



SUMMER SCHOOL IN GLOBAL POLITICS, DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY 2021

Geopolitics of the MENA Region in a Post-Western and Post-Covid World

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Date: June 21 – 23

Time: 12.00 pm – 2.00 pm (CEST, Barcelona time)

Format: online

Which are the implications for the Middle East and North Africa of the relative decline of the West, Russia's return, the rise of China and Africa's potential? Has COVID19 modified cooperation and conflict dynamics within the MENA region and between these countries and the main global powers? The purpose of this course is threefold: to help students understand the priorities of global powers in this region, to discuss the impact on global shifts in regional dynamics and to explore which actors in this region are better placed to take advantage of these changes.

In the early 2000s, the MENA region was one of the theatres where Washington projected its unilateral moment. It is no longer the case. In the post-2011 context Russia has manoeuvred to fill this vacuum. In a more subtle but gradual manner, China is also becoming a relevant actor and mega-infrastructure projects suggest that this is a long-term investment. More broadly, relations between the MENA and Asia are growing and are multifaceted, including Iran's economic links with major Asian economies or the presence of

South-Asian diasporas in the Gulf. The irruption of the pandemic has only reinforced the role of Russia, China and India both in the global stage but also in the MENA region.

Finally, Africa's demographic and economic growth in the next decades will be a global game-changer but the effects will be felt more strongly in the MENA because of geographic proximity. While many may look to Africa as a source of threats, countries in the MENA tend to perceive it as geopolitical opportunity. By analysing these trends and assessing the role and strategies of different MENA countries, this course will provide students with an innovative approach to the region's embeddedness in global trends and will invite them to "de-westernise" their reading of the MENA's position in global affairs.

Session 1. The "rise of the rest" and competitive multipolarity: implications for the MENA region

This session analyses the consequences for the Middle East and North Africa of global power shifts. This includes the rise of re-emerged global powers such as Russia and China, the changing global priorities of the US (pivot to Asia/Pacific and the domestic agendas of Biden's administration and his predecessors) and the competition among these global powers and their relations with the main regional powers. The key question to be answered is the extent to which these global shifts have contributed to increase the levels of conflict and internal geopolitical competition in the MENA region.

Required reading:

Malmvig, Helle (2018) "[Does the Middle East Still Play to the Tunes of Global Powers?](#)" in Al Jazeera Centre for Studies.

Recommended reading:

Burton, Tim (2020) [China and Middle East Conflicts. Responding to War and Rivalry from the Cold War to the Present](#), Routledge

Cofman Wittes, Tamara (2021) [What to do – and what not to do – in the Middle East](#), Brookings
Hassan, Zaha et al (2021), [Breaking the Israel-Palestine Status Quo](#), Carnegie.

Lons, Camille (2019) [China's Great Game in the Middle East](#), ECFR.

Malmvig, Helle et al (2019), [Interregnum: The Regional Order in the Middle East and North Africa after 2011](#), MENARA Final report. n.1

Popescu, Nicu & Secreriu, Stanislas (2018) [Russia's return to the Middle East: building sandcastles?](#), Paris, EUISS.

Quero, Jordi & Dessí, A (2019) [Unpredictability in US foreign policy and the regional order in the Middle East: reacting vis-à-vis a volatile external security-provider](#), British Journal of Middle East Studies

Session 2. A pivot to Africa?

Africa has gained centrality, globally but also for consolidated and emerging powers of Middle East and North Africa. To what extent the *Africa rise* narrative is shaping global power's policies towards the MENA region? Which are the priorities, instruments, and alliances in Africa of the regional powers of the MENA region? Is the Sahel and the Horn of Africa blurring the line between the MENA regional security complex and Subsaharian Africa?

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Required reading:

Soler i Lecha, Eduard (2020) [Ten Reasons Why the Maghreb Pivots to Africa](#), MedYearbook, Barcelona: IEMed, pp. 70-77

ICG (2019) [Intra-Gulf Competition in Africa's Horn: Lessening the Impact](#), International Crisis Group

Recommended reading:

Aïdi, Hisham (2020) [Africa and the Middle East: Beyond the Divides](#), POMEPS

Dworkin, Anthony (2020) [A return to Africa: Why North African states are looking south](#), ECFR

Tanchum (2021) [Europe–Africa Connectivity Outlook 2021: Post-Covid-19 Challenges and Strategic Opportunities](#), Rome: IAI.

Werenfels, Isabelle (2020) [Maghrebi Rivalries Over Sub-Saharan Africa](#), Berlin: SWP

Session 3. After COVID-19: Regional effects and implications for the MENA region's embeddedness in global dynamics

This final session is devoted to discussing alternative futures for the Middle East. To do so, it will engage in an assessment on the impact COVID-19, identifying potential or already visible impacts of the pandemic on cooperation and conflict dynamics within the MENA region and whether it also impacting the relations between MENA countries and major global actors (US, China, Russia, India and the EU). It will also elaborate on potential impacts

on the pandemic beyond international relations, discussing whether the risk for a new wave of social unrest has increased and whether pandemic amplified the social, economic, and political challenges in specific countries of the MENA region but also whether the pandemic creates opportunities in areas such as digitalization or nearshoring strategies.

Required reading:

Steven Kenney & Ross Harrison (2019) [Middle East Conflict and COVID-19 – A View from 2025](#), Middle East Insitute.

Recommended reading:

Göll, Edgar et al (2019) [Imagining Future\(s\) for the Middle East and North Africa](#), MENARA.

Gaub, Florence (2019) [Arab Futures 2.0.](#), EUISS

IISS (2020) [The Strategic and Geo-economic Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), IISS Manama Dialogue 2020 Special Publication