

Do the Regional Economic Development Plans Bring Peace and Stability to the Middle East?

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Abstract:

The Middle East has long been plagued by instability, fueled by geopolitical tensions and internal challenges. This article examines the potential of regional economic development plans to bring about peace and stability in the region. It explores historical factors such as the Sykes-Picot Agreement and ongoing conflicts like the Israel-Palestine issue, highlighting their impact on the region's stability. Additionally, it discusses various economic development proposals, including LaRouche's "Blue Peace" Oasis plan, and evaluates their feasibility and potential for fostering peace. The role of the United Nations in conflict resolution and the challenges it faces in the Middle East are also analyzed. Furthermore, the importance of regional water projects in promoting cooperation and addressing resource scarcity is emphasized. The article concludes by stressing the necessity of a comprehensive approach that combines economic development with political solutions to achieve lasting peace and prosperity in the Middle East

Keywords: Middle East, Regional economic development, LaRouche's "Blue Peace" Oasis plan, Regional cooperation

1. Introduction

The Middle East is the common term for a region consisting of countries from southwest Asia to North Africa. The Middle East region has been grouped into sub-regions, based on geographical and climatic homogeneity. The Near East group includes Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Islamic Republic of Iran. Arabian Peninsula's group includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. In this article it is considered to call these regions including Egypt as a common term "Middle East"

Middle East region has been plagued by outbreaks of instability, resulting from both structural geopolitical tensions and persistent internal factors, such as socioeconomic development challenges, weak governance, and religious radicalism; whereas numerous countries in the Middle East have faced war, instability, and social and financial crises;

Peace in the Middle East is the only option for the future. The massacre in Gaza revealed how important it is for humanity to achieve peace in the Middle East. Therefore, all kinds of alternative solutions should be tried for peace and stability in the Middle East. More attention

must be paid to obstacles on the way to a regional development solution. War will never bring peace, Peace will bring stability and economic prosperity. In this regard, the international system must also support new alternatives for peace. Therefore, there is a need for a new vision that prioritizes economic and social developments in the Middle East.

Political stability and economic development couldn't be achieved in Middle Eastern countries where armed conflicts and civil wars have been going on for a long time. It seems difficult for some countries that have suffered greatly from these wars to achieve economic development in their effort. Aid provided to the Middle East from outside the region is aimed not at the peace and stability of the region, but at the interests of international powers. For this reason, the desire of the regional countries for peace and stability does not ensure progress in this regard. The international system's plans in the Middle East also need to change. If the international system sincerely supports applicable development programs in the region, at least a base for peace and stability in the Middle East will be established.

The Middle East is a region that has not achieved a long-term stable political order, except for the period during which it remained under Ottoman Empire rule. To understand the reasons for this instability, it is necessary to understand the structure of the region well. The Middle East has been one of the most important regions of the world in terms of political, strategic, economic, and cultural balances, not only today but throughout history. It is a crossroads for trade as well as a crossroads for religions and cultures.



Tensions in the Middle East throughout history have shifted from the axis of the Muslim-Christian conflict to the axis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The fact that a part of the region is seen as the promised land for Israel has resulted in the establishment of a direct connection between the existence and security of Israel and the existence and security of Judaism.

The international conflict that has been going on between Israel and Palestine in the Middle East for many years remains on the table as a factor that prevents peace and stability in the region. Israel expanded its territory during the wars of 1948, 1958, and 1967. The Jewish population increased in the region. Millions of Palestinians became refugees in other Arab countries, especially Jordan. Today's inhumane massacre carried out by Israel in the Gaza Strip has dealt a huge blow to the plans for Middle East peace.

The massacre carried out by Israel in the Gaza Strip has also brought the Palestinian issue to the world's agenda. Prosperity, stability, and peace in the Middle East have become directly linked to the solution of the Palestinian problem.

2. The Sykes-Picot Agreement

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, which was signed secretly during World War I and continues to affect the region, is an important document in the sense that it causes problems in the region by shaping the Middle East.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, signed between England and France in 1916 and envisaging the sharing of the region between them, is extremely important in terms of determining the evil fate of the Middle East. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was a harbinger of the problems that the region would experience in the future. While the Middle East was divided into spheres of influence, new states were formed, but even this division was not made according to applicability but according to the desires of the countries that signed the agreement.

Historian James Barr described the agreement as a “line drawn in the sand” and likened it to the straight lines that showed the artificiality of partition in Africa in the 19th century.

In general, the Middle East consists of artificial borders created by colonial states after World War I and World War II. It is a geography where problems are intense due to the Palestine problem that emerged after World War II, the West's desire to keep the oil here under their control, and the inability to share natural resources such as oil and water.

Slow economic development, injustice in income distribution, inadequate institutionalization, and democratization have led to political, economic, and social instability in Middle Eastern countries. This situation has highlighted the thesis that economic development and development projects are necessary as well as a political solution to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East.

3. Economic Development Plans

Some experts argue that economic development plans to be implemented in the region are a prerequisite for political solutions. It is claimed that an economic development and development vision is needed before seeking a political solution for the region. Those who advocate this approach argue that internationally supported regional development and development plans are needed to break the cycle of chaos and constant war in the Middle East.

3.1.LaRouche's « Blue Peace » Oasis Plan



LaRouche's « Blue Peace » Oasis plan, is one of the plans to be put on the table of diplomatic negotiations as the « spine » of a durable peace agreement in the region (1).

In this plan, some projects involve large amounts of water transfer such as Red-Dead, and Med-Dead. In this context, projects such as The nuclear-powered desalination plant, the creation of new cities and a "development corridor" around new water transmission systems, and new settlement areas (Blueprint Negev). are planned.

According to the plan Part of the seawater going through the Med-Dead Water conveyance system will be desalinated in **Beersheba**, the « capital of the Negev » whose population, with new fresh water supplies, can be doubled.

In 1975, LaRouche visited Baghdad, and subsequently in the year proposed an International Development Bank to fund common-interest infrastructure projects in the Mideast and other regions. In 1986, Peres, then prime minister of Israel, called for a "Marshall Plan" approach, involving high-technology-vectored infrastructure including desalination plants, international electricity grids, and rail and road networks. The Oasis Plan goals cohere with this and also with the program elaborated by Palestinian economists such as Yousef Sayegh(2).

Lyndon LaRouche (1922-2019) proposed his "Oasis Plan for Peace and Development in the Middle East". But this plan, like other proposals along similar lines, was blocked on the Israeli side,

Mr. LaRouche's Oasis plan included three major axes:

- 1) Israel's relinquishment of exclusive control over water resources;

2) economic development of the Gaza Strip;

3) construction of the Gulf of Aqaba-Dead Sea and Dead Sea-Mediterranean canals, going beyond the Peres plan which combined canals and tunnels to bring water through the mountain ranges between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea.

Lyndon LaRouche proposed the use of nuclear energy to generate the electricity needed for economic development and desalinate seawater to obtain drinking water in the quantities needed.

3.2. An economic development plan as a catalyst

There are many obstacles to establishing peace and stability in the Middle East, such as ethnic, religious, historical, economic, geopolitical, hydrological, and the interests of international actors. For this reason, sustainable peace has not been achieved in the Middle East for a long time. It is as if a sense of stability is desired to continue in the chaos in the region. This ensures that the region is ready and suitable for armed conflict at any time. This situation prevents the socio-economic development of the region. Social unrest can occur more easily in socio-economically backward countries, and tensions between countries can more easily turn into armed conflict. Regional economic development plans can be an important step to break this vicious circle.

Therefore an economic development plan can indeed catalyze in a conflicted region. Because conflict often arises due to various factors such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, and lack of opportunities. An economic development plan can tackle these root causes by creating jobs, reducing poverty, and promoting inclusive growth. By addressing these underlying issues, the plan can help mitigate tensions and reduce the likelihood of conflict.

Economic development projects can bring different communities and stakeholders together by providing opportunities for collaboration and cooperation. Joint investment in infrastructure, industries, or trade can foster trust and build common interests among conflicting parties.

A robust economic development plan can stabilize the region by attracting investment, improving infrastructure, and enhancing the business environment. This stability can create an environment conducive to peacebuilding efforts. Economic interdependencies created through trade, investment, and shared prosperity can incentivize conflicting parties to cooperate and find peaceful resolutions to their differences.

When parties have mutual economic interests, they are more likely to prioritize dialogue and negotiation over violence. However, it's essential to note that economic development alone may not be sufficient to resolve deeply rooted conflicts. It should be complemented by political, social, and cultural initiatives aimed at addressing grievances, promoting reconciliation, and building trust among conflicting parties. Additionally, the success of an economic development plan in a conflicted region depends on factors such as governance, security, and the involvement of local stakeholders.

3.3. An Economic Development Plan: A Prerequisite for Political Progress

In regions marred by political turmoil, achieving sustainable peace and progress often feels like an elusive dream. Political instability, conflict, and societal divisions can stagnate development efforts, leaving communities trapped in cycles of poverty and strife. However, amidst these challenges, there lies a beacon of hope: the implementation of a comprehensive economic

development plan. Such a plan not only catalyzes economic growth but also lays the foundation for resolving political tensions and fostering lasting peace.

Economic development can serve as a linchpin for political progress, offering solutions to underlying grievances and fostering a sense of shared prosperity among diverse communities.

An applicable economic development plan that prioritizes inclusive growth and equitable distribution of resources can help address root causes, thereby laying the groundwork for political reconciliation.

3.3.1. Building Trust and Cooperation

In deeply divided societies, building trust and fostering cooperation among conflicting parties is essential for achieving sustainable peace. Economic development projects provide a platform for dialogue and collaboration, bringing together stakeholders with divergent interests in pursuit of shared economic goals.

In conclusion, an economic development plan serves as a precondition for moving the political situation forward in conflicted regions. By addressing the root causes of conflict, building trust and cooperation among stakeholders, and promoting stability and good governance, it lays the groundwork for sustainable peace and prosperity.

However, it is essential to recognize that economic development alone is not sufficient to resolve complex political disputes. It must be complemented by inclusive political processes, social cohesion initiatives, and respect for human rights to ensure lasting peace and progress. As we navigate the challenges of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, let us harness the transformative power of economic development to build a brighter future for generations to come.

4. The UN political solution system

The effectiveness of the United Nations (UN) political solution system in resolving regional conflicts varies depending on the context and specific circumstances of each conflict. While the UN has had successes in some cases, it has faced challenges and limitations in others such as in the Middle East.

Through diplomatic efforts and peacekeeping missions, the UN has also been successful in preventing conflicts from escalating into full-scale wars. The UN has deployed peacekeeping missions to numerous conflict zones around the world. In some cases, such as in Mozambique and Namibia, UN peacekeeping missions have helped lay the groundwork for lasting peace and stability. However, this effort needs to be supported by regional economic development plans to be sustainable.

Challenges and Limitations

The UN Security Council, tasked with maintaining international peace and security, often faces political deadlocks among its permanent members (the P5), which can hinder effective decision-making and action on pressing conflicts. Veto powers wielded by these members sometimes prevent the UN from taking decisive steps to address crises.

Israel -Palestine conflict can be characterized by deep-rooted political, ethnic, religious, and socio-economic divisions, making peace difficult. In such cases, the UN's diplomatic efforts may face significant obstacles and fail to bring meaningful dialogue and reconciliation.

Divergent perspectives among some states such as Israel and Palestine may require different approaches such as forming international support for regional development plans in complex long-term crises.



While the UN's political solution system has achieved success in certain instances, it continues to face significant challenges in addressing regional conflicts comprehensively and effectively. Moving forward, enhancing the UN's capacity for conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding requires a vision of economic improvement besides political solutions

4.1.UN political solution or regional economic development projects

Determining which approach is more successful in resolving conflicts in a region—UN political solutions or regional economic development projects—is not straightforward, as both approaches have distinct strengths and limitations. The effectiveness of each approach depends on the specific context of the conflict, the underlying causes, and the dynamics at play. Many conflicts involve deep-seated grievances, ethnic tensions, and power struggles that may not be easily resolved through diplomatic means alone.

Economic interdependencies created through regional projects can foster cooperation and mutual interests among conflicting parties, reducing the likelihood of conflict.

Economic development alone may not address deep-seated political grievances or power struggles that fuel conflicts in some regions. Economic projects reliant on external investment or resources may exacerbate dependency dynamics and create vulnerabilities to external influence, potentially exacerbating tensions.

Economic benefits from regional projects may not be equitably distributed among all communities, leading to perceptions of marginalization and exacerbating existing grievances.

In summary; both UN political solutions and regional economic development projects can play important roles in resolving conflicts in a region, but neither approach is a panacea. In many cases, a comprehensive and integrated approach that combines elements of both political and economic strategies may be most effective. This could involve diplomatic mediation to address

underlying political grievances while simultaneously implementing economic development projects to promote stability, address socio-economic inequalities, and build trust among conflicting parties. Ultimately, the success of any approach depends on its adaptability to the specific context of the conflict and its ability to address the root causes sustainably.

5.Role of regional water projects in establishing peace and prosperity in the Middle East

Regional water projects can indeed play a significant role in establishing peace and prosperity in the Middle East, a region where water scarcity and competition over water resources are longstanding challenges that can exacerbate tensions and conflicts. Here's how:

Water projects necessitate collaboration among countries sharing transboundary water resources, fostering dialogue, and diplomatic engagement. By working together on joint water management initiatives, countries in the Middle East can build trust, mitigate conflicts, and promote peaceful relations. Water projects, such as irrigation systems, desalination plants, and water distribution networks, can stimulate economic development by enhancing agricultural productivity, supporting industrial growth, and ensuring access to clean water for communities. Increased water availability can also attract investment and spur job creation, contributing to regional prosperity.

Addressing water scarcity through cooperative projects can help prevent conflicts over water resources, which have the potential to escalate into broader regional tensions. By providing mechanisms for equitable water allocation and dispute resolution, these projects reduce the likelihood of resource-driven conflicts and contribute to regional stability.

Despite the potential benefits, implementing regional water projects in the Middle East faces several challenges, including political tensions, historical grievances, and competing national interests. Negotiating equitable water-sharing agreements and resolving disputes over water rights requires political will, trust-building measures, and effective diplomatic engagement.

Efforts to address water scarcity and promote cooperation among Israel, Jordan, and Palestine in the Jordan River Basin have led to initiatives such as the Red Sea-Dead Sea Conveyance Project, aimed at replenishing the shrinking Dead Sea and providing desalinated water to the region.

Regional water projects have the potential to serve as catalysts for peace and prosperity in the Middle East by fostering cooperation, supporting economic development, promoting environmental sustainability, preventing conflicts, and addressing humanitarian needs. However, realizing these benefits requires overcoming political obstacles, building trust among stakeholders, and prioritizing shared interests in water management and conservation. By investing in collaborative water initiatives, countries in the Middle East can pave the way for a more stable, prosperous, and water-secure future for the region.

6.Can LaRouche's 'Oasis Plan' play a significant role in establishing peace and prosperity in the Middle East

Lyndon LaRouche's "Oasis Plan" proposes large-scale infrastructure development projects, including the construction of water pipelines and transportation networks, to transform arid regions such as the Middle East into fertile and habitable areas. While the Oasis Plan advocates for ambitious solutions to address regional challenges, its feasibility and potential impact on establishing peace and prosperity in the Middle East are subject to scrutiny.

By facilitating the transfer of water resources from water-rich areas to water-scarce regions, the Oasis Plan aims to alleviate water scarcity and promote agricultural development, potentially enhancing food security and economic growth in the Middle East. The construction of transportation networks, energy infrastructure, and other facilities proposed under the Oasis Plan could stimulate economic development, create jobs, and improve connectivity within and between countries in the region. Proponents argue that the Oasis Plan's focus on reforestation, soil conservation, and renewable energy could contribute to environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change, benefiting ecosystems and communities in the long term.

Criticisms and Challenges:

Critics question the technical and economic feasibility of implementing the Oasis Plan on the scale proposed by LaRouche, citing challenges such as funding, engineering constraints, and political obstacles. Political Realities can be another obstacle to implementing the Oasis Plans. Its reliance on cooperation among regional governments and international actors may be hampered by political tensions, historical conflicts, and competing national interests in the Middle East, limiting its effectiveness as a peace-building tool. Besides these political realities, the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects under the Oasis Plan could raise concerns about sovereignty, resource ownership, and environmental impacts, potentially leading to disputes and resistance from affected communities and governments.

In summary; while the Oasis Plan presents a bold vision for addressing water scarcity and promoting development in the Middle East, its practicality and potential to establish peace and prosperity in the region remain uncertain. Achieving the plan's objectives would require overcoming significant technical, financial, and political challenges, as well as addressing concerns about sustainability, equity, and governance. While elements of the Oasis Plan may hold promise for addressing specific regional issues, a comprehensive and inclusive approach involving multilateral cooperation, conflict resolution, and sustainable development strategies is likely necessary to achieve lasting peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

7.A Vision of Economic Improvement in the Middle East

A vision of economic improvement is crucial for guiding efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. Economic stability and prosperity are fundamental elements for building sustainable peace in any region, including the Middle East.

Because; many conflicts in the Middle East are fueled by socioeconomic factors such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, and lack of opportunities. Addressing these root causes through economic improvement can help alleviate grievances and reduce the likelihood of conflict. By promoting inclusive growth, creating jobs, and enhancing access to education and healthcare, economic development can foster social cohesion and stability.

Building Trust and Promoting Stability:

Economic interdependencies created through trade, investment, and shared prosperity can foster cooperation and trust among conflicting parties. When countries have mutual economic interests, they are more likely to prioritize dialogue and negotiation over violence. Economic cooperation can provide a platform for building relationships, fostering understanding, and finding common ground for peaceful coexistence. Economic stability is essential for maintaining peace and security in the Middle East. A robust economy can provide the resources and infrastructure necessary for effective governance, law enforcement, and social services. By reducing poverty, addressing inequality, and promoting sustainable development, economic

improvement can contribute to a more stable and resilient society less prone to internal conflicts and external threats.

It is also worth mentioning that empowered communities are more likely to actively participate in peacebuilding efforts and resist the lure of extremism and violence.

In conclusion, a vision of economic improvement is indeed essential for guiding efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. By addressing the root causes of conflict, building trust and cooperation among conflicting parties, promoting stability, and empowering communities, economic development can play a crucial role in laying the foundation for lasting peace and prosperity in the region.

8. Conclusions

The Middle East is a region where trust and cooperation between countries cannot be achieved because of ethnic, religious, sectarian divergencies and external power effects on petropolitical, natural gas political, hydrological, geopolitical, and historical relations. Especially after World War II, the Middle East is a geography that constantly produces armed conflict and tension. However, it is not possible to accept that the Middle East will be doomed to constant conflict due to these characteristics. In this region, the disputes between Israel and Palestine and Israel's radical security and foreign policies seem to be the main reasons that negatively affect the stability of the region.

The political stability of the countries in the region has still not been achieved after World War II. Representatives of global powers are making statements that the borders of the countries in the region will change. The region has been accepted as a geography doomed to a future full of war and tension. The conflict-intensive character of the region limits the development of interdependence, democratization, and socio-economic development of the countries. This limitation also prevents the formation of an infrastructure for the peace and stability of the region. However, this vicious circle must be broken with an innovative and visionary approach and a more hopeful future must be promised to the new generations. For this, a way must either be found or a road must be built. Analyzes should not only focus on the current situation but also investigate how applicable economic, social, and political approaches and projects can be implemented for the peaceful and stable future of this region.

The most basic need of the projects that will ensure economic and social development in the region will be water. The region is a region where 5% of the world's population lives but has 1% of freshwater resources, almost all of which are transboundary waters. Water is the only natural resource that draws the borders of the countries in the region and connects them. Therefore, the cooperative use of the region's transboundary water resources will play a very important role in the future of the region.

However, the fact that the region is a region with intense conflicts and a lack of trust between countries results in the securitization of water resources. The fact that economic cooperation and interdependence among the countries in the region have not been sufficiently developed also negatively affects water cooperation. For this cooperation, a road map for water-based regional development projects between countries is needed. Instead of the approach of sharing water in the region, the approach of sharing the benefits of water based on regional projects should be adopted. However, the political instability of the region makes it difficult to implement these plans and policies. But this political reality should not be allowed to throw the future of the region into chaos. Another factor that challenges cooperation on this issue is the

negative impact of climate change on water resources. According to research, this impact may reach a level that will create new instability in the region after 2040.

Intense war and chaos will never be the choice of the generations who live and will live in this region in the present and future. Besides this reality, it is never possible for a military solution to yield a sustainable result in the region, including the conflict between Israel and Palestine. These military conflicts push the problem into the future more deeply and chaotically and force the region into a conflict-intensive future.

A plan that claims to quickly implement peace in the Middle East is unrealistic. However, instead, a new vision that will implement a road map to peace and the infrastructure of peace is more realistic and necessary. For this reason, plans and policies that will ensure socio-economic development as well as the United Nations-based political solution should be supported internationally.

However, to implement this kind of project in Israel and the Palestinian region, some political thresholds must be crossed. It would not be realistic to hope for a healthy compromise, cooperation, and trust between the two parties without an international guarantee regarding the political future of Palestine State and the occupied lands.

Therefore it's important to recognize that economic improvement alone is not sufficient to resolve complex political disputes and longstanding grievances in the region. It must be complemented by inclusive political processes, social cohesion initiatives, and respect for human rights to ensure a comprehensive and sustainable peace in the Middle East.

Efforts to solve the very complex problems between countries in the Middle East by simply establishing a traditional peace table will not achieve positive results and will only be a waste of time and energy.

It is very important to analyze what kind of peace can be achieved in the Middle East under these circumstances and how this peace will be fair and sustainable.

There is a need for a regionally and internationally agreed road map on this issue. For this road map, first of all, there must be a process of increasing trust and developing political relations among the countries in the region.

The political will of the countries in the region is very important for a fair and sustainable peace and stability in the Middle East. The continuity of this political will depends on the gradual development of cooperation. This development requires a realistic road map that includes applicable regional economic development projects for cooperation.

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Biography



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