



**JOURNAL OF
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

<https://e-journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/jis>

How to cite this article:

Bendebka, R. (2025). "New regionalism" in the Middle East and North Africa region (Mena): An evaluation on its characteristics. *Journal of International Studies*, 21(2), 189-218. <https://doi.org/10.32890/jis2025.21.2.10>

**“NEW REGIONALISM” IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
REGION (MENA): AN EVALUATION ON ITS CHARACTERISTICS**

Ramzi Bendebka

Department of Political Science, International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia

ramzib@iium.edu.my

Received: 3/7/2023

Revised: 21/2/2024

Accepted: 17/7/2025

Published: 28/8/2025

ABSTRACT

In the late twentieth century, regional dynamics in international relations reemerged, sparking a renewed interest, as evidenced by the emergence of the term “new regionalism.” The global economy has become increasingly defined by regionalism. Both developed and developing countries are turning to regional cooperation as a vital tool to counter global challenges and issues. This study aims to analyse the features of “new regionalism” in the context of the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). The study begins by identifying and explaining the key features of “new regionalism” that facilitate cooperation between countries. It then evaluates and examines the following features of regionalism in the MENA region: 1) geographical proximity; 2) trade liberalisation; 3) economic interdependence; 4) non-discrimination; and 5) unilateral reform. To analyse the current status of regionalism in the MENA region and clarify the level and extent of cooperation, the research method proposes utilising a set of indicators to refer to each of these features. The research findings are summarised below: Despite some encouraging signs of regional cooperation in the MENA region, it is distinguished by slow free trade, a weak regional import-export process, unclear unilateral reform, and a lack of collaboration.

Keywords: Developing countries, new regionalism, MENA region, cooperation, economies.

INTRODUCTION

Supporters of the “new regionalism” (Baylis et al., 2007; Breslin et al., 2002; Hettne & Söderbaum, 2006; Mansfield & Milner, 1999; Schirm, 2002; Tavares, 2004) argued that regional blocs, organisations, and institutions have a significant effect on the international system in a globalised world. Collaboration is currently a defining feature of the global economy, serving as a tool for both developing and developed nations to overcome contemporary challenges (Scott & Storper, 2003). This includes tackling climate change, managing migratory flows, combating terrorism, and promoting peace and security (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2006).

This article evaluates the collaboration in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Regionalism in the MENA region is rarely studied comprehensively and in an accessible manner, especially from the perspective of those within the region itself. Studies by Ajami (1991), Halliday (1996), Aarts (1999), Hinnebusch (2003), Edwards (2006), and Fawcett (2009) have focused on the role of Western countries in shaping MENA regionalism. External factors, such as the USA's intervention, have significantly influenced the region's economy and politics (Hurrell, 1995). In this regard, the United States has repeatedly redefined the region's economy by supporting its trade policies and economic liberalisation measures according to its own dictates (Cheta, 2018). Politically, the USA has taken on managerial roles by assisting confident leaders or groups in forming governments, which has significantly impacted the power dynamics of politics, regimes, and alignments within the region (Hazbun, 2018). Furthermore, its security and military interventions have altered the regional dynamics by affecting political stability and sovereignty demographics—that is, its participation in reshaping the regional balance, as seen in its support for Israel (Seeberg, 2016). Seldom is MENA regionalism evaluated in the context of domestic factors, particularly economic ones, such as import-export dynamics and liberalisation.

Evaluating regionalism in the MENA can provide a clear understanding of the region's reality, based on the region itself, without prejudices or assumptions that would distort the facts and lead to biased conclusions. This internally oriented approach to evaluating MENA regionalism aims to provide a more accurate and impartial understanding of the region's dynamics in light of its cultural, political, and historical context.

Despite scholars and experts outside the region (Baylis et al., 2007; Breslin et al., 2002; Hettne & Söderbaum, 2006; Mansfield & Milner, 1999; Schirm, 2002; Tavares, 2004) suggested that the MENA region is an exception to other models of regionalism, we cannot dismiss the possibility of evaluating economic cooperation at the regional level. Bill (1996) asserted that the “Middle Eastern political processes defy observation, discourage generalisation, and reject explanation based on fifty years of academic study in the region” (p. 156). Hence, this article aims to examine MENA regionalism using a set of standard criteria applicable globally, demonstrating that the MENA region is not an anomaly in terms of cooperation and regionalism. The study aims to provide a clear and understandable explanation of the emerging regionalism in the MENA region. It is crucial to treat the MENA region like any other regional bloc, showing that it is neither an exception nor fundamentally different in terms of cooperation and the possibility of unity.

It is crucial to highlight and clarify the reality of cooperation within the MENA region rather than merely assessing external factors, as seen in other studies that focused on the role of superpowers and their potential influence on regionalism in the area. Recognising and analysing the characteristics of regional cooperation in the MENA is significant for various reasons. First, the MENA region is under

increasing economic pressure to collaborate. This is due to dynamic global economic changes, such as greater economic globalisation, the impact of events like the pandemic, regional challenges, and the expanding engagement of various developing countries in global markets (Aboyade, 2018; Fischer & El-Erian, 1996; Rouis et al., 2013). The speech delivered by Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune at the opening of the 31st Arab Summit in 2022 eloquently summed up the concern:

“Our summit is taking place under exceptional regional and international circumstances, like COVID-19... These circumstances have led to shifts in balances, increasing tensions, and a worsening phenomenon of polarization, which significantly contribute to escalating crises with repercussions on international peace and security. These crises cast shadows over many countries, particularly regarding their food security. In light of the immense natural, human, and financial resources available in our region, which qualify us to be active players in the world as an economic power, we cannot accept that our economic role is limited to being influenced... Therefore, we must all build a strong Arab economic bloc that safeguards our common interests by identifying priorities and focusing on areas of joint work that have a rapid and tangible positive impact on our region.”

Thus, it is challenging for the MENA region to refrain from engaging in cooperation. Moreover, it is crucial to link studies on the aforementioned region to recent global events and trends, providing a fresh perspective on current regionalism and demonstrating the level of cooperation in the region. It is also noteworthy to distinguish between old and new forms of regionalism. Old regionalism relied heavily on security matters and the outcomes of the Cold War, whereas “new regionalism” is more focused on economic and development concerns (Hettne, 2005). The establishment of the European Union (EU) in the aftermath of World War II is often described as the contemporary counterpart of old regionalism (Beeson, 2004; Mansfield & Milner, 1999). Linking MENA studies to broader global developments is essential, as this perspective illuminates the international forces shaping domestic dynamics and how local concerns influence and are influenced by global trends, particularly in economic matters. This approach enhances the relevance and precision of analyses by considering the global factors that increasingly determine political, economic, and social life in various regions, including MENA.

Table (1) below shows the countries constituting this study's MENA region. The following 22 countries present a wide range of political, economic and cultural complexities in the region. The MENA region comprises a collection of countries characterised by varying levels of development, economic structures, and historical experiences - from oil-rich states in the Gulf, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), to North African nations like Algeria, Egypt, and Morocco.

Adding Iran, Turkey, and the West Bank (part of the Palestinian Territory) into the equation, one can argue how geographically expansive the MENA region is. More importantly, it highlights the diverse power dynamics at play within these elements, each contributing to the region's complex political and strategic landscape. Therefore, the primary focus of this study lies in regional interactions and challenges.

Table 1

List of MENA Countries Used in This Study

Algeria	Lebanon	Sudan
Bahrain	Libya	Syria
Egypt	Mauritania	Tunisia
Iran	Morocco	Turkey
Iraq	Oman	The UAE
Jordan	Qatar	West Bank (Part of Palestinian Territory)
Kuwait	Saudi Arabia	Yemen

The relevance of regionalism within the international system has arguably been one of the most challenging questions since the Second World War. The subsystematisation of the international system was an approach aimed at reducing conflicts between states (Fawcett & Hurrell, 1995; Higgott & Achaya, 2002). A new phase of regionalism emerged in the 1980s, leading to significant changes in academic discussions and the formal aspects of regional integration (Hettne, 1997, 2002). By identifying the characteristics of regionalism in the MENA region, it is possible to integrate the interplay of various existing organisations, innovative ideas, and ongoing discussions under the umbrella of regional cooperation.

Second, most scholarly discussions of regional cooperation focus on a specific regional organisation (Castaner & Oliveira, 2020; Fawcett & Hurrell, 1995; Lake et al., 2021). Examples include the Arab League (AL), the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Moreover, research has been conducted on specific MENA states. For instance, Ismael and Jacqueline (2011) focused their research on certain MENA states such as Turkey, Iran, and Syria, while other experts emphasised other MENA nations like Algeria, Morocco and Egypt (Ayoob, 1981; Halliday, 1996; Kipper & Saunders, 1991; Owen, 1992; Vatikiotis, 1997; Zuhur, 2005). Although each nation in the region is proclaimed to be unique (Ayoob, 1981), for the purposes of this study, the region will be treated as a cohesive bloc. The existing literature on regional cooperation in the MENA region generally highlights international interventions and global economic pressures as the most significant determinants of the region's dynamics. This is a notable gap, as it fails to address regional factors, including regional trade and investment, unilateral reform, and economic interdependence. Whereas earlier works have considered these internal elements separately, this article attempts to bridge that gap through an analysis of the major factors within the same framework, aiming to achieve a better understanding of regional cooperation in the region.

Moreover, international relations witnessed a revival of regional dynamics in the late 20th century. Scholars of “new regionalism” (Baylis & Smith, 2007; Breslin et al., 2002; Mansfield & Milner, 1999; Schirm, 2002; Tavares, 2004) argue that regionalism will become a defining feature of the global economy. They contend that regional cooperation offers both developed and developing regions, such as the Middle East and North Africa, an opportunity and a means to address the challenges posed by globalisation, including environmental, economic, and security matters. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the MENA region to evaluate regionalism in depth by connecting several indicators of regional cooperation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Considerable literature exists regarding the MENA region, regionalism, and integration, covering a wide range of topics. Most of this writing delves into the efforts made by nation-states to improve different aspects of regional cooperation.

What is “New Regionalism”?

Despite substantial scholarly interest and general agreement among scholars, a widely accepted definition of regionalism has yet to be established, even though the concept was significantly developed by the end of the Cold War in 1990 (Mansfield & Milner, 1999; Mistry, 1995). Consequently, different scholars interpret the term “new regionalism” in several ways. According to Hettne (1995, p. 1), the concept is a regional integration process incorporating economic, political, social, and cultural factors. Another definition of “new regionalism” is a multi-level approach to regional government. Regional integration is not a single strategy but rather a multifaceted process centring on economics or other aspects, including political, cultural and social dimensions (Söderbaum, 2003). This requires policy and regulatory harmonisation among sectors, like industry, services and trade, to create stronger linkages and encourage more effective cooperation between countries encompassing a wide range of related problems (Ravenhill, 2014; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). The main problem with the literature on new regionalism is that there is no clear agreement on its features due to extensive discursive elaboration. However, this lack of consensus in defining and interpreting new regionalism poses challenges to the formation of coherent policies and regulations, as the definition and approach to new regionalism vary from study to study.

Furthermore, “regionalism” refers to a collaborative and integrated process that may occur on a global, regional, or even national scale, incorporating both state and non-state actors. Varying actors and processes interact at many levels, and the relative significance of these interactions varies throughout time and geography (Soderbaum, 2001). Economic integration is concerned with maximising the use of resource efficiency by focusing on the geographical component, like the European Union that forms the existence of regional organisations such as the EU (Farole et al., 2011; Koester, 1986; Robson, 1980; Snorrason, 2012).

Two of the most significant preconditions for achieving economic integration are the free flow of trade and the absence of racial or ethnic prejudice among participants (Robson, 1987). The move toward trade liberalisation is a convenient example, as the free flow of goods and services due to reduced barriers such as tariffs, quotas, or import/export controls ensures that more can be traded from one place to another (Baldwin, 2006; Krugman & Obstfeld, 2009). An inclusive environment where all individuals and groups can contribute to and benefit from economic opportunities equally is very important for concerns of racial or ethnic prejudice among the members (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005).

As a result, integration serves as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. This means that integration is a way to minimise conflict and promote security, which is in the interest of neighbouring countries. In reality, most economic cooperation groups are based on political and security considerations, highlighting the crucial importance of these aspects in understanding the true pace of integration (Price, 1955; Tabb, 1999). (Price, 1955; Tabb, 1999). According to Anderson and Blachhurst (1993), regional economic cooperation is “the process of diminishing the economic relevance of national political borders within a geographic region” (p. 181). Both writers believe that Europe is the most attractive site for integration. European integration is defined as the unification process that has

shaped economic, political, and social policies among different European nations, to increase cooperation and stability, thereby transferring these benefits to institutions, allowing these countries to improve together. An example of integration is the European Union (EU), which was established through economic cooperation within the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1956, bringing together France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries. This evolved into the concept of common cooperation in trade, leading to the inception of the EEC, also known as the Common Market, in 1957. Currently, the EU comprises policies such as the single market policy, the Schengen policy, and the eurozone policies, which have systematically provided economic stability, political integration, and social uplift on the European continent. In these institutions, the European countries have provided integration and regional stability through cooperation (Cini & Borrigan, 2019, p. 142).

The Importance of Regional Cooperation

In their study, Windsor and Getz (2000) highlighted the five most significant outcomes of regionalism:

"1) increased market size and reduced resource mobility barriers, leading to 2) increased competition and efficiency; 3) organisational evolution towards more substantial and global multinational enterprises (MNEs); 4) supranational institutional development; and 5) increased demand for sub-national devolution" (p. 418). This means that regions achieve cost efficiency by expanding market size and reducing mobility barriers, enabling them to benefit from increased internal competition and efficiency. These attributes favour the rise of multinational enterprises (MNEs) and supranational institutions for regional governance and, consequently, pave the way for stronger sub-national devolution, fostering greater local participation and responsiveness within the regions (Girod & McCann, 2018).

On the other hand, De Lombaerde et al. (2010) suggested that lower levels of global integration may stimulate regionalism, potentially driving both universalisation—by fostering broader international cooperation—and specialisation—by allowing the development of specific expertise or institutional policy products within a region. They agreed that regionalisation would not obstruct globalisation. It will, however, have a considerable impact on how advantages and losses are distributed and how nations' economies and populations are affected. The European Union (EU) has developed several Association Agreements with the MENA countries, for instance, the EU-Algeria Association Agreement (2005), the EU-Tunisia Association Agreement (1998) and the EU-Egypt Association Agreement (2004). They are designed to enhance trade relations by reducing barriers, such as tariffs, through agreements. Still, they have raised questions about the effects of such competition on industries in MENA nations from Europe and the kind of goods they produce (Zarrouk, 2019).

Regional integration is designed to facilitate the sale of products from developing nations in the markets of wealthy countries (Matthews, 2003, p. 47; WTO, 1996). Primary commodity exports are critical to the economies of developing countries. The primary goal of regional integration is to help developing nations gain market access to the markets of wealthy countries, which is particularly pertinent given the significant contribution of primary commodity exports to these economies on average (Klasen, 2018). Despite rising export volumes, incomes generated from the exports remain flat due to the declining trend in primary commodity prices. Consequently, regional commercial partnerships among emerging nations are suggested as an alternative path to progress. Increased production for the regional market can leverage economies of scale, reduce production costs, and enhance the competitive value of commodities in the global market (Agarwal, 2004; Tovias, 2008).

Although regional integration is partly intended to address some of the above-mentioned structural shortcomings, the power and independence of nation-states remain the basis dictating their foreign policy-making and international behaviour. An example is the EU, where integration still doesn't remove powers in the foreign policy-making arena from individual member states. For instance, there are disparities in how nationals view matters such as asylum seekers and trade embargoes, which are evident at the national level. Their behaviour towards foreign conflicts or partners depends on their domestic agendas (Radaelli, 2023). Moreover, corporations, trade unions, and other political and pressure groups oppose the formation of a single political body within nation-states (Shuqing, 2013). Europe exemplifies regional unity but will never have a federal constitution or a unified foreign policy (Gonsalves, 2006).

Consistent with the assumption of structural realism, the nation-state remains the dominant actor in the international system due to its considerable power and influence. According to this structural realism, it is because the nation-state has a monopoly over sovereignty (the military and economic might) to guard its interests and shape the occurrence of events in the international realm. This strength enables states to guarantee their existence in a world without hierarchy, where the only relevant authority is anarchy, thereby corroborating their primary functions in security and diplomacy (Collard-Wexler, 2006). Furthermore, specific geographical groupings have established impenetrable, invisible boundaries, such as those seen in Europe (Schmidt, 2022). A notable example of political and socio-economic motivations driving a nation-state to prioritise its national interests is the UK's recent withdrawal from the EU, commonly known as Brexit.

Regional Cooperation in MENA

Regional integration in the MENA region is intended to deepen economic liberalisation, manage security threats, and foster closer political cooperation to achieve stability and development among member countries. Despite the existence of several regional cooperation blocs worldwide, the nations of the Middle East and North Africa appear hesitant and ineffective in collaborating on economic matters (Aarts, 1999). Historically, several nations in the region have pursued small regional accords, including the Arab League, the Arab Maghreb Union, and the Arab Cooperation Council. Unfortunately, they often fail to create tangible outcomes by realising and benefiting from regional cooperation (Kalaycioglu, 1996).

An examination of the types of regional organisations that have emerged in the Middle East after 1945 shows that security, rather than economic concerns, has been the primary foundation for their establishment (Fawcett & Hettne, 1995). This focus on security was driven by perceived military threats that were considered detrimental to the stability of all participating sovereign nations at the time, particularly due to the presence of Western colonial powers in the region. For example, one of the primary goals of the Arab League was to work towards the liberation of the remaining Arab countries still under colonial rule, such as Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Iraq, and Libya. As a result, economic and social goals were not prioritised at that time, as military and security concerns for achieving independence took precedence (Barakat, 1993, p. 11).

Regional organisations often prioritise security and regional dominance to enhance collaborative efficiency (Handley et al., 2009; Santi et al., 2012). Despite the establishment of numerous regional organisations, such as the Arab League, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Arab Cooperation Council, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the Mediterranean Free Trade Area, effective integration in the region has yet to be achieved (Lawson, 2012). True economic integration requires more than just creating an

organisation; it necessitates tangible progress that fosters beyond economic cooperation, efficiency, and growth. For instance, the Arab League, which represents all Arab nations, is one of the earliest and most influential regional organisations in the Middle East (Little, 1956). The League's primary goal was to support the liberation of Palestine, reflecting the broader aim of free nations in the region, which was then under foreign colonial rule (Carkoglu et al., 1998; Guazzone, 1997; Roberson, 1998). Central to the Arab League's agenda was to uphold and protect the independence and sovereignty of nations, with a significant focus on the Palestinian issue. Under the 1945 Charter of the Arab League, Article II of Annex I Regarding Palestine stipulates that:

The League's purpose is to strengthen relations between member states, coordinate their policies to achieve cooperation and safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and generally concern itself with the affairs and interests of Arab countries.

These goals, however, have become questionable since all member states have gained independence, and several countries in the region have begun normalising their relations with Israel in recent years (Kerr, 1969; Laanatza et al., 2001; Tripp, 1995). For instance, the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel was signed in 1977, followed by Jordan's peace treaty in 1994. More recently, in 2020, a group of Arab countries, including the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, joined the normalisation process. Therefore, the organisation's existence has arguably lost its legitimacy, and its goals and agenda have not adjusted to face the regional issues and concerns.

All types of economic collaboration in the MENA region have remained at a low level, with minimal progress within its regional organisation (Fioramonti, 2012; WTO, 2011). Therefore, assessing the features of regionalism that may elucidate the underlying reasons for the failure of regional cooperation is inherently linked to the study of regional and sub-regional organisations in the Middle East and North Africa. The Gulf Crisis during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the divisions among Arab countries - between supporters and opponents - significantly undermined the region's organisation system and exposed its serious flaws (Nordhaus, 2002). As Arab countries increasingly divided and disagreed during annual meetings throughout the 1990s, deeper rifts emerged, notably between Saudi Arabia and Libya, Egypt and Iraq, and among other Arab nations. The Gulf Crisis shifted the focus from the collective good of the member states to self-interest. This fragmentation undermined collective economic action, reducing attempts to build tighter economic cooperation architectures that could have served the entire area well, rather than focusing solely on national interests (Telhami & Barnett, 2002: p. 34).

Ideology and Cooperation in MENA

Governments may pursue stability by establishing a long-term institution if they believe a dispute could harm their common interests and undermine their authority (Barnett, 1993). In the MENA region, for instance, regional organisations (e.g., the Arab League) were initially founded on ideological principles, such as Arabism. This concept, firmly rooted in a shared Arabic identity and the Arabic language as a central element of cooperation, guided early regional cooperative efforts (Lynch, 2012, p. 158). The Arab League, established in Alexandria in 1945, was arguably the first central regional-based institutional entity dedicated to promoting Arab nationalism. However, a series of events that transpired in the last three decades, such as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the subsequent military intervention by foreign superpowers, namely the United States and its NATO allies such as the United Kingdom and Canada have created significant divisions within the MENA region, not only weakening

the cohesion among members but also challenging the Arabism ideology (Altoraifi, 2012; Kramer, 1993; Heacock, 2010).

The aforementioned regional institutions mainly were based on state systems and jurisdictional connections, which ultimately clashed with the pan-Arabist ideology (Nonneman, 1993). A persistent lack of trust and a significant ideological divide have long characterised the relationship, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, between the so-called progressive leadership of Arab republics, such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, and the traditional Arab monarchies, including Saudi Arabia and Morocco. While state concerns and nationalism eventually overshadowed Pan-Arabism, the concept of Arabism continued to retain its ideological influence within these organisations (Sawani, 2012). Additionally, the Arab League was initially shaped by regional rivalries, disputes, and what often seemed like perpetual disagreements among Arab governments, influenced by both external and internal factors (Hasou, 1985). Historical agreements, such as those between certain Arab countries and Israel, often exacerbated disputes and widened disparities rather than fostering cooperation (Wolf, 2007).

Additionally, during the height of the Pan-Arabism era, significant tensions existed between countries like Egypt, Syria, and Iraq and the monarchies of the Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and the Emirates over regional leadership issues (Selim, 2020). Moreover, the lack of regional integration resulting from the weakness arose from a lack of confidence and trust among member countries, largely due to perceptions that certain regimes, most notably Egypt, dominated the Arab League. When Gamal Abdel Nasser governed Egypt in the 1950s and early 1960s, and after 1976, when al-Assad assumed power in Syria, there was a noticeable retreat from collective policymaking, as both leaders sought to dominate the league (Khadduri, 2001). This apparent power imbalance played a significant role in the Arab League's failure to foster greater unity among Arab states. These discords illustrate the complex interplay of ideological and geopolitical factors that have impacted the effectiveness of regional integration in the Arab world.

The discussions above allow for several conclusions. Various regional research projects have identified and studied elements and features likely to shape the contours of an emerging “new regionalism” or regional cooperation (see, for example, Burfisher et al., 2004; Chapra, 2001; Das, 2004; de Hanlon, 2011; Devlin & Estevadiordal, 2001; Ethier, 1998a, 1998b; Evans et al., 2004; Mansfield & Milner, 1999; Söderbaum, 2001; Telo, 2014; Tsardanidis, 2005; Tsardanidis, 1997; Vayrynen, 2003). The key challenge lies in converting or transforming these features into measurable indicators. Therefore, this article aims to implement these features by developing specific indicators for each one.

Despite widespread academic interest in the topic, no consensus on a definition of regionalism has been reached. Most analysts examine the Arab League and associate it with regionalism, or concentrate on particular states rather than the entire MENA region. Due to historical events and rivalries, collaboration among MENA countries appears to remain in its early stages. While many studies examine the dynamics and variables that define regionalism, they often focus on external factors (Warleigh, 2006). Consequently, little research has investigated and analysed the MENA region in relation to common features of regionalism. Furthermore, the MENA region has not received the same level of generalisation as other global blocs. Most previous studies have discussed the MENA region while concentrating on individual countries or sub-regions, such as the GCC countries, as reflected in the works of Marcel and Mitchell (2006) and Rivlin (2009). However, no comprehensive studies evaluate regionalism as a cohesive bloc encompassing all MENA countries, akin to the approaches taken in Europe, Asia, and North America. This research aims to address this gap.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Understanding the regional context is critical in recognising the typical elements underlying the issue of regionalism in MENA in this study. This study draws on many sources, including official reports, data, and documents from the Arab League, Arab Development Portal Statistics, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and data from member countries. It also utilises official documents issued by the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the United Nations (such as the Human Development Reports). This analysis seeks to comprehend the functions and processes of regionalism in MENA. The sources are scholarly books, journal articles, earlier surveys, and periodicals. Some databases, such as the World Bank, UNDP and UNCTAD, were used to evaluate the level of regionalism in a particular MENA region. This can be done by researching the statistics of the relevant countries, such as the import and export rates for each country in specific years, and then calculating the overall percentage of imports and exports within the region. Nonetheless, it is essential to establish the theoretical aspects of regionalism before proceeding to study it.

Second, in certain instances, evaluating intra-regional collaboration in the MENA region requires access to publicly available data. Existing databases, however, frequently have a national or inter-regional scope (Schulz, 2011). To address this issue, data from individual MENA area countries must be recalculated and combined to produce intra-regional data for the entire region (Schulz, 2011). The study made a comparison between the MENA region and other regions in the world to show the level and extent of progress of cooperation, such as in the case of the export of goods and services. Despite differences in capacities and structures among regions, the commitment and willingness to cooperate can be quantified to highlight achievements and compare them with other regions.

Third, various indicators, including import-export, investment, and tariff reduction, have been employed to evaluate the significance of regional integration processes. Consequently, regional formations that score high on indicators of regionalism tend to have a high level of collaboration within the region. Initially, data were obtained from national statistics offices, international institutions, research centres, and private companies. The information is then reorganised into notes and tables, grouped to discern patterns by linking the groups together for a comprehensive description. The reason for limiting the time frame of this study to 1990-2018 is that the “new regionalism” era began at the end of the 1980s, and most of the data used were only available in the 1990s. The researcher utilised a set of indicators for each feature, as follows, namely, the proportion of imports and exports among MENA nations, to analyse the current status of regionalism in MENA and clarify the amount of cooperation, whether weak or strong. In addition to GDP and gross national income, the researcher provided other indicators of development in MENA nations.

Indicators of “New Regionalism” Features

Although each feature of “new regionalism” is unique, a set of common criteria can be used to identify the key indicators of this concept (De Lombaerde, 2005). Anderson (1991, p. 45) outlines the appropriate criteria for these indicators: 1) indicators should be easily obtainable or made accessible promptly and affordably; 2) indicators should be relatively simple to comprehend; 3) indicators should measure something relevant or noteworthy in itself, or should reflect or symbolize such relevance; and 4) indicators should be based on data that can be compared across geographical regions and countries. Geographic closeness, trade liberalisation, interdependence, non-discrimination, and unilateral reform

in economics are aspects of the “new regionalism” examined in this research. Each feature will provide indications based on the parameters specified.

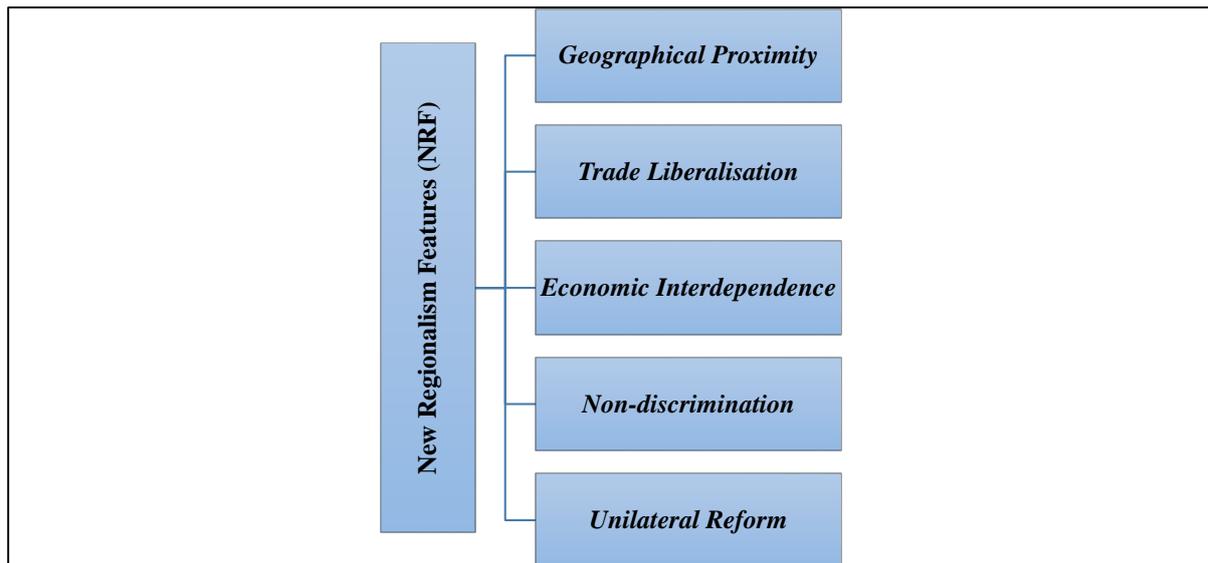
The “new regionalism” is based on geographical proximity, as well as non-discriminatory and trade liberalisation principles, to establish greater collaboration and cooperation in economic affairs and open up opportunities for countries at various levels of development. Geographical proximity is one of the key factors that could sustain regional cooperation (Ethier, 2001; Robst et al., 2006; Starr, 2005). Increased engagement opens up new avenues for international collaboration. Trade liberalisation is essential to the “new regionalism” (Donegan, 2006; Findlay, 2004, p. 95). Additionally, contemporary regionalism emphasises the increasing interconnectedness of regional economies (Hufbauer & Wong, 2005; Petri, 2006). The inclusion of nations at various stages of development demonstrates that the “new regionalism” is founded on the principles of non-discrimination and non-exclusivity (Mistry, 1995). Countries should undertake significant adjustments and unilateral reforms as part of the “new regionalism” (Ethier, 2001).

RESULTS

Different sources and works on regionalism suggested that the following features characterise new regionalism in any region. Figure (1) shows the major features of new regionalism.

Figure 1

New Regionalism Features



Source. Created by the author.

Geographical Proximity is the most frequently used and crucial factor in overcoming spatial separation between participating nations to foster practical and active collaboration and integration (Ethier, 1998; 2001). The countries of the MENA region are relatively close in geographical proximity. Geographical proximity refers to the physical distance between states, measured by their relative closeness or distance from each other. States with continuous borders have the most regional connections (Starr, 2005).

Geographical proximity can serve as both a strength and a challenge for the countries in the MENA region. For example, it can facilitate trade and transportation, allowing for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of resources. Robst, Polachek, and Chang (2006) assert that connected nations engage more as a result. Greater interactions, however, also increase the likelihood of conflicts of interest, which can fuel increased competition and conflict. These conflict orientations are opposed to neo-liberal ideologies, which hold that there should be less conflict the more trade there is between neighbouring nations. This creates a paradox: proximity, on the one hand, causes conflict, yet proximity, on the other hand, promotes trade cooperation, which, according to some views, particularly those of neoliberalism, reduces conflict.

Trade Liberalisation: Eliminating barriers and easing investment are significant indicators of liberalisation. First, liberalisation and free trade occur when parties reduce cross-border obstacles to trading (tariff reduction) and investment on a preferential basis. Second, the investment climate improves for growth when cooperation encourages investment by eliminating non-tariff and other administrative barriers (Donegan, 2006; Findlay & Pangestu, 2007, p. 98). The primary goal of liberalisation and free trade is to promote economic development and growth that can be mutually beneficial to the involved parties.

Economic Interdependence: A central idea in both new and old literature on regional integration (Fink & Krapohl, 2010) is that economic interdependence is at the heart of integration dynamics. “New Regionalism” emphasises the regional management of a greater degree of economic connectivity. *Interdependence* is a characteristic in which natural or policy obstacles to trade with some partners are lower than with others. Economic ties and partnerships are more substantial with certain countries than with others (Petri, 2006). Regional trading is beneficial according to traditional and contemporary trade theories (Fink & Krapohl, 2010; Haas, 1958; Krugman, 1980; Mattli, 1999; Obermeier, 2009) because it permits the utilisation of cost benefits, flexibility and economies of scale. Increases in economic interdependence may strengthen calls for regional trade liberalisation.

Increasing imports and exports within a geographical area is a fundamental sign of regional interdependence. Short-term export-based development, however, does not lead to an increase in economic interdependence. Instead, a sustained inflow of exports and imports to neighbouring countries is an essential hallmark of successful regional interdependence (Fink & Krapohl, 2010). Only when exports and imports increase the region's economic interdependence, which may result from economic development, can the regionalism process be considered effective in the long run (Sun et al, 2002).

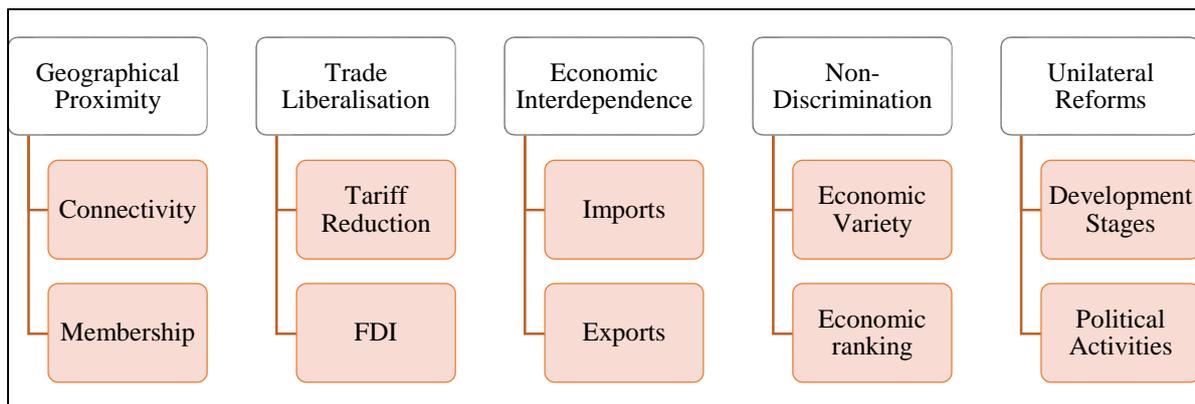
Non-Discrimination: There are two key indicators of the non-discrimination principle. The first is that interaction across countries with different levels of development is conceivable within the same organisation. The second pertains to the conduct of economic activities when foreign enterprises and corporations are subject to laws, regulations, and guidelines that are not less favourable than those of the host country. Large and small countries, as well as rich and poor countries, can join a regional organisation, according to the doctrine of “new regionalism”. Mistry (1995) provides examples of countries at different stages of development to show what non-discrimination or non-exclusion means.

Non-discrimination became a distinctive feature of treaty-based international economic law, particularly in the areas of foreign direct investment protection and international trade regulation. It was primarily established under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and serves as the guiding concept of the WTO (Mahfud, 2013).

Unilateral Reforms: Another hallmark of the “new regionalism” is the need for governments to implement extensive unilateral reforms. Unilateral reform refers to policy changes implemented by a single country without the involvement or agreement of other countries. It applies, for example, to Mexico under NAFTA. Even more remarkable is the example of Central European members in European Agreements who abandoned communism. To a lesser extent, it is also characterised by the engagement of developing nations in numerous regional efforts (Ethier, 2001). Using the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) to assess reform in MENA countries is advantageous. According to the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), there are five stages of development: Stage 1, the transition from Stage 1 to Stage 2; Stage 2, the transition from Stage 2 to Stage 3; and Stage 3. Figure (2) summarises the above results and highlights the indicators of new regionalism features.

Figure 2

The Indicators of “New Regionalism” Features



Source. Created by the author.

DISCUSSIONS

Numerous variables are used to analyse regionalism in the MENA region. Significant elements include geographic proximity, trade liberalisation, economic interdependence, non-discrimination, and unilateral reform. Applying these qualities to the MENA region allows for a degree of regional collaboration. These features have been studied independently since 1990, as exemplified in the work by Ethier (2001), Starr (2005), and Petri (2006).

Assessing regionalism in the MENA region since 1990 is crucial for several reasons. First, the end of the Cold War brought about significant shifts in the global political landscape, leading to the emergence of new transformative dynamics, particularly with the rise of globalisation. Globalisation has increasingly interconnected the world and its regions, making cooperation on economic matters more imperative than ever. These developments greatly influenced the MENA region, and knowing how regionalism emerged in this setting is critical for understanding the region's current situation.

Second, the region experienced profound upheaval in the 1990s, marked by significant events such as the Gulf War of 1991 and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, both of which dramatically altered regional power dynamics. These events not only plunged the region into turmoil but also led to new patterns of cooperation and alliance formation among regional players (Gause, 2005; Hinnebusch, 2006).

Geopolitical shifts have been crucial in shaping regional dynamics in the MENA, as evident in the collaboration between Egypt and the Gulf countries, and the sympathies of nations such as Algeria, Sudan, and Libya, among others, toward Iraq.

Ultimately, both internal and international politics in the MENA region have arguably undergone significant evolution during the 1990s. This includes the establishment of authoritarian governments, the expansion of political Islam, and the emergence of new economic and social challenges. Understanding how these changes have impacted regionalism is crucial for comprehending the region's current situation and its future prospects. Table (2) shows the cooperation achievement of regional indicators.

Table 2

Cooperation Achievement of Regional Indicators

Features	Indicators	Cooperation Achievement
Geographical Proximity	Relative geographical proximity.	Linked to and (mostly) associated with at least three regional institutions
	The affiliation in one or more regional or sub-regional organisations.	
Trade Liberalisation	Tariffs Reduction.	Slow tariffs reduction and very low FDI.
	Foreign Direct Investments (FDI).	
Economic Interdependence	1) Import.	Very low import-export among members. Import: 6.5% Export: 8.5%
	2) Export.	
Non-discrimination	Different levels of development within an organisation.	Economies are affiliated with five major regional organisations. Four are open to lower and upper middle income, except for GCC, which is open to only high-income economies.
	The affiliation in different organisations within the region.	
Unilateral Reform	Stages of development based on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI).	Most MENA countries are between the second and third stages of development. The political systems and activities have been the same for a long period of time.
	Political Activities.	

Source. The authors generated this using different sources, such as the WTO (2019), the World Bank, UNDP (2019), UNCTAD and the World Economic Forum (2018), and GCC (2019).

Geographic Proximity: The interdependence of the MENA region can be assessed through its geographical proximity. The MENA countries mainly share a border with at least one member country of another regional organisation. Regional and sub-regional organisations in the MENA zone include the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Maghreb Union, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and the Turkish-Arab Cooperation Forum. Due to their geographical proximity, almost every MENA nation is a member of at least one regional cooperation organisation. The degree of physical closeness illustrates the interconnectedness of MENA nations, as does their involvement in at least three regional organisations.

The MENA region is more than just physical proximity; the complexity of economic and political relations among countries such as Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran adds another layer of depth. While these nations are diverse in their cultural and political landscapes, they are economically interconnected, making developments in one country likely to have a spillover effect on others. For instance, Turkey serves as a key link between the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe, functioning as a vital economic exchange route among these regions. Geographically and as a predominantly Muslim nation with close ties to the Arab world, Turkey's role in regional commerce is pivotal. This association should continue to strengthen its commercial connections with its MENA neighbours (Carkoglu et al., 1998).

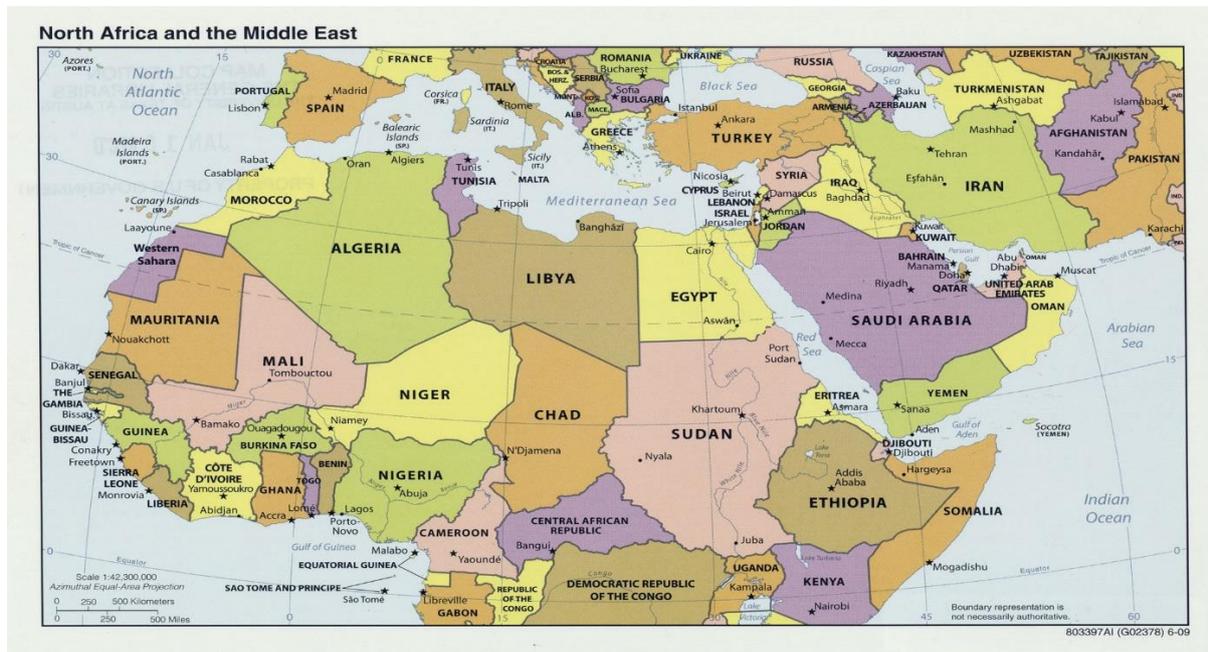
Trade, energy cooperation, and investment flows are actively occurring among member countries, reflecting the natural advantages of geographical proximity. This closeness facilitates economic collaboration and mutual growth, making it easier for these nations to engage in shared ventures. As the map below illustrates, this geographical proximity influences economic dynamics within the MENA region by enhancing connectivity and fostering smoother interactions between countries.

As illustrated in the map above, the MENA is divided into many smaller regions, each with its own distinct characteristics. These regions include the Maghreb Union, the Persian Gulf, Turkey, and the Levant. The Levant, comprising Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinian territories, is generally considered a critical region due to its extensive and close connections to Europe and the Mediterranean. These sub-regions also represent the human geography and interdependence of the countries in the MENA region.

Geographic closeness, on the other hand, may contribute to disputes and tensions between nations in the region. Disputes over natural resources, such as water or hydrocarbons like petroleum and natural gas, may arise when nations share borders or are geographically adjacent. For instance, conflicts between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq over water resources, with each state competing for control of either the Tigris or Euphrates rivers, serve as a 'proxy' for the geo-hydraulic connection. Such a connection encourages intra-national disputes (Kibaboglu, 2002). Moreover, living so near might increase the risk of political and ideological disagreements escalating into violence, like the political issues between Morocco and Algeria, Egypt and Sudan over water, and recently between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, as Iran wanted to spread the Shia ideology to Yemen (Behnassi, 2021; Zerafa, 2020).

Map 1

Middle East and North Africa Region: A Geographical Proximity



Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection (2021).

The League of Arab States is a bloc comprising 20 MENA nations. The Turkish-Arab Cooperation Forum is another regional forum in which all 20 nations are members in addition to Turkey. A few governments from the MENA region are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Maghreb Union, and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Except for Iran, which continues to try to join at least one regional organisation, all MENA countries are also members of many sub-regional or regional organisations. On the other hand, states like Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco are members of a number of regional and sub-regional groups, notably the Maghreb Union and the African Union.

Geographical proximity in the MENA region presents a complex mix of cooperation and conflict. While regional and sub-regional organisations, such as the Arab League and the Maghreb Union, help member states address security challenges, their ability to act is limited by longstanding political differences and resource-based disputes. Fragmented institutional arrangements further complicate cooperation, often excluding key regional players, such as Iran and Turkey (Perthes, 2018). Iran, for example, seeks to expand its ideological influence in the region, which has turned geographical proximity into a perceived threat for some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Syria. This intricate dynamic suggests that, despite the geographical closeness, deeply entrenched national interests and regional pressures hinder genuine cooperation, even with clearly defined state borders. Table (3) illustrates and summarises the above discussions on the main regional and sub-regional organisations in the MENA region.

Table 3

The Main Regional and Sub-Regional Organisations in the MENA Region

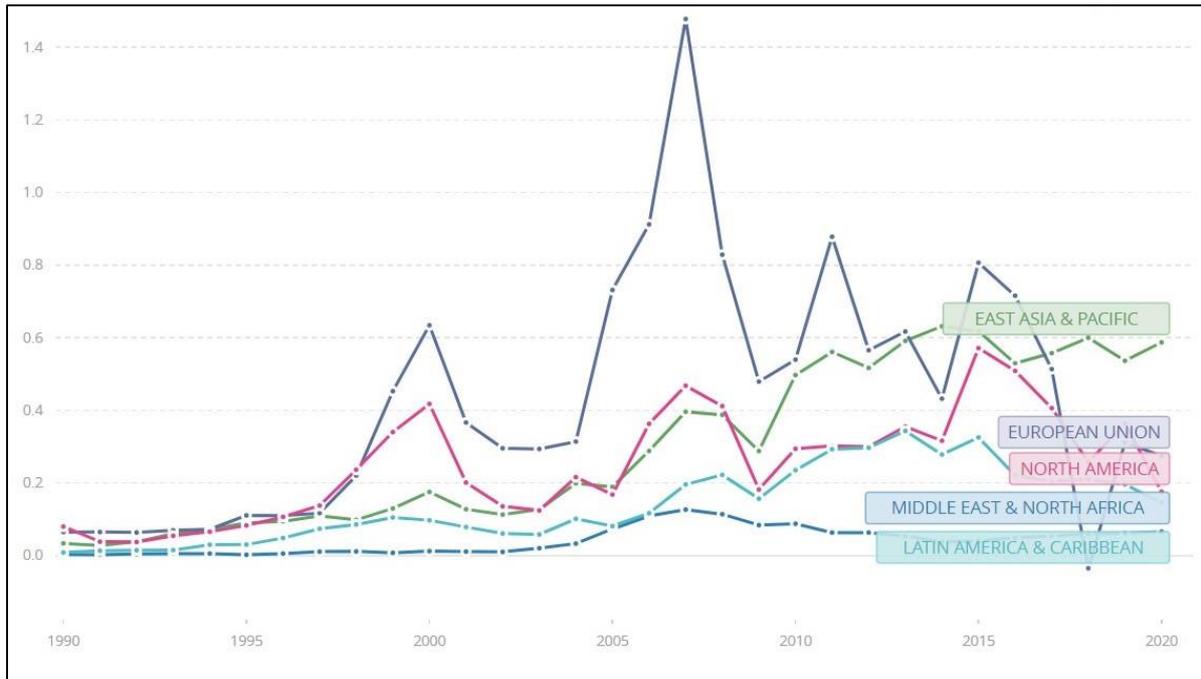
Countries	League of Arab States (LAS)	Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)	Maghreb Union	Euro-Mediterranean partnership	Turkish-Arab Cooperation Forum
Year of Foundation	1945	1981	1989	1994	2007
Algeria	✓		✓	✓	✓
Bahrain	✓	✓			✓
Djibouti	✓				✓
Egypt	✓			✓	✓
Iraq	✓				✓
Jordan	✓			✓	✓
Kuwait	✓	✓			✓
Lebanon	✓			✓	✓
Libya	✓		✓		✓
Mauretania	✓		✓		✓
Morocco	✓		✓	✓	✓
Oman	✓	✓			✓
Qatar	✓	✓			✓
Saudi Arabia	✓	✓			✓
Sudan	✓				✓
Syria	✓				✓
Tunisia	✓		✓	✓	✓
Turkey				✓	✓
The UAE	✓				✓
Palestine	✓			✓	✓
Yemen	✓				✓
MENA (Total)	20	5	5	8	21

Source. The World Bank Report, 2012; 2013.

Trade Liberalisation: According to the World Bank (2020), the average decline in tariffs among MENA countries between 1990 and 2018 was 10%. In terms of FDI, the contributions amount to less than 0.6% of the region's total FDI. Both variables, tariff reduction and FDI inflows, demonstrate and reflect a moderate decline in tariffs and extremely low FDI inflows. Figure 3 compares investment in the MENA region to other regions across the globe from 1990 to 2020. The MENA region was the least enticing for investment after South America. Low FDI indicates that the region is not appealing enough for investment, implying that trade liberalisation is insecure. With little foreign direct investment and delayed tariff reductions, the MENA region risks obstructing trade and economic integration.

Figure 3

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), MENA Region, 1990-2020



Source: The World Bank (2022).

Trade liberalisation in the MENA region has been a primary policy goal for many countries in the region, as it has the potential to provide several advantages, including higher economic development, job creation, and access to a broader range of products and services.

Yet, liberalisation involves several challenges that must be addressed for it to be successful. For example, several nations in the MENA region need more extensive infrastructure, such as ports, motorways, and rail networks, making commodity transportation difficult. Capital access is restricted. Many SMEs in the region require assistance to access capital, making it challenging for them to participate in regional and global commerce (Algan, 2018). Certain nations in the region are prone to political instability and violence, which may lead to confusion and make doing business difficult. The MENA region has limited trade agreements with other regions and within the region, making it challenging for businesses to access markets outside their own nation. Several countries in the region demand higher-skilled labour (human capital), making it harder for businesses to find the individuals needed to participate in international commerce.

The extent and depth of regionalism in the MENA region appear not to be as significant or closely tied to trade. Despite the protectionism in the regions, trade liberalisation has been just as a policy goal, not as a practice. Also, the reduction of tariffs is very moderate, and there is a low level of foreign Direct Investment FDI among MENA countries compared to outside the region. The MENA region continues to be less conducive to investment than other regions globally, suggesting that there are obstacles to trade liberalisation. Limited trade deals with other countries mean less export potential, underdeveloped institutions that affect their transparency and ability to operate within the rule of law, and low investment. This limits the region's capacity to develop tighter economic connections among

themselves, as well as with those farther afield. Therefore, the MENA region has been unable to progress towards broader objectives due to these trade limitations.

Economic Interdependence: This feature is based on a combination of import and export indicators. The average percentage of imports across MENA economies is 6.5%, and for exports, it is 8.6% from 1990 to 2018 (World Bank, 2018). The combined average for both imports and exports is almost 7.5%. It reveals that most import and export activities focus more on markets outside the region (nearly 92%). This scenario indicates a lack of import-export activities among countries and, therefore, is a sign of non-economic interdependency.

Table 4

Imports of Goods and Services (US\$) MENA Comparing to Other Regions in the World

Region	Most Recent Year	Most Recent Value (Millions)
East Asia & Pacific	2021	8,146,185.99
European Union	2021	8,009,959.60
North America	2020	3,293,093.19
Latin America & Caribbean	2021	1,541,941.88
Middle East and North Africa	2020	1,082,934.21

Source. The World Bank (2022).

Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate that the MENA region was the least developed in terms of goods and services imports and exports compared to other regions worldwide. This is because the region is less competitive, and as previously stated, a lack of FDI and high tariffs may make imports and exports more difficult. Additional factors may be found in the security challenges of the MENA region. Civil unrest, terrorism, and military intervention in MENA have all impacted the manufacturing and supply chains of several nations. For instance, instability in states such as Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Yemen results in severe disruptions to transport, sensitive supply chains, and the migration of workforces, forcing firms to reconsider their logistics or develop new sourcing strategies to avoid such threats. Such political instability leads to an unstable situation where these corporations can hardly predict the availability of raw materials and finished goods, making it difficult for them to meet the deadlines they set and/or budgets they plan (Maher, 2013).

Table 5

Export of Goods and Services (US\$) MENA Compared to Other Regions in the World

Region	Most Recent Year	Most Recent Value (Millions)
East Asia & Pacific	2021	8,968,178.61
European Union	2021	8,670,630.91
North America	2020	2,609,975.40
Latin America & Caribbean	2021	1,513,761.70
Middle East and North Africa	2020	1,119,245.36

Source. The World Bank Data (2022).

The table provides regional economic information, showing the economic volume of specific areas. The most significant regional contribution is the East Asia & Pacific at 8.97 trillion, with the EU second at around 8.67 trillion. North America stands third at 2.61 trillion, and Latin America & Caribbean at 1.51 trillion. The Middle East and North Africa scored the lowest at 1.12 trillion dollars.

Although economic interconnectedness has numerous benefits, including increased economic development and job creation, it also presents certain risks and obstacles. The following are some of the risks and obstacles linked with economic interdependence in the MENA region. Numerous nations in the MENA region, like the Gulf countries, are sensitive to changes in the global oil market due to their reliance on oil exports. This poses a risk for economically linked nations, as economic shocks in one nation can harm others. The economies of the countries in the region depend too heavily on a few industries, such as oil and gas, which makes them vulnerable to economic shocks. Some countries in the region heavily depend on just a few major markets for their exports, which could pose a problem if these markets experience economic or other issues.

Regionalism in the MENA region is characterised by low and fragmented economic interdependence, with intraregional trade representing just 7.5% of the region's import-export activities. Most trade is directed toward external markets rather than within the region itself. This low level of interdependence is further exacerbated by the region's heavy reliance on the oil and gas sectors, which are highly exposed to market risks. Since many countries in the region produce nearly similar commodities and resources, there is little diversity in products available for trade within the region. While regionalism - marked by a sense of shared identity and interest in fostering economic cooperation - does exist, it has not translated into deeper levels of trade integration. This limited interdependence makes the region more vulnerable to external shocks and hinders collective growth among the states.

Non-Discrimination: There is no distinction in membership between MENA nations based on their GDP, GDP per capita, or global economic position. Several regional and subregional entities integrate the diverse economic levels of the MENA states. Among the five major regional organisations - Arab League, Maghreb Union, GCC, Turkish-Arab Cooperation Forum, and Euro-Mediterranean Partnership—only the GCC has a comparable economy and a substantial source of revenue. The remainder of the lower—and upper-middle-income economies, excluding the GCC, belong to the same regional organisations.

Table 6 categorises the MENA economies based on GDP and revenue. The first group comprises the six GCC countries with the greatest per capita GDP. Some MENA countries fall under the second group. Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey are the nations classified as upper-middle-income countries. The third category, which has a lower middle income, includes the majority of MENA countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Djibouti, Mauritania, Yemen, Sudan, Syria, and the Palestinian territories. This illustrates that MENA nations are divided into separate groups, yet there is no discrimination in terms of joining organisations.

Table 6

Income Group of MENA Economies (2023)

Higher Developed Income	Upper Middle Income	Lower Middle Income
GCC Countries	Algeria, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Morocco, and Turkey	Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Djibouti, Mauritania, Yemen, Sudan, Syria, and Palestine.

Source. World Bank Classification of Economies (2023).

Unilateral Reform: The table below displays the level of collaboration in the MENA region based on regional indicators. The general extent of political activity towards reform remains low compared to other regions, like the European Union and ASEAN. Most governments in the MENA region are at Stage 2 or below on the development scale. This demonstrates that change in all facets of development necessitates substantial unilateral reform, particularly for nations with low development ratings, such as Mauritania, Yemen, Iraq, Sudan, and Libya. Table 7 below displays the level of collaboration in the MENA region based on regional indicators.

Table 7

Stages of Development in the MENA Region till 2018

Stage 1	Transition from 1 to 2	Stage 2	Transition from 2 to 3	Stage 3
Mauritania, Yemen	Algeria, Kuwait	Egypte, Iran, Jordan, Morroco, Tunisia, Lebanon	Oman, Turkey, Saudi Arabia	Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates

Source. Global Competitiveness Index Report, 2017–2018 (2018).

The MENA region is still struggling politically, with the majority, if not all, MENA countries struggling to create political legitimacy and popular trust. This is also because the region has witnessed a series of events, such as the Arab Spring, that have compelled political regimes to focus increasingly on military and security matters rather than developing a fair democratic system capable of facilitating internal and regional integration. The aftermath of the Arab Spring in Egypt, for example, shifted the focus toward military and security matters at the expense of democratic reforms. This resulted in a regime that prioritised stability over political inclusivity, disrupting internal cohesion and contributing to regional disintegration (Brown, 2014).

The MENA region may face severe challenges and risks if it undertakes unilateral reform in economic and development areas. Some of these obstacles include: 1) the absence of unilateral reforms can disrupt trade patterns and create uncertainty for companies that rely on exports or imports from the country without reform. 2) Uncertainty would question foreign investors before stepping up and investing in some countries that go on their own with significant policy changes without any consideration of the realities of investments and trade. 3) Unilateral reforms may result in political risks such as border disputes or other forms of interstate conflict. 4) Benefits of the reforms implemented by one country may vary from those that are enacted in other countries. For instance, a country can gain various benefits

from its trading partners by reducing its tariffs. 5) Investment: unilateral reforms in regional support may have less than half the benefits of those done on a multilateral basis. This, in turn. Gives rise to a reforming nation, making it more challenging to obtain the required resources and assistance to implement them.

When discussing regionalism in the MENA region, it is essential to consider how contemporary nation-states emerged. Regionalism is the belief that nations in the same region should collaborate and become more integrated. This is usually done to strengthen economic, political, and cultural ties between countries in the same region. Nation-building and the rise of modern states have not always been easy in the MENA region (Kirmanj, 2020). In the early period following their independence, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania, for instance, inherited borders from the colonial era that often did not align with the ethnic, cultural, or economic realities on the ground. This situation has led to conflicts and tensions within and between states, making it difficult for the region to move forward towards cooperation.

Furthermore, the region's history of colonialism, interference from outside powers, and economic problems has led to a lack of trust and competition between states, making it more difficult for regionalism to grow. Despite these challenges, some groups in the MENA region, such as the Arab League and the GCC, have attempted to collaborate. However, these efforts have frequently needed to be expanded in scope and effectiveness to include other sub-regions and countries. Even though the GCC countries have experienced some disputes, such as in 2017, when Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates decided to cut relations with Qatar. Still, the GCC is the most successful sub-regional organisation that can spread the collaboration model to other MENA countries and sub-regions (Mosteanu, 2019). Overall, the process of establishing modern governments in the MENA region has had a profound impact on regionalism and will continue to shape the region's future.

CONCLUSION

Regional cooperation must be established so nations may build on each other rather than wasting money on trade diversion and resource misallocation. Increased economic cooperation will require efforts such as eliminating tariffs and other economic obstacles, accepting foreign direct investment, and making fundamental changes in how things are done. To make the region's nations more equal, the region's imports and exports must be increased, and economic discrimination must be prohibited. When modern theories of regionalism are applied to the MENA region, they reveal that it is one of the least connected regions in the global economy. On the other hand, East Asian nations that have lately embraced a new regionalist strategy, at the same time as the MENA region, have seen significant increases in trade and development. The extent of regional cooperation can be measured by applying these qualities to the MENA region. Despite numerous positive signals of regionalism in the MENA, such as physical proximity and non-discriminatory behaviour, the region lacks genuine regionalism. It is distinguished by a weak and inefficient trade liberalisation process, a low level of regional import-export, and ambiguous unilateral changes, which contribute to the country's prolonged underdevelopment.

Geographic proximity is representative of the connectivity between MENA nations, as each MENA nation shares a border with at least one other nation. Regarding regional and sub-regional organisations in MENA, nearly all MENA nations belong to more than two regional institutions. Until recently, the average drop in tariffs across MENA nations was minimal. Regarding FDI, investments continue to account for less than 1 % of global FDI. This result reflects the gradual reduction in tariffs and the

extremely low FDI. Concerning economic interdependence, the combined total of imports and exports reveals that most originate from outside the region, suggesting an extremely low import-export ratio among members. Additionally, most low- and upper-middle-income economies are members of regional organisations. In most MENA nations, the level of development is Stage 2. Therefore, achieving a significant unilateral change is imperative, especially for countries like Mauritania, Yemen, Iraq, Libya, and Iran, which have very low development scores. As a result, the MENA region must prioritise all of the discussed indicators to achieve development by implementing new regionalism.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

REFERENCES

- Aarts, P. (1999). The Middle East: A region without regionalism or the end of exceptionalism? *Third World Quarterly*, 20(5), 911–925. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599913406>
- Aboyade, A. S. (2018). States' attitude to international boundaries and Africa's challenging integration: Cues from pre-1945 Europe. *Journal of International Studies*, 14, 1-21. <https://e-journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/jis/article/view/jis2018.14.1>
- Agarwal, M. (2004). Regional trading arrangements in the era of globalization: An Indian perspective. *International Studies*, 41(4), 411-423. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002088170404100404>
- Alesina, A., & La Ferrara, E. (2005). Ethnic diversity and economic performance. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 43(3), 762-800. <https://doi.org/10.1257/002205105774431243>
- Algan, N. (2019, June). The importance of SMEs on world economies. In *Proceedings of International Conference on Eurasian Economies, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus* (Vol. 12, pp. 56-61).
- Altoraifi, A. (2012). *Understanding the role of state identity in foreign policy decision-making: The rise and demise of Saudi-Iranian rapprochement (1997–2009)*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Anderson, K., & Blackhurst, R. (1993). *Regional integration and the global trading system*. Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Arab Development Portal. (2018). *Assessing Arab Economic Integration: Trade in Services as a Driver of Growth and Development*. Arab Development Portal. <https://www.arabdevelopmentportal.com/publication/assessing-arab-economic-integration-trade-services-driver-growth-and-development>
- Arab Development Portal. (2019). *Statistical Yearbook, 2018*. Arab Development Portal. <https://www.arabdevelopmentportal.com/indicator/trade>
- Attina, F. (2003). The Euro–Mediterranean partnership assessed: The realist and liberal views. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 8(2), 181-199. <https://kluwerlawonline.com/journalarticle/European%20Foreign%20Affairs%20Review/8.2/25537>
- Axelrod, R. (1984). *The evolution of cooperation*. Basic Books.
- Axline, A. (Ed.). (1994). *The political economy of regional cooperation: Comparative case studies*. Pinter Publishers.
- Baldwin, R. (2008). Big-think regionalism: A critical survey. *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series, 14056*. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w14056>

- Baldwin, R. E. (2006). *Globalization: The great unbundling(s)*. Economic Council of Canada.
- Baldwin-Edwards, M. (2006). 'Between a rock & a hard place': North Africa as a region of emigration, immigration & transit migration. *Review of African political economy*, 33(108), 311-324.
- Barakat, H. (1993). *The Arab world: Society, culture, and state*. University of California Press.
- Barnett, M. (1993). Institutions, roles, and disorder: The case of the Arab States System. *International Studies Quarterly*, 37(3), 271–296. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600809>
- Baylis, J., Smith, S., & Owens, P. (Eds.). (2007). *The globalization of world politics: An introduction to international relations* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Beeson, M., & Jayasuriya, K. (1998). The political rationalities of regionalism: APEC and the EU in comparative perspective. *The Pacific Review*, 11(3), 311-336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512749808719260>
- Behnassi, M. (2021). The nexus of environment, climate, conflict, and security. In *The societies of the Middle East and North Africa* (pp. 201-228). Routledge.
- Bende-Nabende, A. (2002). *Globalization, FDI, regional integration and sustainable development*. Ashgate.
- Bill, J. A. (1996). The study of Middle East politics, 1946-1996: A stocktaking. *Middle East Journal*, 50(4), 501–512. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4328986>
- Biscop, S. (2003). *Euro-Mediterranean security: A search for partnership*. Ashgate.
- Blake, G., Dewdney, J., & Mitchell, J. J. (1987). *The Cambridge atlas of the Middle East and North Africa*. Cambridge University Press.
- Breslin, S., Phillips, N., Hughes, C. W., & Rosamond, B. (2002). *New regionalisms in the global political economy*. Routledge.
- Brown, A. J., & Deem, J. (2014). A tale of two regionalisms: Improving the measurement of regionalism in Australia and beyond. *Regional Studies*, 50(7), 1154–1169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2014.980800>
- Buthe, T., & Milner, H. (2008). The politics of foreign direct investment into developing countries: Increasing FDI through international trade agreements? *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(4), 741-762. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2008.00340.x>
- Calleya, S. (2002). *Regionalism in the post-Cold War world*. Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Carkoglu, A., Eder, M., & Kirisci, K. (1998). *The political economy of regional cooperation in the Middle East*. Routledge.
- Castañer, X., & Oliveira, N. (2020). Collaboration, coordination, and cooperation among organizations: Establishing the distinctive meanings of these terms through a systematic literature review. *Journal of Management*, 46(6), 965-1001.
- Chatelus, M. (1996). Economic cooperation among Southern Mediterranean countries. In R. Aliboni, G. Joffe, & T. Niblock (Eds.), *Security challenges in the Mediterranean region* (pp. 83-113). Frank Cass.
- Cheta, O. Y. (2018). The economy by other means: The historiography of capitalism in the modern Middle East. *History Compass*, 16(4), e12444.
- Cini, M., & Borragán, N. P. S. (2019). *European Union politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Clark, A. M. (1995). Non-governmental organizations and their influence on international society. *Journal of International Affairs*, 48(2), 507-525. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24357601>
- Clawson, P. (1992). The limited scope for economic cooperation in the contemporary Levant. In S. L. Spiegel (Ed.), *The Arab-Israeli search for peace* (pp. 79-102). Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Collard-Wexler, S. (2006). Integration under anarchy: Neorealism and the European Union. *European Journal of International Relations*, 12(3), 397-432.
- Cooper, A. F., Hughes, C. W., & De Lombaerde, P. (2008). *Regionalisation and global governance*. Routledge.

- De Lombaerde, P. (2010). How to 'connect' micro-regions with macro-regions. *Perspectives on Federalism*, 2(3), 29-37.
- De Melo, J., & Panagariya, A. (1992). *The new regionalism in trade policy: An interpretive summary of a conference*. World Bank Publications. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/182401468780317236/The-new-regionalism-in-trade-policy-an-interpretive-summary-of-a-conference>
- De Melo, J., & Panagariya, A. (Eds.). (1995). *New dimensions in regional integration*. Cambridge University Press.
- Di Mauro, F., Dees, S., & McKibbin, W. J. (2008). *Globalisation, regionalism and economic interdependence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Donegan, B. (2006). Governmental regionalism: Power/knowledge and neoliberal regional. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 35(1), 117-138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298060350010601>
- Easterly, W., & Levine, R. (1997). Africa's growth tragedy: Policies and ethnic divisions. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 112(4), 1203-1250. <https://doi.org/10.1162/003355397555497>
- Echinard, Y., & Guilhot, L. (1994). Le nouveau régionalisme: De quoi parlons nous? *Annuaire Français de Relation International (AFRI), Ministère des affaires étrangères et européennes*. <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00194646>
- Estevadeordal, A., Fouquin, M., & Vodusek, Z. (2007). The new regionalism: Introduction. *Économie Internationale*, 2007(1), 5-19. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-economie-internationale-2007-1-page-5.htm>
- Ethier, W. J. (1998). Regionalism in a multilateral world. *Journal of Political Economy*, 106(6), 1214–1245. <https://doi.org/10.1086/250045>
- Ethier, W. J. (1998). The new regionalism. *The Economic Journal*, 108(449), 1149–1161. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2565673>
- Ethier, W. J. (2001). Regional regionalism. In Lahiri, S. (Ed.). *Regionalism and globalization: Theory and practice (1st ed.)* (pp. 23-35). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203183410>
- Farole, T., Rodríguez-Pose, A., & Storper, M. (2011). Cohesion policy in the European Union: Growth, geography, institutions. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49(5), 1089-1111.
- Farrell, M., & Hettne, B. (Eds.). (2005). *Global politics of regionalism: theory and practice*. Pluto Books.
- Fawcett, L. (2009). *International relations of the Middle East* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Fawcett, L., & Hurrell, A. (Eds.). (1995). *Regionalism in world politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Findlay, C. (2004). *Multilateral liberalisation of services trade and investment in a globalising world: Scope and limitations*. The Australian National University: National Europe Centre. Paper No. 55.
- Findlay, C., Pangestu, M., & Lee, R. C. (2007). Service sector reform options: the experience of China. In *China: Linking markets for growth*, 95. Asia Pacific Press.
- Fink, S., & Krapohl, S. (2010). *Assessing the impact of regional integration: Do regional trade institutions shape trade patterns?* The PSA Conference 2010 Panel “Networking International Politics: The Relational Element in International Relations”.
- Fischer, S. (1995). Prospects for regional integration in the Middle East. In J. De Melo & A. Panagariya (Eds.), *New dimensions in regional integration* (pp. 423-448). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511628511.026>
- Fischer, S., & El-Erian, M. A. (1996). Is MENA a region? The scope for regional integration. *IMF Working Papers*, 1996(030), A001. <https://doi.org/10.5089/9781451980363.001.A001>
- Fischer, S., Rodrik, D., & Tuma, E. (Eds.). (1993). *The economics of Middle East peace*. MIT Press.

- GCC. (2018). *GCC foreign trade*. GCC-STAD. <https://dp.gccstat.org/en/DataAnalysis?qL0BKMF58U2HLoA7g7fmbQ>
- GCC. (2018). *Statistics reports, international trade*. GCC-STAD. <https://gccstat.org/en/statistic/statistics/international-trade>
- Girod, D., & McCann, P. (2018). Globalization and regional economic development. *Regional Studies*, 52(8), 1087-1099. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2018.1468924>
- Gomaa, A. M. (1977). *The foundation of the League of Arab States*. Longman.
- Gonsalves, E. (2006). Regional cooperation in South Asia. *South Asian Survey*, 13(2), 203-209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097152310601300202>
- Grugel, J., & Hout, W. (1999). *Regionalism across the north-south divide*. Routledge.
- Guazzone, L. (1997). A map and some hypotheses for the future of the Middle East. In *The Middle East in global change: The politics and economics of interdependence versus fragmentation* (pp. 237-259). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Haas, E. B. (1958). The uniting of Europe and the uniting of Latin America. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 5, 315.
- Handley, G., Higgins, K., & Sharma, B. (2009). 'Poverty and poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa: An overview of key issues'. (Working Paper 299). London: ODI.
- Hasou, T.Y. (1985). *Struggle for the Arab World* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315829074>
- Hazbun, W. (2018). Regional powers and the production of insecurity in the Middle East. *Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture (MENARA) Working Papers*, 11.
- Hettne, B. (1994). *The new regionalism, implications for global development and international security*. UNU/WIDER.
- Hettne, B. (1995). *International political economy: Global understanding disorder*. Fernwood Publishing.
- Hettne, B. (1997). The Double Movement: Global market versus regionalism. In *The new realism: Perspectives on multilateralism and world order* (pp. 223-242). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Hettne, B. (2002). The Europeanisation of Europe: Endogenous and exogenous dimensions. *Journal of European Integration*, 24(4), 325-340.
- Hettne, B. (2004). The new regionalism revisited. In F. Söderbaum & T. M. Shaw (Eds.), *Theories of new regionalism* (pp. 21-38). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403938794_2
- Hettne, B. (2005). Beyond the 'new' regionalism. *New Political Economy*, 10(4), 543-571.
- Hettne, B., & Söderbaum, F. (2006). Regional cooperation: A tool for addressing regional and global challenges. In *International Task Force on Global Public Goods, Meeting Global Challenges: International Cooperation in the National Interest* (pp. 179-244). Stockholm.
- Higgott, R. (2006). International political institutions. In R. A. W. Rhodes, S. A. Binder, & B. A. Rockman (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions* (pp. 3-28). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199548460.001.0001>
- Hinnebusch, R. (2003). *The international politics of the Middle East*. Manchester University Press.
- Hurrell, A. (1995). Explaining the resurgence of regionalism in world politics. *Review of International Studies*, 21(4), 331-358.
- Kalaycioglu, S. (1996). Regional economic co-operation in the Middle East. *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, 1(2).
- Keohane, R. O. (1989). *International institutions and state power: Essays in international relations theory*. Westview Press.
- Kerr, M. H. (1969). Persistence of Regional Quarrels. *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, 29(3), 228-241. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1173200>

- Khadduri, M. (2001). *The Gulf War: The origins and implications of the Iraq-Iran conflict*. Oxford University Press.
- Kibaroglu, M. (2002). Turkey's triple-trouble: ESDP, Cyprus and Northern Iraq. *Insight Turkey*, 4(1), 49–58. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26300102>
- Kipper, J., & Saunders, H. (1991). *The Middle East in global perspective*. Routledge.
- Kirmanj, S. (2020). The Syrian conflict: Regional dimensions and implications. *Journal of International Studies*, 10, 57-75. <https://doi.org/10.32890/jis2020.10.4><https://doi.org/10.32890/jis2020.10.4>
- Klasen, S. (2018). The impact of gender inequality on economic performance in developing countries. *Annual Review of Resource Economics*, 10(1), 279-298. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-resource-100517-023429>
- Koester, U. (1986). Regional cooperation to improve food security in southern and eastern African countries. *Research Report (53)*. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/160818>
- Krishna, P., Mansfield, E. D., & Mathis, J. H. (2012). World Trade Report 2011. The WTO and Preferential Trade Agreements: From Co-Existence to Coherence by World Trade Organization, Geneva: World Trade Organization, 2011. *World Trade Review*, 11(2), 327–339. doi:10.1017/S1474745612000055
- Krugman, P. R., & Obstfeld, M. (2009). *International economics: Theory and policy* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Lake, D. A., Martin, L. L., & Risse, T. (2021). Challenges to the liberal order: Reflections on international organization. *International organization*, 75(2), 225-257.
- Lawson, T. (2003). *Reorienting economics* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203929964>
- Little, T. R. (1956). The Arab League: A reassessment. *Middle East Journal*, 10(2), 138-150. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4322798><https://www.jstor.org/stable/4322798>
- Louis, M., & Reinalda, B. (Eds.). (2013). *Routledge handbook of international organization*. London: Routledge.
- Lynch, G. (2012). *The sacred in the modern world: A cultural sociological approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Maher, S. (2013). *The Arab Spring and its impact on supply and production in global markets*. European Center for Energy and Resources Security (EUCERS), Strategy paper, (4), 2012-13.
- Mahfud. (2013). The discrimination under the principle of national treatment under the GATT and the GATS: De facto or de jure discrimination. *Indonesian Journal of International Law*, 11, 537.
- Mansfield, E. D., & Milner, H. V. (1999). The new wave of regionalism. *International Organization*, 53(3), 589-627. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081899551002>
- Marcel, V., & Mitchell, J. V. (2006). *Oil titans: National Oil companies in the Middle East*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Matthews, A. (2003). *Regional integration and food security in developing countries*. Agricultural Policy Support Service.
- Mistry, P. S. (1995). Open regionalism: Stepping stone or millstone toward an improved multilateral system? In *Regionalism and the global economy: The case of Latin America and the Caribbean*, 1-15.
- Mosteanu, N. R. (2019). Regional development and economic growth approach in Europe and GCC countries. *Ecoforum*, 8(2), 0-0.
- Nesadurai, H. E. S. (2003). *Globalisation, domestic politics and regionalism*. Routledge.
- Nolte, D. (2010). How to compare regional powers: Analytical concepts and research topics. *Review of International Studies*, 36(4), 881-901. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021051000135X>

- Nonneman, G. (1993). State, power and politics in the making of the modern Middle East. *International Affairs*, 69(2), 391-392.
- Nordhaus, William D. (December 2002). *The economic consequences of a war in Iraq*. NBER Working Paper No. w9361, National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=359302>
- Nye, J. S. (1968). *International regionalism*. Little Brown and Co.
- Owen, R. (1992). A new post-Cold War system? The Middle East in a realigned world. *Middle East Report*, (184), 2-6.
- Panagariya, A. (1998). The regionalism debate: An overview. *The World Economy*, 21(4), 477-511. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9701.00155>
- Perthes, V. (2018). Conflict and realignment in the Middle East. *Survival*, 60(3), 95-104.
- Petri, P. A. (2006). Is East Asia becoming more interdependent? *Journal of Asian Economics*, 17(3), 381-394. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asieco.2006.04.001>
- Quartey, P., Turkson, E., Abor, J. Y., & Iddrisu, A. M. (2017). Financing the growth of SMEs in Africa: What are the constraints to SME financing within ECOWAS? *Review of Development Finance*, 7(1), 18-28.
- Radaelli, C. M. (2023). Europeanization in public policy. In *Encyclopedia of public policy* (pp. 1-5). Springer International Publishing.
- Ravenhill, J. (2014). Global value chains and development. *Review of International Political Economy*, 21(1), 264-274.
- Rivlin, P. (2009). *Arab economies in the twenty-first century*. Cambridge University Press.
- Robson, P. (1985). Regional integration and the crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 23(4), 603-622. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/160681>
- Robst, J., Polachek, S., & Chang, Y. (2006). *Geographic proximity, trade and international conflict/cooperation*, IZA Discussion Papers, (1988).
- Russett, B. (1967). *International regions and the international system*. Rand McNally.
- Salafy, A. (1989). *The League of Arab States: Role and objectives*. Arab Information Centre.
- Salamé, G. (1979). Integration in the Arab world: The institutional framework. In G. Luciani & G. Salamé (Eds.), *The politics of Arab Integration* (pp. 25-47). Croom Helm.
- Sawani, Y. M. (2012). The 'end of pan-Arabism' revisited: Reflections on the Arab Spring. *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 5(3), 382-397.
- Schimmelfennig, F., & Sedelmeier, U. (2005). The politics of European Union enlargement. *Theoretical Approaches*.
- Schmidt, A. (2022). Borders connecting and dividing-East meets West and the borders of the European Union. *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, 13(SI), 9-32.
- Schulz, M. (2001). *Regionalism in a globalising world: A comparative perspective on forms, actors, and progresses*. Palgrave.
- Scott, A., & Storper, M. (2003). Regions, globalization, development. *Regional Studies*, 37(6-7), 579-593.
- Seeberg, P. (2016). Analysing security subcomplexes in a changing Middle East—the role of non-Arab state actors and non-state actors. *Palgrave Communications*, 2(1), 1-8.
- Selim, M. E. S. (2020). Causes and consequences of the breakdown of the Middle East peace process. *Journal of International Studies*, 1, 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.32890/jis2020.1.1>
- Söderbaum, F. (2001). 'A framework for understanding regionalization'. In M Schulz, F Söderbaum & J Ojendal (Eds.) *Regionalization in a globalizing world*. Zed Books, 1-21.
- Söderbaum, F. (2001). Regionalisation in a globalising world. A comparative perspective on actors, forms and processes.
- Söderbaum, F. (2003). Introduction: Theories of new regionalism. In *Theories of new regionalism: A Palgrave reader* (pp. 1-21). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

- Spindler, M. (2003). New regionalism and the construction of global order. *University of Warwick Discussion Paper Series*, 21–36. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1784449>
- Sun, Q., Tong, W., & Yu, Q. (2002). Determinants of foreign direct investment across China. *Journal of International Money and Finance*, 21(1), 79-113.
- Tabb, W. K. (1999). Progressive globalism: Challenging the audacity of capital. *Monthly Review*, 50(9), 1.
- Tavares, Rodrigo. (2004). ‘The contribution of macro-regions to the construction of peace: A framework for analysis’. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 7(1), 24–47.
- Telhami, S., & Barnett, M. N. (Eds.). (2002). *Identity and foreign policy in the Middle East*. Cornell University Press.
- Thakur, R., & Van Langenhove, L. (Eds.). (2008). *Enhancing global governance through regional integration*. Routledge.
- Tripp, C. (1995). Regional organizations in the Arab Middle East. In L. Fawcett & A. Hurrell (Eds.), *Regionalism in world politics: Regional organization and international order* (pp. 283–308). Oxford University Press.
- UNCTAD (2007). *Trade and development report 2007: Regional cooperation for development*. UNCTAD. <https://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationArchive.aspx?publicationid=2146>
- UNCTAD. (2015). *UNCTAD states merchandise trade matrix*. <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=24739>
- UNCTAD. (2018). *Handbook of statistics*. [https://unctad.org/en/Pages/Publications/ Handbook-of-Statistics.aspx](https://unctad.org/en/Pages/Publications/Handbook-of-Statistics.aspx)
- UNCTAD (2013). *Trade and development report, 2013*. <http://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds/TableViewer/tableView.aspx?ReportId=88>
- UNDP. (1994). *Human development report, 1994*. Oxford University Press.
- UNDP. (1995). *Human development report, 1995*. Oxford University Press
- UNDP. (2009). *Human development report 2009: Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- UNDP. (2005). *Human development report, 2005*. Oxford University Press. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2005>
- UNDP. (2010). *Human development report 2010: The real wealth of nations: Pathways to human development*. Oxford University Press.
- UNDP. (2011). *Human development report 2011: Sustainability and equality: A better future for all*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- UNDP. (2011). *Regional human development report: Beyond transition: Towards inclusive societies*. UNDP Bratislava.
- UNDP. (2016). *Human development report, 2015*. Oxford University Press.
- Vatikiotis, P. J. (1997). *The Middle East: From the end of Empire to the end of the Cold War*. Psychology Press.
- Warleigh-Lack, A. (2006). Towards a conceptual framework for regionalisation: Bridging new regionalism and integration theory. *Review of International Political Economy*, 13(5), 750-771.
- Windsor, Duane and Getz, Kathleen A. (2000). Multilateral cooperation to combat corruption: Normative regimes despite mixed motives and diverse values. *Cornell International Law Journal*, 33(3), Article 11. <https://scholarship.law.Cornell.Edu/cilj/vol 33/iss3/11>
- Wolf, A. T. (2007). Shared waters: Conflict and cooperation. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 32(1), 241–269.
- World Bank Group. (2018). *Women, business and the law 2018*. World Bank Publications.
- World Bank Group. (2022). *Global economic prospects, January 2022*. World Bank Publications.
- World Bank. (1990). *World development report 1990: Poverty*.

- World Bank. (2000). *Making transition work for everyone: Poverty and inequality in the Middle East and North Africa*.
- World Bank. (2000). *Trade blocs*. Oxford University Press.
- World Bank. (2001). *World development report 2000/2001: Attacking poverty*. Oxford University Press.
- World Bank. (2002). *Global economic prospects 2002: Making trade work for the world's poor*.
- World Bank. (2006). *World development report, 2005*.
- World Bank. (2007). *Healthy development: The World Bank strategy for health, nutrition, and population results*.
- World Bank. (2007). *Sanitation and water supply: Improving services for the poor. IDA at work*.
- World Bank. (2008). *World development report 2009: Reshaping economic geography*.
- World Bank. (2009). *Doing business 2010*.
- World Bank. (2009). *Information and communications for development: Extending reach and increasing impact*.
- World Bank. (2009). *Protecting progress: The challenge facing low-income countries in the global recession*.
- World Bank. (2009). *World development report 2010: Development and climate change*.
- World Bank. (2010). *World development report, 2009*.
- World Bank. (2011). *Global economic prospects, 2010: Crisis, finance, and growth*.
- World Bank. (2012). *The Middle East and North Africa Region: Little data book*.
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/20356/909070WP0littl00Box385323B00PUBLIC0.txt?sequence=2>
- World Bank. (2013, December 17). *World development indicators database*.
<http://ieconomics.com/palestine?ref=tradingeconomics.com>
- World Bank. (2013). *World development indicators: Tariff rate, applied, weighted mean, all products (%)*. <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalogue/worlddevelopment-indicators>
- World Bank. (2015). *World Development Report, 2012*.
- World Bank. (2023). *The world by income and region*. World development indicators.
<https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/the-world-by-income-and-region.html>
- World Bank. (2023, January). *Global economic prospects*. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/38030>
- World Economic Forum. (2009). *The global competitiveness report 2009–2010*.
- World Economic Forum. (2009). *The global competitiveness report 2011–2012*.
- World Economic Forum. (2010). *The global competitiveness report 2017–2018*.
- World Economic Forum. (2018). *The global competitiveness report 2020–2021*.
- Zarrouk, H. (2019). Regional trade agreements and economic impacts: Evidence from MENA countries. *Middle East Development Journal*, 11(2), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17938120.2019.1686542>
- Zerafa, G. (2020). *Iran-Saudi Arabia strife for regional dominance: Proxy wars in the Middle East (Yemen as case study)*. Working Paper.
- Zuhur, S. (2005). *The Middle East: Politics, history and neo-nationalism*. Xlibris Corporation.