

**Middle East Studies Center
Jordan**

Arab Regional Relations

Reality and Prospects

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English Abstract

Arab-Regional Relations: Reality and Prospects

The present book is the outcome of a symposium held by the MESC in 2-3 December 2017 titled Arab-Regional Relations: Reality and Prospects, joined by about a hundred of experts, academics and politicians from six Arab countries.

Arab-regional Relations since 2010 are deeply investigated to achieve a number of objectives. One of them is the assessment of the position and role taken by the Arab World on the regional relations map. Another is the analysis of Arab-regional Relations in light of the accelerated developments seen by the region, in particular, and the globe, in general. A third one is setting future scenarios for such ties. A fourth is the proposal of a joint Arab vision to phrase a foreign policy towards major issues. In studying the total present and future picture of these links, focus is laid on the three political, economic and military-security aspects, in addition to social and cultural issues.

There is an introduction, four chapters and a number of appendices. Chapter One, Arab-Turkish Relations, consists of three sections. Firstly, Political Dimensions of Arab-Turkish Relations refers to the Turkish policy development towards the Arab region and the political factors affecting such ties, mainly in the current stage. It is concluded here that they are active and continuous, no matter how the states' policies diverge or tend to be isolated. On the other hand, the Turkish policy is witnessing a significant shift in the Arab World by using force according to a realistic approach. That would control the balance of power and face the rising regional threats, as is the case in military intervention and deployment of military bases outside Turkey. Among the internal causes of such a development is the change in the form of the political system after the constitutional amendments, defeat of the coup attempt and the AK party's overcoming of several obstacles to its policies.

Secondly, Arab-Turkish Relations in Energy and Investment (Algeria as a Model) analyzes the Turkish-Algerian relations from an economic perspective, such as the aspects of integration and cooperation in several investment sectors and the matters hindering distinguished close bilateral ties. Furthermore, recommendations are made to serve their joint permanent future interests. It is concluded, on the one hand, that Algiers realizes the significance of energy for Ankara, making the former a partner which ensures constant flow of energy resources to the latter. On the other hand, bilateral investment has progressed and expanded to cover the ramified fields, which assisted in boosting both countries' commercial balances.

Thirdly, Arab-Turkish Relations and the Arab-Israeli Conflict explores current developments and future scenarios, which would pave the way for a more active and influential Turkish role in and for the Palestinian cause. Examples are the foreign policy approach to Eastern powers like Russia, China and Iran, in parallel with tense relations with Western allies like the US, EU and NATO. There is also an important internal element of the new presidential system due to commence in November 2019. Other regional factors have to do with the ties with Egypt and Israel as well as the Syrian crisis solution, among other issues. Moreover, this section investigates the Turkish foreign policy determinants and reality, in general, and the handling of the Palestinian cause, in particular. There are motives and barriers to a significant Turkish part in this regard at the internal Palestinian level and Palestinian-Israeli level. At the moment, Ankara can only play a limited active role due to a number of reasons, such as Cairo's monopoly of the internal Palestinian reconciliation, Turkish busy national agenda, regional crises and lack of trust with Israel. However, the foreign policy decision is expected to be faster in liberating itself from the Western powers' pressure, which exclusively affected the country for decades. That would open new prospects for a Turkish positive and active role in the Palestinian cause, making the Palestinian parties responsible for supporting and enhancing such an approach.

Chapter Two, Arab-Iranian Relations, begins with a section called Political Dimensions of Arab-Iranian Relations. Focus is laid on Tehran's shift in reading the Syrian landscape after the agreement with Group 5+1 with regard to its nuclear file. Another issue is the Arab-Iranian relations in light of the Arab Spring, the impacts of the Iranian foreign policy on the Arab Mashreq, in specific, and the Arab reactions. A number of relevant conclusions are made. First, Iran considers the Syrian issue an introduction to other regional files. Second, for Iran, support to Al-Assad's regime is nonnegotiable, believing that the latter's fall means the decline of its influence in the region, mainly in Lebanon and Iraq. Third, Tehran's ongoing support to the Palestinian cause has exploited the emotions of the Arab peoples, who feel frustrated of Arab solidarity, especially by the governments, with their central issue. While Tehran backs the Palestinian resistance and criticizes Israel, the Arab officials do not pay due attention to this 'issue of the peoples'. As a result, Iran's renown and impact have significantly expanded among the peoples of the region.

Chapter Three, Arab Relations with Ethiopia and Neighbouring African Countries, discusses three issues. Firstly, Arab Mashreq and Nile Valley Relations with South-Saharan Countries explores the reality of such ties since the resumption of joint Arab-African summits in 2010. There is extraordinary significance for the continent, in general, and the East and Horn of Africa countries, in particular. They have a special location and water, agricultural, animal and mineral resources, in addition to recent discoveries of oil and natural gas. Five cases are witnessing activity in Africa: Israel, Turkey, Iran (regional), US and EU (international), each with

its own motives and discourse. Such movement can be without problems if it does not directly hamper the Arab-African interests. Otherwise, it should be investigated and countered. Such Arab-African partnership has a great importance, which would create a strategic joint space as long as there is good intention and good management.

Secondly, Arab-South Saharan Relations– Political Dimensions argues that such ties need a great deal of communication. There is also limited general harmony among the Arab states' stands in North Africa on inclusive political issues, leading to occasional covert and overt competition. Thus, the continent has seen the same policies followed with the EU; i.e., national rather than integrated policies based on tangible Maghreb regional coordination. As a result, they have become so fragile and failed in political and economic terms, due to the persistence of what is called 'non-Maghreb' case.

Thirdly, Arab-Ethiopian Relations considers Ethiopia a leading country in East Africa, which enjoys religious, historical, geographical, security and economic ties with the Arabs, bearing in mind different connections of conflict, cooperation and neutrality. The challenges to such relations can be roughly attributed to internal, regional and international conditions. Relevant recommendations may be as follows:

- Setting a political framework for the relations with the Africans, in general, and major countries like South Africa, Nigeria and Ethiopia, in particular
- Focus on strengths, to be consolidated in media campaigns
- Boosting investment and commercial exchange with Ethiopia, especially by the Arabian Gulf states.

Chapter Four is titled Future of Arab-Regional Relations: Determinants and Prospects. Firstly, Future of Arab-Regional Relations: Determinants and Prospects (1) summarizes the current Arab case as well as the present and future of regional relations. It is stressed that joint Arab action institutions, like the Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council and Maghreb Union, are now helpless with reference to the conflicts afflicting the Arab situation, let alone act to counter foreign intervention and regional expansions at the expense of the Arab interests. It is not believed that the challenges faced by the Arab World are about existence, in spite of their size. It is proposed that the active regional powers, like Israel, Iran and Turkey, can be dealt with through reading the present and future as well as by sound relevant planning. It is concluded that the Arab project should be based on an inclusive reform strategy which addresses structural economic imbalances, ends pan-Arab disputes, enhances joint Arab action institutions and unifies

Arab stances on major regional and international issues, especially the Palestinian cause.

Secondly, Future of Arab-Regional Relations: Determinants and Prospects (2) presents a vision for Arab-regional relations in light of different factors. These could be linked to three main elements. The first is the Arab reality and the Arab countries' ability to overcome their internal crises and restore their stability and coherence. The second is the neighbouring regional powers' ability to make concessions, leading to the rebuilding of mutual trust. The third is the international context in which the Arab-regional relations should be formed. It is concluded that the Arab-regional relations are engaged in several dilemmas which become harder with the complications of the Arab World, regional milieu and international context. The future of such relations will keep dependent on the Arab will and ability to internal rebuilding and action, along with power and joint vision. That would assist the review of relations with regional powers to maximize partnerships and reduce the challenges of such powers' policies, stands and intervention in the Arab World. The following are approaches affecting the future of Arab-regional relations. First and foremost, the future rebuilding of such ties depends on the Arab states' success in solving their overwhelming crisis and stability, ending pan-Arab disputes and reaching the minimum of common attitude and agreement with regard to the Arab issues. Another point is that Turkey will stay more as an ally than a threat to most Arab countries, especially those of the Arabian Gulf, despite the differences with Egypt and Ankara's stance on the Qatari crunch. The third is that, in spite of Iran's rapprochement with a number of Arab countries, especially Qatar, others will consider it a direct threat to their national security, mainly Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain. Finally, the Palestinian cause will keep as a point of accord among all the Arabs, but it requires actual pan-Arab pressure against Israeli policies.

In the appendix, the concluding speech lists a number of recommendations associated with the Arab-regional Relations, most important of which are the following: concentration and unification of the Arab efforts; solving inter-Arab problems; avoiding submission to international pressures; reconsidering Arab-Israeli agreements; unifying the Arab stance by rejecting the international efforts towards what is called 'deal of the century'; restoring the Arab power in its vital Islamic and African milieu; improving the stereotype of the Arabs in Ethiopia, South-Saharan countries, Iran and Turkey; consulting research centers in the pan-Arab and national decision-making; and the MESC's call for a later symposium on solving inter-Arab disputes and containing crises, for the purpose of consolidating the Arab's power in the region and the world.