than the primary challenger, or if the challenger is on the whole satisfied with the institutional arrangements that have been put in place by the dominant state.

Power transition theory suffers from significant conceptual shortcomings (DiCicco and Levy 1999; Lebow and Valentino 2009; Sample 2017), but has nevertheless inspired investigations into the circumstances under which war breaks out in various parts of the world (Lemke 1996; Sobek and Wells 2013). These studies indicate that armed conflict seldom erupts if the dominant state in a particular region enjoys a substantial surplus of power over its primary rival, and that war does not take place if the challenger is satisfied with the existing regional order. Detailed case studies confirm the utility of power transition theory as an explanation for the occurrence of large-scale warfare (Copeland 2000), and could profitably be supplemented by examples drawn from the Middle East.

Unlike power transition theory, power cycle theory has been applied to Middle Eastern conflicts. Power cycle theory posits that countries experience upswings and downturns in their economic and military capabilities over time (Doran 1991). At each stage in the cycle of power, some actions are appropriate for a state to undertake and others are not. Whenever a state adopts policies that are inappropriate to its location along the power cycle, conflict with other states is apt to break out (Spiezio 1993; Hebron et al. 2007). In particular, countries that reach the peak of power relative to others and start to decline, but do not scale back their strategic ambitions, are likely to provoke diplomatic and military confrontations that they can no longer afford. By the same token, states whose relative position takes a turn for the better, but whose leaders fail to take advantage of their improved circumstances, will most likely find themselves exploited by rivals before the proper adjustments can be made.

This analytical perspective can explain crucial aspects of Iraq's relations with its neighbours after 1975. Andrew Parasiliti (2003) shows that Baghdad's invasion of Iran in September 1980 took place in the context of sharply rising Iraqi power, plunging Iranian power, and a marked levelling off of Saudi Arabia's power. In the run-up to the 1990 invasion of Kuwait,

by contrast, Iraq's power relative to that of its neighbours had notably diminished, Iran's was rapidly growing, and Saudi Arabia's had started to recover after a sustained slump. In both situations, the Iraqi leadership confronted a strategic crisis, which accompanied a persistent 'ambition for a greater role in both Gulf and Arab political affairs' (Parasiliti 2003: 160). The conjunction of power trends and role conceptions led Iraq, in each case, to launch a risky military venture (see also Gause 2002b). Trita Parsi (2005) extends power cycle theory to explain the unexpected jump in Israeli hostility towards Iran at the end of the 1980s. He shows that this shift occurred in the context of falling Israeli power and rising Iranian power, which 'prompted a rivalry with Iran, which in turn necessitated improved [Iranian] relations with Israel's Arab neighbors, particularly since Iran sought increased role [*sic*] by playing the Arab street card against governments of the pro-Western Arab states through its harsh rhetoric and anti-Israel ideology' (Parsi 2005: 261).

Contributions from regional specialists

With the notable exception of Stephen Walt's work on alliance formation, writing about the Middle East has had no discernible impact on general scholarship in international relations. Studies that deal with the region occasionally test or revise theoretical concepts that have been developed to understand things that happen elsewhere, but innovative theories formulated to explain Middle Eastern cases usually get relegated to the area studies ghetto. Nevertheless, there are at least two research programmes coming out of the Middle East that merit broader recognition.

Benjamin Miller (2006) accounts for the exceptionally high incidence and severity of conflicts in the Middle East in terms of the lack of congruence between states and nations in this part of the world. Middle Eastern states tend to be poorly institutionalized and suffer from a basic incapacity to mobilize and manage resources. At the same time, state boundaries rarely coincide with 'the national aspirations and identities of the people in the region' (Miller 2006: 665–6). Leaders consequently have a strong incentive to redraw existing borders, and ethno-sectarian minorities have an equally compelling incentive to secede. Pervasive irredentism and secessionism end up 'exacerbat[ing] other causes of war such as the security dilemma, power rivalries, and diversionary motives', while increasing the advantages of attacking first in a crisis (Miller 2006: 670–1). Miller applies this argument to the Middle East as a whole, rather than demonstrating that state–nation imbalances in one part of the region or at some particular moment push countries towards war. Moreover, the analysis makes sweeping assertions about the effects of pan-Arabism, even though spelling out congruences and incongruences between states and local nationalisms would be more apposite. Still, this looks like a promising explanation for variations in regional conflict, in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Philip Robins (2014) proposes a distinction between states that operate inside an established regional order ('milieu states') and 'cusp states' that stand at the edge of adjacent regions. Cusp states display unusually complex patterns of antagonism and alignment, which reflect the powerful cross-currents they have to navigate. Relations between a cusp state and its neighbours can be expected to be tenuous and brittle, and subject to unexpected twists and turns, since the cusp state is forced to respond to changing circumstances in two (or

more) regional arenas at the same time. Moreover, cusp states occasionally get pulled into one of the regions it abuts, only to be dragged back into another, producing major reconfigurations in both regions. So far, the concept has been used to explain the foreign policies of a handful of countries (Herzog and Robins 2014). Exploring the dynamics of cusp state-milieu state interaction in a systematic fashion will uncover new ways to explain regional, and inter-regional, politics in the contemporary world.

Conclusion

Scholars of the Middle East have so far addressed only a fraction of the many theoretical debates and controversies that energize the field of international relations. Most studies that do engage with broader conceptual questions have been framed in terms of structural realism, although a growing literature draws inspiration from the variegated constructivist research programme. Quantitative scholarship at one time paid close attention to events and trends in the Middle East, and one influential statistical database was created out of events that transpired in this part of the world (Azar 1972). Yet widespread unfamiliarity with the facts of Middle Eastern cases—past and present—severely restricts the audience for theoretically oriented studies that are firmly grounded in regional expertise.

Moreover, it may not be possible to conceive of the Middle East as a regional order, or states-system, that is autonomous enough to operate according to its own dynamics. To the extent that the United States, Europe, Russia, the People's Republic of China, and other outside actors routinely intervene in Middle Eastern affairs, many of the analytical questions that exercise scholars of international relations will turn out to be mis-specified or irrelevant. For the moment, however, simply abandoning the quest to integrate international relations and Middle East studies seems premature, and both intellectual enterprises can be enriched by deliberate and sustained cross-fertilization.

Further reading

Burchill, S., Linklater, A., Devetak, R., Donnelly, J., Nardin, T., Paterson, M., Reus-Smit, C., and True, J. (2013) *Theories of International Relations*, 5th edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan)
Cogent, accessible overviews of the most influential theoretical approaches to world politics.

Carlsnaes, W., Risse, T., and Simmons, B. A. (eds) (2013) *Handbook of International Relations*, 2nd edn (London: Sage)
Short, authoritative summaries of key analytical arguments and conceptual controversies.

Dunne, T., Kurki, M., and Smith, S. (eds) (2016) *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
Comprehensive survey of the field by major scholars.

Linklater, A. and Suganami, H. (2006) *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Assessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
Lucid appreciation and critique of English School scholarship.

Senese, P. D. and Vasquez, J. A. (2008) *The Steps to War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press)
Compelling synthesis of a wide range of quantitative findings.

Smith, S., Booth, K., and Zalewski, M. (eds) (1996) *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
Seminal contributions by theorists outside the mainstream.

Valbjorn, M. and Lawson, F. (eds) (2015) *International Relations of the Middle East*, 4 vols (London: Sage)
Compendium of paradigmatic essays, with a critical introduction to each volume.

Questions

1. What aspects of the security dilemma have the greatest impact on international relations in the Middle East?
2. How can constructivist theories avoid highlighting features of Middle Eastern culture that reinforce long-standing stereotypes?
3. What circumstances might transform Westphalian sovereignty in the contemporary Middle East?
4. Why did the conflict between Egypt and Israel become an enduring rivalry?
5. On the basis of evidence drawn from the Middle East, can we conclude that wars are most likely to occur whenever a dominant state starts to be overtaken by a rising, dissatisfied state?