

## **Middle East in Crisis**

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### **Abstract**

In the contemporary times, Middle East is engulfed in multiple crises ranging from contention amongst rival states to the terrorism. In addition to that, insurgencies, civil wars and proxies, a very active role of non-state actors as well as extra regional players have become a constant feature while defining Middle Eastern politics. This research study would analyze these conflicts from multiple perspectives that include economic, social and demographic structures that contributed in ignition of the crises in Middle East. Furthermore, the incongruence amongst various actors in Middle East severed and aggravated the crises that Middle East is facing in current era. This research study argues that a comprehensive and multilateral approach is required to resolve these issues, which are affecting Middle East.

**Keywords:** Political Islam, Yemen crisis, Syrian crisis, non-state actors, Arab world

### **Introduction**

Thomas Hobbes is known as the political scientist who observed that the core of human behavior is based on selfishness and its own interests. According to him, the notion of international law, moral, political and ethical norms a society preaches is hypothetical in its nature. This observation of Hobbes can be viewed in contemporary Middle Eastern politics where a large number of actors, state as well as non-state, are involved and playing the regional dynamics in their own interests. Though all the regions are facing different crises, ranging from economics to political, security or environmental but Middle Eastern region proved to be tumultuous region as it is facing all these issues simultaneously. However, this research paper focuses upon political and security crises that Middle East is witnessing currently.

Middle East is home to a lot of crises which are significant in the history of international politics due to their complexity and longevity. Till now, none of the issues are resolved completely and new crises are emerging, adding to the complexity of Middle Eastern political scenario. The convoluted dynamics of Middle East are serving as a barrier to the peace processes and stability in the region. This article would analyze multiple crises that Middle East is facing and would determine the role of various actors that are disturbing the tranquility in Middle East (Pollack, 2015).

### **Middle East- A Geo-Political Introduction**

Unlike other regions in the world, the term Middle East is not self-explanatory and is stretched into various directions and geographical demarcations. Marked by Alferd Mahan in 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term Middle East is originated by British Indian office in

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early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The region that was termed as Middle East was located between current Arabian Peninsula and South Asia. Geographically, it might be difficult to demarcate exact boundaries of Middle Eastern region, but it is usually defined as a region that starts from present day Arab world, Turkey, Iran and Israel. It is a diverse and considerably large geographical area, with a total area of 3500,000 square miles (Kublin). The region is extended from the Arabian Sea in the South to the Black Sea in the north and from the Mountains of Iran in the East to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. More specifically, to north, the region is separated from Europe by Caucasus Mountains. To southwest, the Middle East is connected with Africa. And to its East, it has Central Asian and South-Asian regions. Its geostrategic significance is multiplied because it is surrounded by major seas namely Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Aegean Sea, the Black Sea, and the Red Sea.

**Figure 1**



**Source:** Online Atlas- Middle East

The Middle Eastern region is comprised of multiple ethnic and religious identities. It is home to of Arab world largely; however, some non-Arabs States are also included. Following countries are Part of the Middle East region; Israel, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Iraq, Lebanon, Qatar, Yemen, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, Cyprus.

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The region of Middle East is a place of rich civilizations. It is composed of broader Arab and non-Arab ethnics. Besides, there are many sub-ethnicities as Kurds are one of the large ethnicities living across the border of multiple Middle East Countries. These irredentist trends are one the major regional dynamics that shape and reshape the intensity of the existing conflicts in the region. Moreover, there is also a sectarian diversity (Younis, 2017). Majority of the Middle East states have Sunni population but some states have Shiite majority and few others have considerable Shiite Minority. For instance, Iran, Kuwait and Iraq have Shiite majority while Lebanon has considerable Shiite minority, however, all other States have Sunni majority population. This diversity breeds a space for sectarian violence in the region. Not only sectarian diversity but religious differentiation can also be seen. Although the region has a large Muslim population but it also contains Jewish and Christian people. This religious differentiation is apparent in the Palestine-Israel conflict. In sum, there are considerable ethnic, religious and sectarian minorities in the Middle East which provide impetus to many on-going conflicts in the region (Ma'oz, 1997).

### **Conflict in the Middle Eastern region and its dynamics**

The Middle-East is one of the most conflict-ridden regions. It is not surprising to say that the on-going wars in the region have truly exhibited the conditions of Hobbesian state of nature where life is brutish, nasty and short. More troubling is the complexity of conflicts that inhibit efforts intended to resolve the conflicts. It is due to dynamic nature of the conflicts and multiplicity of factors causing them that successive peace initiatives are falling short of success. The conflicts in the Middle East are not simple reflection of contention between rival states but have a very dynamic nature. There are civil wars, insurgencies transcending borders, and terrorist assaults; these multiple conflicts involve multiple actors such as Non-state actors, foreign Powers, and international and regional organizations (Manfreda, 2017). Therefore, an effort is made in this article to examine the nature of some outrageous conflicts that are inhibiting tranquility of the region and causing instability.

### **Syrian Crisis**

One of the most significant dynamic in contemporary Middle Eastern politics is rooted in the Arab spring which paved the way into a civil war in Syria. Civil wars are not an unusual part of international politics, but the number of actors involved in Syrian civil war made it a dynamic and tragic manifestation of conflicts in Middle East. With no hope for resolution, roughly after seven years of civil war, Syria has witnessed approximately 456000 deaths and over 12 million Syrians are now living

their lives as refugees in neighboring countries and regions (Aljazera, 2018). The civil war which started between Assad's government and Anti- Assad forces in Syria, soon witnessed the involvement of Russia, US, Iran, Israel , Turkey and Saudi Arab as powers that believed in extracting maximum geo-political and strategic advantages out of the Syrian Crisis. In addition to that, the role of ISIS further worsened the situation in Syria. A complex web of war within war can be viewed where each actor involved in ensuring to execute policies that would benefit and secure their national interests.

The anti-Assad protests in Syria were an outcome of Arab Spring. A wave of protests and regime change initiated in Tunisia and led to the demise of Qaddafi in Libya and Mersi in Egypt. In Syria, initially the Arab Spring was an uprising against a long dictatorial rule of Ba'athist family. The 'Arab Spring' is analyzed differently by many scholars, however, one of the trends that remains constant throughout their analysis is that it was 'peoples awakening' against long dictatorial rules. Thus, first few of the many uprisings in Egypt and Libya convinced peoples in Syria that autocratic regimes are no more invincible (Diamond, 2014, p. 152).

Events in Tunisia and Egypt where the transition was realized quickly inspired people in Syria to demonstrate against Assad's Regime. The Protestors claimed a non-violent nature, non-sectarian basis and purely Syrian Character of their demonstrations. However, the Assad's regime responded with counter claims to thwart the legitimacy of protestors. The regime launched a campaign to label the uprising as orchestrated by foreign elements and having narrow sectarian motives. A state owned Syrian television often on-aired such content that portrayed protests to be controlled by foreign powers- i.e. Israel, Saudi-Arabia and the US. Not only this but it was claimed that opposition has aims to install heavy-handed Sunni majoritarian regime that would not only breed animosity against minorities of Syria but would even try 'sectarian cleansing' by attacking Shia minority. This labeling helped Assad's regime to validate its consequent armed assaults on the demonstrators. These crack-down on protestors, attacks on civilians and armed conflicts in Syria bifurcated Syria into two major factions, one Pro Assad Regime and other against Baathist-regime or rebellion group. Although there are many opposition groups but they all are same in purpose. Syrian military even defected and forked into these two factions. This sharpening of many internal cleavages and subsequent armed conflicts prompted global and regional powers to intervene and offered a Space for terrorist organizations to emerge i.e. ISIS (Cordesman, 2017). Till now, after the loss of lives and

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infrastructure, a humanitarian crisis that emerged in Syria, there is no sign that the Syrian conflict would reach to any peaceful end in near future.

### **International involvement in the Conflict: Major actors**

The civil war in Syria turned as a battleground for multiple powers in the region to execute their influence in the Middle East. The role of Qatar, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arab along with many other states became prominent in the wake of Syrian crisis. As this war was not only exploited by many in terms of their geo-political and geo-strategic ambitions, it developed an in result, a parallel patron-client relation as well. Initiated within the rebellion factions; it fragmented the political opposition and rebellion factions alike. A large number of reports alleged that Qatar and Turkey are involved in funding Nusra Front whereas, Saudi –Arab was using Free Syrian Army and Islamic Front as its proxy in the Syrian crisis.

Saudi Arab managed to provide training and arms to rebels and also served as a medium to generate a larger coalition of rebel forces such as Syrian Interim Government and High Negotiation Committee. Turkey, on the other hand, is supporting its own interest by targeting the Kurdish group YPG near its border with Syria. US aggravated already intense situation by providing Kurdish forces arms and economic assistance. Iran, a huge rival of US in the region funded Hezbollah as they both emerged as staunch supporters of Assad Regime against those who want the Ba’athists out of government (War List of Middle Eastern Conflicts). Due to Iran’s support for the regime, Israel has supported opposition forces (Tsurkov, 2018).

Syrian crisis became an arena for extra regional major powers as well. US started criticizing Syrian government because of the human right conditions that emerged in Syria due to civil war whereas; Russia supported Iran because of its long-term ambition of re-emerging as balancer in Middle Eastern politics.

However, the emergence of ISIS proved a factor that challenged all the states involved in Syrian crisis thus forcing these states to fight with ISIS as a common enemy and threat to their national objectives in Middle East.

### **Peace Initiatives**

Despite the rivalries and antagonism in Middle East, few efforts were made to resolve the Syrian Crisis amicably. In 2012, UN provided its good offices in Geneva to initiate a talk between Syrian government and rebel forces but they were failed to reach on any peaceful solution. In 2017, Russia proposed to create for de-escalation zones in Syria under Russia, Iran and Turkey to control the situation but it was never

materialized. In January 2018, Iran, Turkey and Russia again joined together to reach to a solution of Syrian Crisis. These efforts were highly criticized by US and its allies as they believed that such attempts were to undermine UN role in reaching to a peaceful solution in Syria.

### **The Current situation**

FSA and Turkish forces have launched strategic offensive attacks against Kurdish forces in Syrian territory. Syria with the help of Russia is carrying air strikes against opposition forces and rebel group to eliminate them. It is however, worth mentioning that these forces are justifying their attacks by claiming that these are attempts to eliminate the ISIS.

As far as the humanitarian crisis is concerned, according to reports by The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) approximately 5.5 million Syrians have registered as Refugees and roughly 6.5 million population falls under the category of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This humanitarian crisis got worsened when neighboring states decided to close their border, raising concerns for human rights regimes as well as for the long surviving idols of globalism.

In conclusion, the mere civil war in Syria is now emerged as a complex web of conflicts between regional and extra regional powers, working for their own national objectives and violent non-state actor ISIS who emerged as a champion out of the chaos in Middle East. Syria has become a battleground of a zero-sum competition of Saudi-Arabia and Iran (Ganji). The complexity of the crisis and involvement of multiple players with disparate and indefinite aims have made the crisis self-sustaining.

### **Rise of Islamic State in the Middle East**

In the chaos of Syrian crisis, the major actors involved in Middle East were failed to notice rise of another threat, the emergence of Islamic state in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). ISIS, a terrorist organization that has emerged in the troubled territories in Iraq and Syria soon established its control over a large chunk of land in Middle East. It was its lethal and sophisticated tactics and ideological claims that major powers were forced to declare ISIS as a threat to regional as well as international peace and security.

ISIS claimed to follow the Sunni-band of Islam but ironically it still declared fellow Sunni majority governments as infidels in the region. It is pertinent to note that ISIS provides a distorted interpretation of Islam that stands against the peaceful Sunni Islam being practiced by Majority of Muslims for long. The organization entails

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global drives that surpass the region. It intends to install universal Islamic empire. For this ambition it opposes everyone and thus has no allies. It stands alone and poses threat to everyone.

By using misrepresentation of Islamic values, the upper echelon of Islamic state has declared every entity as its opponent. For ISIS, Saudi Arab is an ally of the western satanic forces and is deviated from the original path of Islam where Iran is a *takfiri* state. For ISIS, Iran and Saudi Arab are its most significant regional rivals. Furthermore, ISIS has also declared “Jihad” against US forces in the Middle East and is determined to eliminate them. It is worth mentioning here that for ISIS, Al- Qaeda, another terrorist organization in Middle East, is its rival. Furthermore, for ISIS all the major and minor ethnicities and sects in Middle East are its enemies, challenging the existence of Kurdish forces, Shia-majority government in Iraq and Iran, Shia organization Hezbollah, Israel and every other religion of the world other than the Islam ISIS advocates for..

The rise of Islamic State has been under scholarly examination and various scholars have provided different explanations of it. It is the most recent manifestation of religiously motivated terrorism that has worldwide motivations. The most argued justification is that the US interventions in Iraq and no concrete post-intervention resolutions have provided a fruitful arrangement for the Islamic State to rise. The rise of Islamic state has caused unpredictability in the region. It has compelled the military involvement of foreign powers in the region and thus provided the possibility of prolonging proxy warfare, thus halting the regional peace and tranquility. Although the rival powers are united in purpose to eliminate the terrorist organization but they employ incongruent strategies to do so.

### **Strategies used by States to counter ISIS**

From 2007 onwards, the US employed its Counterinsurgency Strategy (COIN) in Iraq. The US has learned from its experience in Afghanistan and therefore coined a new strategy that calls for building local militias that would fight with soldiers in combating terrorism. Moreover, it provided tribal leaders more political recognition and allowed them to maintain private militias. In other words, the strategy calls for broader civilian role in fighting insurgency. The similar approach is carried on to fight ISIS but with slight variations. In Syria, the military strategy of ‘boots on ground’ has been replaced by Air strikes and in Iraq the US and its coalition partners have banked on Kurdish security force ( Peshmerga) in the North and the Iraqi army in the west by proposing them training and air support. Moreover, the containment of ISIS is

ensured by the UN Security Council resolution No 2178 that was passed in 2014. By this strategy it is hoped that the ISIS would face internal fragmentation and would split into multiple groups, resulting in its weakness. US thus would provide military assistance, air support to local tribal groups with army's efforts to ensure the defeat of ISIS. Likewise, Russia also carries out air attacks to dismantle the strongholds of the ISIS in Syria.

Some reports suggest that the disintegration of the ISIS is beginning and soon the IS would be defeated. However, it is clear that mere defeating the ISIS is not adequate for ensuring peace in the Middle East. There must be an accord between major powers about the fate of Baathist regime in Syria and an acceptable political solution for Iraq. In absence of solution to these crises, the region would continue to face volatility and the antagonism between major powers would be likely to dragged in other parts of the world.

### **Palestine Crisis**

One of the primary reasons that put Middle Eastern peace and stability at stake is Arab- Israel issue. It would not be wrong to declare the Arab – Israel crisis as defining event in the political dynamics of Middle Eastern politics. .It is the issue that engulfed all the Arab nations and has remained a cornerstone of the foreign Policy of every Middle-Eastern State and other Global powers that have any national stakes in the region. Till now, all the efforts made by UN, Arab League and other entities like U.S, Britain etc. to resolve this issue are in vain. As a matter of fact, the recent foreign policy actions by US President Donald Trump further aggravated the Israel- Palestine crises as he initiated a resolution in UN to declare Jerusalem as a lawful capital of Israel. U.S also halted the two-state solution backed by the UN and International community by signing of Jerusalem Embassy Law on 6 December 2017 (Beaumont, 2018). In addition to that, the US has jeopardized its historic role as a Peace-broker in the Conflict. This move by U.S has forced a lot of Arab states to review their strategy with respect to Israel and U.S in Middle East. This urge of re-strategizing in Palestinians entails fair probabilities of more vigorous and hard stance towards 'One state' Solution. In short, the crisis of Palestine is one of the most contentious conflicts having the capacity to engulf the whole region and to spread instability throughout the Middle East.

### **Historical Background of the Crisis**

Rooted in the occupation of Jew immigrants from Europe in the Palestinian territory, currently Israel is located in the heart of Middle East whereas, Palestinians are



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confined in territories of West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem that was occupied by Israel in 1967. Historically, the region has seen three wars over the conflict along with multiple efforts to resolve this issue. The Zionist ideology has reinforced the creation of Israel as a God-proposed home for all the Jews. In the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Jews living in Germany and other parts of Europe have begun to move to the land, now known as Israel in order to escape persecution. Israel establishment on the basis of Zionist ideology was received as challenge to the Arab states which were also following certain ideological customs based on Pan- Arabism.

In 1947, the UN proposed division of the territory into three separate entities; an Arab State, a Jewish State and Jerusalem containing holy places was to be controlled by the UN. The leaders of Zionist were agreed to the proposal but Arabs rejected it. Consequently, after British abandoned the territories in 1948, the Jews declared an independent state of Israel (Guardia, 2002). This act was followed by a War between the State of Israel, Palestinians and neighboring Arab States. At the end of War, East Jerusalem was under Jordan's Control and Israel controlled west Jerusalem. Another war was fought in 1967 in which Israel occupied the East Jerusalem.

**Figure 2** Expansion of Israel in Middle East



**Source:** <http://www.jailingopinions.com/una.htm>

Therefore, Israel controls more territory than it was originally proposed in the UN's Proposal of 1947. Since 1967, the Issue was dragged on and many efforts have been made to resolve the conflict. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed

and it is recognized as the legitimate representative of Palestinian People. The PLO declared independence of the State of Palestine in 1988 (Ibrahim, 1988).

### **Dynamics of the Conflict and its Impact on Middle East**

The Arab – Israel conflict is composed of various dynamics. Firstly, the conflict is known as Arab- Israel conflict, where, with exception of Jordan and Egypt, a large number of Arab states do not recognize Israel as a legitimate state. Though, a large number of reports claim about existence of secret relationship between Israel and Saudi Arab. However, there is a general consensus amongst these Arab states that Israel is their ideological rival and the creation of Israel is illegal. Thus three major wars were fought amongst Israel and Arab worlds but they remained in vain. Secondly, Israel, despite several UN resolutions kept on extending its territorial jurisdiction by establishing its colonies in Palestinian territories. Though both Israel and Palestine have declared themselves as independent states, the Palestine cause is suffering due to weaknesses of Arab world to resolve this crisis amicably.

Thirdly, the Palestinian – Israeli conflict possesses religious dynamics as well. The occupation of Jerusalem by Israel has challenged the religious identity of Muslim as it is considered one of the three holy places of Muslims. The religious dimension of Palestine issue has impacted the Middle Eastern policy the most than any other issue did. It provided a space for rise of extremist organizations in the region and activates the role of ‘Political Islam’ in the Politics of the region.

In response to US President Donald Trump’s erratic behavior towards Israel-Palestinian issue a new wave of unrest has swamped the region. The move has unfolded the flaw of the Muslim World and international community alike. It also raised doubts about U.S if it wants to resolve this issue or not. In addition to that, the Palestinians were forced to rethink the strategy for themselves (Zalzburg, 2017). The role of the US is, however, exposed in the future Peace processes. Although, the US has not backed off from the ‘Two-State’ solution yet but it has definitely lost its integrity. Following the move, United Nations General Assembly voted against the US on its resolution to declare Jerusalem as capital of Israel. a resolution was moved in the Security Council to counter US policy of recognizing Jerusalem as capital of Israel, which was vetoed by the US. Similarly, the flaws in Muslim world are also wide-open as the special OIC summit held in Turkey was merely a ritualistic condemnation and no concrete plan of action was devised. The Palestinians are too facing great political division thus, lack stimulus to restructure their strategy.

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Consequently, the Palestine crisis poses a challenge in Middle East than any other, to stability of the region (Delattre, 2017).

### **Yemen Crisis**

The Arab Spring in Middle East led to the end of 33 yearlong rule of Ali Saleh but pushed the country in a civil war and an arena for proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arab. The successive government of President Hadi witnessed grave political instability due to sectarian and political differences. In 2014, the situation got more alarming when Houthis armed mercenaries advanced and captured Capital city Saana and forced President Hadi to move to Aden. Till now no conceivable solution has been reached and the ethnic and sectarian rift continues to pull to pieces the tranquility and peace in Yemen (Al-Muslimi, 2015).

### **Other Conflicts**

Apart from the conflicts discussed above, there are few other conflicts in the region that need explanation, notable of these are crisis in Iraq and Libya. Iraq is the most devastated region in the Middle East. After the Ouster of Saddam Husain and US occupation in 2003, Iraq is witnessing a vertical division into Shia, Sunni and Kurdish segments. The sharpening of sub-identities, increasing dissatisfaction of Iraqi society with US occupation, Separatist movement (Kurdish referendum 2017) and rise of the ISIS in Iraq makes it the most instable and conflict-ridden region. Similarly, Libya after Gadhafi is facing Political Chaos but is less ungovernable than Iraq and Syria (Cockburn, 2014).

General Factors having Impact on Politics of the Middle East and triggering conflict.

After reviewing the conflicts in Middle East, certain factors can be outlined which are common amongst all the Middle Eastern crises. A separate case study of every conflict can help trace the causal variables of the Conflict. This section of this research study would focus upon the exploration of factors that influenced political dimensions of Middle East.

### **Demography and Social Structure**

The geopolitics of the Middle East is largely determined by the demographic environment and prevailing social structures of States (Sinkaya, 2016). The ethno - religious and national compositions of a state effects the government's policies at home and at regional as well as international level. The Middle East is divided into four major ethnic groups namely Turkish, Persians, Arabs and Jews. Thus challenging the notion of Pan – Arabism and inter-state conflicts amongst different states in the

region based on their separate ethno-sectarian identities. Furthermore, Middle East is largely believed to be a territory of Muslim states but it has Israel, a Jewish entity, a considerable number of Christian minority is also found in Jordan. Rest of the “Muslim” Middle East is divided into various sectarian blocks. Majority of the Middle East states have Sunni population but some states have Shiite majority and few others have considerable Shiite Minority. For instance, Iran, Kuwait and Iraq have Shiite majority while Lebanon has considerable Shiite minority, however, all other States have Sunni majority population. This diversity breeds a space for sectarian violence in the region. In sum, there are considerable ethnic, religious and sectarian minorities in the Middle East which provide impetus to many on-going conflicts in the region.

This diversity in the Middle East is viewed in the policies executed by various Middle eastern states in the region and harmed the crises like Arab- Israel, Yemen civil war and challenge to rise of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. Middle East is also home to a large number of ethnic identities. Kurds, are one of the large ethnicities in Middle East, scattered geographically along the borders of multiple Middle East Countries.

These irredentist developments are one the foremost regional dynamics that contoured and reshaped the intensity of the existing conflicts in the region.

### **Economic baseline**

The economic power of a state is one of the primary factors that determine its status in the international and regional politics as they largely affect the domestic and external foreign policies of a state (Rother, 2016). Most of the Middle Eastern states, despite their geographical sizes, are enriched with natural resources, primarily in natural oil. In Middle East political economy, whether the state is rich in oil or not determines its foreign policy maneuvers. For instance, the Persian Gulf states are rich in oil but lack enough labor and for that these rely heavily on foreign labor. Similarly, Syria, Egypt and Yemen have large population thus have a huge labor force but they have not enough energy resources. Thus, these States earn huge remittances by sending their labor abroad. In this way, the mutual trade of surplus resources shapes the regional interaction and attracts Global attention that in turn prepares a ground for the subsequent geopolitics of the region.

One of the most crucial economic features in the regional dynamics of the Middle East is oil. Oil has proved as the most significant strategic asset of all the states in the region. Thus, providing most of the Middle Eastern states a status of ‘rentier States’ in the region. Many oil producing countries relied profoundly upon the production of oil. In this way they managed to influence the price of oil in international market. It also

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attracted global strategic interests in the region. Thus, major powers intend to maintain a large sphere of their influence in the Middle East. For that often these powers interfere in the domestic affairs of states as oil is one of the most powerful weapons that the states in Middle East use to influence outsiders over many domestic and regional issues. For instance the oil embargo in 1973 shook the whole world and acted as a determining role in 1967 war between Israel and Arab world.

### **Political Character; regime matters**

Political character of a state is another factor that regulates its retorts towards major regional conflicts. It all depends upon the regime and the leading ethnic and sectarian social group that is commanding the government (Rahman, 2008). The colonial period had influenced the future political character of the states; for instance, countries that were under British control have developed kingdoms in post-colonial period. In contrast, the countries that were underneath French control have established into democracies. The type of regimes also shapes the general posture of the State however, the Arab spring has shown the remarkable uprisings directed against the long autocratic rules. It also expressed that the Middle east is developing culture of strong public opinions gradually. The fate of kingdoms in Iran (1979), Egypt (1952), Iraq (1958) and Libya (2011) met with their deadly end and were replaced by republics. Besides, the dominant social group in charge of regime also influences the politics in the region. The sectarian composition of regimes is crucial for the regional interaction in the Middle East; the Shia government in Syria, Iraq, and Iran and Sunni majority rule in Saudi-Arabia and in other many other States breeds sectarian rift that harms the regional stability in both ways. During the inter-state conflicts and on the home, the major ruling sect deals with the minority sect through stanch policies.

### **i) Strategic interests of Global-Powers; a competition among Global powers, and among Regional powers.**

The geo-political and geo-strategic dimensions of Middle East made it an attractive region for the major powers around the world. This attribute attached to Middle East generated a sense of competition amongst various regional as well as non-regional major powers (Guéhenno, 2017). This major power competition aggravated the situation on several occasions in Middle East. the divergent national objectives forced states to manipulate the crises in Middle east in their own favor. Every states attempted to tilt the balance in its own favors. For instance, the Syrian crisis in Middle East is the valid example that how major powers attempt to influence a crisis without thinking about humanitarian and political cost a region bears. Every state in the Middle Eastern Region is supporting different entities. Iran and Russia are supporting

Assad in Syria whereas US is supporting anti Iran and Russian forces. Similarly US is supporting Kurds where Turkey is detesting them. This leads the region to the conflicts that are self-sustaining as the major players are pursuing dissimilar culminations in many regards. In result, the violent non-state extremist and terrorist organizations like ISIS and other are finding enough vacuum for their functioning. Besides, the oil rich Middle East attracts major Global powers to control the production mechanism so that they can control its value in the global market. Terrorist organizations attack the fields so often and pose a threat that these may control the production of oil from many fields in future. This threat delivers enough validation to major powers to intrude in the region.

### **ii) A rift between Political Islam and Western democracy**

Another factor that breeds conflict in the Middle East is a rift between Western democracy and Political Islam. Political Islam witnessed a great rise after the defeat of Arabs in the War of 1967. Before that Arab nationalism was at its topmost and called for the breakdown of Ottoman Empire and establishment of numerous Arab states in the region. The rise of political Islam provided great challenge to nationalist powers that carried on the despotic rule or believed in the western democratic idols. Political Islam stood against the both and discussed for major transformation based on Islamic traditions and sanctions. In Egypt and many other Middle Eastern States, 'Muslim brotherhood' is one of the flag carriers of political Islam. Importantly, the movement of political Islam was more strengthened after the Iranian revolution (1979). The western powers have long favored the exporting of democracy in the Middle East. Therefore, the rise of Political Islam is considered as a biggest threat to their vision of the Middle East. It is pertinent to see that whether there is an inherent discrepancy between democracy and political Islam or whether the West is unable to see the Middle East practicing democracy that is in line with their own cultural and religious traditions. Answer to these questions would tell us exactly about the intensification of conflict due to rift between the forces of Political Islam and Western-styled democracy. A manifestation of this conflict is apparent in the elections and subsequent military Coup in Egypt. Mohammad Morse became President after winning the elections. Soon he began to introduce such policies that reflected the values of Political Islam. However, in 2013 Abdul Fatah al-size staged a military Coup to overthrow Morse's government. This military Coup was seen by many as a command act and being planted by the western powers especially the US as Morse was working against their interests and proclaimed idols of democracy. In result, there followed

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chaos and instability. Thus, this rift between Political Islam and Western democracy is also a source of conflict in the region.

### **Pakistan's standing**

Pakistan maintains positive relations with the Middle East. Despite intensive regional power antagonism between Iran and the Saudi Arabia, Pakistan has not sided superfluously with anyone in this rivalry as it would antagonize other. It is clear from the fact that Pakistan was reluctant to join the Military alliance of Muslim countries made by Saudi Arabia as it exhibited an anti-Shia alliance. Only after substantial assurances that the alliance would not advance any sectarian agenda, Pakistan has tacitly accepted the membership of the alliance. It shows that Pakistan is very conscious of sectarian dimension and it intends to stay away from being party to such rivalries as it risks disturbance of sectarian relations in its own territory. Not only has this but many times Pakistan offered to play the role of arbitrator between Iran and Saudi-Arabia on various conflicts. Additionally, it takes well-founded position on Palestine issue and does not recognize Israel. In the United Nations and on every forum, it speaks about the atrocities that Palestinians face against the Israelis. In sum, Pakistan's position on the politics of Middle East is positive and constructive (Dawn, 2017).

### **Conclusion**

The Middle East is undergoing multiple crises. The conflicts in the Middle East are not simple reflection of contention between rival states but have a very dynamic nature. There are civil wars, insurgencies transcending borders, and terrorist assaults; these multiple conflicts involve multiple actors such as Non-state actors, foreign Powers, and international and regional organizations. Moreover it is explored that multiple factors ignite or facilitate these conflicts and these include; demography and social structure, Economic baseline, Political character of regimes, Power competition among global as well as regional players, and a rift between Political Islam and democracy. These are general factors that idiosyncratically or through interaction with each other contribute to keep the conflicts alive. It is argued that the actors involved in these conflicts have disparate interests and therefore they are working to achieve distinct ends; this conflict of approach and major Power competition in the region complicates these conflicts further and therefore the conflicts are self-sustaining.

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