Unraveling the Enigmas: Deciphering the Causes of Discord in the Middle East: *A Review*

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Abstract

Turbulence and conflict are part of the Middle East's history. It's often impossible to say where the present rumbles came from--or why they won't go away. This is not a single area, but rather a magnificent mosaic that harbors an assortment of cultures, religious traditions, and customs. Here the history spans many thousand years, and so we are unable to describe it as a simple theme but rather as a complex pattern: People from different places with differing religious and cultural beliefs mean an eternal fight that can only exist under heaven. How can one come face to face with the Middle East? The hole that this region is spiraling down can make for a series. To cover the numerous aspects of the Middle East would require far more than several articles. Some key components of conflict in the area that we will look at here to try and make them clear. May carry in abundant hope, we can look at these factors and as they interact with each other both in terms of cause-effect relationships or symptom management for a set visit. At the least, may we keep a few honest records? Hopefully we can create still greater understanding and peace throughout this region.

Keywords— Middle East, Security, review, conflict resolution, identity, culture, religion

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPLEXITY OF CONFLICTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East has always had a rich history of various ethnic groups, religious groups, civilizations, and within that all, there have been competitions for power, baked by rivalries and conflicts over ideals and identities. The region has historically been a crossroads where empires have fell over the centuries and been replaced by new ones [1].

In order to comprehend what some of the historical, political, religious and socio-economic factors are that have created the landscape we see in the Middle East, I will need to break it down for you. So I can show you that regional developments and global developments are closely connected. In addition, states' attempts to secure their national interests' requirements have created relationships between various dynamic interactions at various striking degrees of relations [2].

Political factors have been effective on the occurrence of the conflicts in the region. There are many nation states in the Middle East region and each of them has its own political system, leadership and foreign policy. Efforts to realize national interests, disputes over land and power struggles create tensions and conflicts. In addition, the influence and interventions of foreign powers have complicated the relations between the governments in the region.

Religious differences have been another important source of the tension and conflict in the Middle East. This region is the birth place of the most major world religions such as Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Especially, in countries where religious population is diverse, religious differences, sectarianism and the competition for religious supremacy cause conflicts in the Middle East.

In the analysis of conflicts in the Middle East region, socio-economic factors cannot be ignored [5]. The region has deep-seated problems with significant wealth discrimination, poverty, unemployment and lack of economic opportunities. Societal challenges of this nature along with political corruption and the unfair distribution of resources give rise to mounting social unrest and dissatisfaction. They are major causes of conflict and political instability in the region. The Middle East is home to a complex network of historical, political, religious and socio-economic factors that create the conditions for conflict. This sea of grievances doesn't produce a cause of

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conflict so much as it provides a vast set of elements to take into consideration. What follows is an examination of the primary factors behind conflict and instability in the Middle East. A more thorough understanding of these causes is crucial in the context of both the present adoption of and future attempts to craft politics and policies that seek to build lasting peace and stability in the region.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The conflicts in the Middle East have their roots in the early 20th century. The present-day circumstances must be understood in terms of the broader historical background of the region. This history is the result of a confluence of factors, first and foremost among them the colonial impact on the region. In the 19th and 20th centuries, European powers imposed artificial borders and colonized many territories in the area, leaving deep-seated tensions and rivalries among the nations of the region [6].

Colonial governments' policies and their lasting effects on political–social structures have been an important factor when analyzing conflicts in the Middle East. Religious and sectarian conflicts have played a significant role in the occurrence of conflicts in the Middle East region [7]. The Middle East harbors many religious groups including: Sunni and Shia Muslims, Christians and others. Generally, political actors exploit these religious divisions. This type of exploitation is usually associated with a violent sectarian tension.

Another central issue that has been responsible for unstable security in the Middle East is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The state of Israel was established in 1948, as a result of which the Palestinians were displaced, leading to decades of competition and tension amongst the countries in the region [8]. This has made it the longest unresolved political and military conflict in the Middle East, with regional, as well as global justifications. Furthermore, competition over important resources–oil and water has also been a source of many struggles in the area. The Middle East holds a vast amount of oil, which has attracted major powers, and therefore created a difficult and uncomfortable geo-political rivalry. Access to freshwater resources, particularly in drier areas, has become an issue of tumbling and conflict between countries such as Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Iran and Afghanistan [9].

It is crucial that we look back at the historical background of Middle Eastern conflicts if we are to understand how complex these issues really are today. Taking into account the twin influences of colonialism and religion, the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and competition for energy, water resources, etc., the web of complex factors that cause Middle Eastern conflicts is there to be seen and weighed in terms of potential solutions.

III. POLITICAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

It is not possible to reflect on the persisting conflict and profound violence Middle Eastern countries have seen over the past decades without considering the political factors. Political factors are essential to understanding the deep-seated causes of the tense atmosphere seen in the Middle East, as a wide range of conflicts induce a web of different disputes based on socio-political, religious and sectarian differences.one of the most essential political factors is the existence of authoritarian regimes and a lack of democratic governance in an overwhelming majority of Middle East [11]

These regimes frequently suppress opposition and limit political freedoms, which leads to widespread dissatisfaction and discontent among the societies. The absence of a all-inclusive and comprehensive political system provides a ground for the spread of social unrest and extremist ideologies. Another ingredient is the interference of foreign powers in the political affairs of the region. The Middle East has long been the battleground for geopolitical competition in which major actors seek to maximize their power and influence in the region. This intervention has frequently fueled conflicts and escalated tensions by backing different factions, arming proxy groups, and pursuing strategic interests [12].

IV. RELIGIOUS AND SECTARIAN TENSIONS: A MAJOR SOURCE OF CONFLICT

The Middle East has been home to a plethora of faiths and religions for centuries. One of the factors responsible for the existence of significant religious tensions is the fact that Islam is composed of various sects, of which the Sunni and Shia sects are the most famous. These two branches have been at odds for centuries over a perceived purport that was given to them after the demise of the Prophet Muhammad [13]. The differences between the Shia and Sunni sects have led to violent, verbal, and political clashes in countries such as Iran, Syria, Iraq, and Bahrain, to name just a few. The competition for influence between the Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia and the Shia-majority Iran, in particular, has worsened sectarian differences and fomented regional conflict [14]. Further, religious minorities in the mid-East, specifically Christians, Yazidis, and Druzes, have been persecuted and discriminated against leading to further tensions and conflicts in the mid-East. Extremist groups emerging lead by ISIS have, for example, targeted these

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religious communities leading to these groups becoming internally displaced, violence against them, and the destruction of their cultural sites [15].

Commonly at the intersection of the ethnic, nationalist and political ideologies mentioned above lies religion. In the MENA, religion further complicates the conflict landscape. Political leaders and groups draw on religious narratives to mobilize support, legitimize their actions and consolidate power. In doing so, they have created deep-seated divides and cycles of violence [16]. Addressing religious and sectarian tensions therefore requires an approach that fosters dialogue, tolerance and respect for religious diversity. Encouraging inclusive governance systems that protect the rights and freedoms of all religious groups is necessary to build trust and peaceful coexistence.

V. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS EXACERBATING CONFLICTS

In Middle East region, one of the reasons which cause to increase conflicts and instability is effective role of socio-economic factors. In order to find out the root causes of these conflicts, it is necessary to understand why these play a role. One of the important socio-economic factor is unequal distribution of wealth and resources [17]. Many countries in the Middle East have an abundance of energy resources and it is not surprising that access to them can lead to violent strife. Oil wealth can be incredibly concentrated in just a few hands, leaving vast sectors of a country to suffer through poverty. Economic instability also can lead to social unrest. High levels of unemployment and underemployment can also hurt economic — to say nothing of social — stability [18]. The region's population growth is driven by one of the highest youth population growth rates in Africa; unfortunately however, the labor market cannot digest the corresponding increase in the number of job seekers [14]. This state of affairs breeds disillusion, particularly among the young, who feel further marginalized by their exclusion from the benefits of economic development. The existence of corruption and poor governance further feeds socio-economic tensions, given that the misuse and/or squandering of public resources by the elite and civil servants for personal gain exacerbates social differences and generates deep-seated disbelief in the ability of government to rise above the private interests of the powerful [19]. This can provide a source of grievances and lead to the rise of radical ideologies as people turn to alternative solutions to their socio-economic problems. In some cases, sectarian differences and ethnic rivalries can intensify conflicts. In some instances, these differences are exploited by political

and religious leaders to hold onto power, further polarizing societies and increasing tensions [20].

Addressing these socio-economic factors will require a comprehensive approach. Governments in the region must strive to promote inclusive economic growth, investing in education and job creation that benefits young people in particular. As transparency is increased and corruption tackled, trust in institutions will be built and social cohesion will be encouraged. Interventions in which people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds are brought together to improve understanding and begin building shared identities will be particularly helpful. It is through recognizing and addressing these under-explored socio-economic factors that the Middle East can work to obtain the stability and prosperity that will prevent conflicts from starting in the first place, and from being so intractable when they do.

VI. GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS AND POWER STRUGGLES IN THE REGION

Geopolitical ways and power struggles play an important role in increasing conflicts in the Middle East [20]. Restless is the region which has become the epicenter of geopolitical competition and strategic calculations of the regional and global powers [21]. One of the main reasons behind these conflicts is the struggle to have the control of key and valuable resources mainly oil and gas reserves. This idea becomes credible by the fact that the Middle East holds some of the big oil reserves of world. This makes the region an indispensable one for energy security and economic interests. It is therefore an environment that the big global powers have been drawn to, allying with local factions and sometimes fighting proxy wars to defend their respective spheres of interest [10] the historical legacy of colonialism and the subsequent redrawing of borders after World War I is also to blame; new states were artificially created in the Middle East. They were not nation-states in which common ethnic and religious concerns bind the citizenry. This inevitably led to deep resentments and violent conflict over identity issues — most notably as these have led to separatist movements and ethnic tensions in countries ranging from Iraq and Syria to Yemen [22]. The Middle East has also served as a venue for global power competition between the United States, the then-Soviet Union, and major players throughout the world [23]

In this respect, these powers also appear to support different nods in the conflicts of the Middle East, as part of their strategy. They mostly do so indirectly, but on occasion directly, and they do so on the basis of "my enemy's enemy is my friend" loyalty rather than any just cause. This has

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further complicated the dynamics of conflicts, making them ever more protracted and difficult to resolve.

Without appreciating this much, it is almost impossible to understand what underlies Middle Eastern conflicts. Without this understanding, a more nuanced approach, which includes historical, economic and political factors, becomes extraordinarily difficult. Without it, it is almost impossible to see a way to sustainable peace and stability in the Middle East.

VII. IMPACT OF EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS ON MIDDLE EAST CONFLICTS

The pursuit of its geopolitical interests is one of the primary reasons external powers have historically intervened in the region. To secure access to strategic resources, safeguard its interests, or amplify its influence over important allies, the United States, Russia, and European countries have regularly inserted themselves into Middle Eastern disputes. [24] These interventions have often failed, disrupted complex local dynamics and historical grievances, and in some cases exacerbated conflict [24]. A second factor is the ideological and religious motivations driving certain regional actors. The attractions of external powers to religious and sectarian differences within the region have seen these powers align themselves with one religious or ethnic group in support of their own strategic goals. Religious- and sectarian-based interference by external actors has deepened divisions and escalated conflict in the Middle East [25] Furthermore, the arms trade and military support from outside forces have fueled conflict in the region. The flow of arms and military aid — often to one side of a conflict — extends and intensifies fighting [26]. This not only increases the number of casualties, but also makes finding peaceful solutions more difficult.

The unintended consequences of external interventions in the Middle East are often brushed aside. These interventions are usually the result of geopolitical calculations that take little or no account of the complex realities on the ground. A failure to understand the region's drivers of conflict and give due regard to the nuances and intricacies of the local level has the potential to prolong inter and intra-state conflicts, exacerbate divisions and impede the prospects for much-needed peace and stability. Therefore, a more nuanced approach is needed. To that end, it requires the understanding of the region's stakeholders, the roots of its animosities and a genuine commitment to diplomacy over militarism.

Only through a comprehensive and inclusive approach can external interventions contribute to lasting peace and stability in the region.

VIII. THE ROLE OF IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM IN FUELING CONFLICTS

Identity and nationalism have played a significant role in perpetuating conflicts in the Middle East, where many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups with distinct identities and ideals based on which their respective political and social movements seek to promote self-determination, autonomy, or dominance, call home [27]. Indeed, a large number of conflicts in the Middle East can be traced back to the formation of nation-states following the end of colonial rule, a process through which borders that ignored existing complex tribal and ethnic differences were drawn, subsequently leading to disputes over territory as well as struggles for resources and power.

Religious identity also plays an important role in Middle Eastern conflicts. The region is the birthplace of some of the world's major religions, such as Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Differences in religious beliefs and practices have contributed to sectarianism and resulted in inter-sect fights and inter-religious wars. Moreover, religious identity has been mobilized and manipulated by various actors for political purposes, further increasing social and political conflicts [28]. Narratives of the past also feed into the continuation of conflicts in the Middle East. Grievances inherited from past historical injustices, such as those emanating from colonial times or related to the nature of state territorial boundaries, fuel nationalist sentiments. Narratives are central in shaping how communities interpret their identity and their aspirations and the stories from the past contribute to a cycle of violence and retaliation [29].

Identities and nationalism have undeniable effects on generating conflicts in the Middle East. In trying to understand the root causes of these conflicts, we must strive to recognize and respect the different identities and ideals held by the people of the region. Promoting governance structures that are inclusive and just, which respect different identities and allow for dialogue, can attenuate the effects of identity-based conflicts and work to bring peace and stability to the region.

IX. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Cultural differences and misunderstandings are among the key drivers for increased conflicts in the Middle East which consists of a wide range of cultures, languages, religions, and traditions every country has its unique history, customs, and social norms that potentially conflict with each other [30]. Lack of understanding and empathy among different groups is one of the critical challenges in dealing with these differences. Stereotypes and pre-conceived ideas can lead to misconceptions, mistrust or even animosity. [31]. Political and religious ideologies, historical grievances and

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conflicting narratives also exacerbate these misunderstandings. Language barriers are also a major contributing factor. Misunderstandings or misinterpretations of words/phrases can easily stoke heightened tensions and divisions, and cultural nuances and non-verbal communication cues also may lead to unintentional offense or misunderstanding [31]. Engaging with such cultural differences and misunderstandings, and the difficult and often-painful work of intercultural dialogue, respect, understanding, and education it necessitates, is an urgent imperative in this light. By coming to know the great variety of cultures and traditions to be found in the Middle East, we can work towards bridging the gap and fostering peaceful coexistence. From there, the presumably infinite complexities of conflicts in the region may perhaps give rise to mutual understanding and — with great effort and a good deal of hope — sustainable peace.

X. PROSPECTS FOR RECONCILIATION AND PEACE-BUILDING EFFORTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Reconciliation and peace-building prospects in the Middle East have long been a topic of analysis and speculation. Over the years, the region has been the stage for various conflicts and tensions, rooted in its complex history. Yet, amid the seemingly insurmountable challenges, there have been occasional glimpses of hope, promising potential paths towards peace. One such factor that could shape reconciliation is a change in political dynamics. Regional leaders, as well as international players and stakeholders, must come to terms with the impracticality of further conflict and the mutual benefits of peaceful coexistence, which only dialogue, negotiation and compromise makes possible [32].

Involvement by grassroots movements and civil society organizations is another important factor. These non-state actors often support understanding, tolerance, and bridging between communities. In doing so, they can help construct trust, necessary for a foundation for sustainable peace [33]. Economic development and regional cooperation are other ingredients in the feature of reconciliation. By addressing socio-economic disparities, strengthening infrastructure, and boosting investment and trade, Middle Eastern nations can work towards shared prosperity and stability. [34]. To be more successful, regional initiatives such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Arab League could serve as platforms for dialogue and cooperation. Mediation and international diplomacy also play a key role in order to facilitate peace building efforts, whereby for example, the involvement of neutral mediators – UN, regional organizations – could provide for a neutral atmosphere for negotiations and assist in building trust between parties. [35].

While the path to reconciliation in the Middle East is undoubtedly challenging, it is crucial to remain optimistic and committed to finding peaceful solutions. By addressing the root causes of conflict, engaging in meaningful dialogue, and strengthening cooperation, there is a glimmer of hope that lasting peace can be achieved in the region.

XI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, unearthing the root causes of Middle Eastern turmoil is essential for anyone brave enough to wade through entangled webs of perceptions and realities, history and political configurations, socio-economics, religion, and the cries of heroism and resistance. It is the only way to humanize the victims of this tortured land and to examine the powerful dilemmas that these men and women faced from all sides. Birthing the recognition required for dialogue, empathy, and ultimately, reconciliation is imperative, and we need this in our individual and collective psyches. As we perpetually strive and theorize, let us seek knowledge and mutual understanding. I embrace one such framework of which this essay has attempted to join.

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