

## Critical and Complementary Review of Buzan's Regional Security Complex Theory in The Wake of Middle East Regional system<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The theory of the Buzan's regional security complex is one of the most important theories of regional system analysis. But the theory has some shortcomings in the analysis of regional systems such as the Middle East. This article seeks to illustrate and reform those shortcomings with a fundamental theoretical and explanatory approach. This can also provide common variables for scrutinizing the regions all over the world. In this way, it is argued that it is need and necessary adding one more variable called "problematic" to the regional security complex theory. Also It is argued that, due to the specific characteristics of each region, it is necessary to consider the other particular variables of each region. Since this study focuses on the regional system of the Middle East as a case, it is also necessary to examine two other variables, the "individual" and the "structure of the international system".

**Keywords:** Problematic, Regional Security Complex, Middle East Regional System, Syrian Failed State.

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1. This article is part of Mrs. Najmiyeh Pour Esmaeili's PHD Thesis

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### **1.Introduction**

Collection of different regional systems form the larger international system (Salimi, Dehghani Firoozabadi and Pouresmaili,2017:2). One of the main ideas presented in relation to regional systems is the Barry Buzan's theory of "regional security complex". Due to the dominance of structural theories in the international arena, micro theories (theories presented at the level of national governments), and too optimistic theories about convergence that cannot be used to explain all regional systems, Barry Buzan attempted to apply a theory that not only would present the internal dynamics of regional systems as an independent totality free from both the effects of the macro level variables (the structure of the international system) and the micro level variables, but also it would have the ability to explain the dynamics of various regional systems. Hence, the four elements that Buzan enumerates for his regional system (anarchy, power distribution, boundary, and pattern of interaction) (Buzan, Weaver & Ghahramnpour,2009:64) are elements that have a regional nature and are derived from a regional system as a whole. In other words, the four elements are originated from the regional analysis level, without any connection to the macro and micro levels of analysis.

Some may criticize Buzan's theory of regional security complex for not considering the impact of both micro and macro level factors. Although this criticism is valid, it should be noted that if a theory combines the influential factors both in micro and macro levels of analysis it would be a great theory, which is neither possible nor desirable. Barry Buzan has intended to maintain the totality of the regional system and to consider the effects of regional factors as the most important ones. He believes that the origins and factors shaping the nature and quality of interactions in a regional system, lie within the regional system itself. These factors are relatively independent of factors of other levels.

The main question that this article seeks to answer is that "where is the starting point for analysis"? "In the analysis of regional systems, which of the four variables can be considered as the focal point and is able to lead the analyzers to know other variables?", "Which of the four variables is capable of shaping relations among other variables and making it possible to formulate a regional system as a single entity?" The fact is that there is no clear answer to these questions in Buzan's theory. In answer to these questions, it is argued that the fifth variable, called "The Problematic",

which is capable of being the initial point in the analysis of regional systems and also serving as the link between other variables.

Another criticism discussed in this study is based on the fact that, while Buzan has been seeking to present a theory to explain the various regional security complexes, he has not noticed that, although regional security complexes have a lot in common, each has some specific features and differences that Buzan's four variables are unable to explain, unless specific features of each region are added in the form of other variables. So, the second question would be; what new variable can be added to the Buzan's four variables to explain the regional security complex of the Middle East. The authors believe that; due to the prominent role of the individuals (the leaders of the states) in comparison with institutions in the Middle East, it is possible to identify the individuals' role at the micro level and the structure of the international system at the macro level, as appropriate variables for explaining the Middle East regional security complex. Hence the authors suggest to add the "problematic" as a new variable to the four variables of Buzan's theory to make it capable of explaining all regional systems on the one hand, and to add the role of individuals and the structure of the international system to explain the security suite of the Middle East on the other hand.

Therefore, this study attempts to determine the relationship among variables. In this regard, the first step is to consider the implication of the "problematic" in a regional system. In the second step, it will be discussed that why a new variable should be the focal point, and how can it define, determine or even limit the four variables in the Buzan's theory. then, in spite of adding the fifth variable, two other variables should also be considered to explain the Middle East regional system; the role of the "individual" and the "structure of the international system". Finally, considering the fifth variable in general, and the two variables (the individual and the structure of the international system) in particular, the regional security complex theory will be used to explain the Middle East. The problematic of the Syrian failed government will be used as a case.

## **2. Research Methodology**

Due to the fundamental and theoretical nature of the present Research, the method used in this paper is the rational deductive method and Qualitative content analysis. Also the method of data collection is based on library studies.

### **3. Research Findings**

The findings of this article are discussed under the following headings;

- "Problematic" as a new variable in the regional security complex.
- Applying the theory of regional security complex for the Middle East in the wake of the variables: the "individual" and the "structure of the international system".
- The failed state of Syria and the regional security complex.

### **4. Analysis**

#### **4-1. "Problematic" as a new variable in the regional security complex**

When analyzing a regional system, if we consider the "problematic" and how to deal with it, as the starting point of our analysis, understanding other variables and the form and type of interactions among them will be facilitated. In every regional system, member states' perceptions of regional problems determine the nature of the regional system. "Problematic" can have economic, environmental, cultural, social, political or even military dimensions. Problems such as water crisis, pollution of the seas, bankruptcy and economic crisis, the loss of human security, political crisis caused by power transfer or military attack, can be considered as regional problems or problematics.

We cannot call any problem, a regional "problematic", unless it involves most of the states or the major states of a region. So, if the member states of a regional system shared the same problem at the same time this would mean that the "problematic" can be considered as a regional explanatory variable which is able to attract the attention of the main actors of a regional system. What this "problematic" precisely is, differs in each system and regional complex, but there is undoubtedly a problem in any regional system. If the regional actors can negotiate and co-operate with each other or even with the transregional powers to fulfill the regional goals and proceedings, "problematic" will be equivalent to the word "issue", and if they can't coordinate to resolve the problems, then it will be equivalent to the word "problematic".

For example, in Post Second World War Europe, how to avoid another war and to work together for this purpose was a problem and a collective concern. It eventually led to convergence in Western Europe. Even now the deepening of this convergence in Europe is a problem. In contrast, the emergence of failed states in the Middle East is a problem that has triggered

competitions and contradictions among all states in this region. In each regional system, the "problematic" can lead to a favorable outcome when the regional actors cooperate. At the same time, a problematic has the potential to change to a conflict in the absence of cooperation. So this variable in fact has a fluid nature.

After clarifying that the "problematic" can be considered as a variable at the regional level of analysis, it's going to be argued in this study that this variable can be the starting point in the Barry Buzan 's regional security complex theory. The interaction between this variable and the other four variables will be also examined. As one can't simply speak of a regional system by enumerating several elements and putting them together, it is undoubtedly necessary to explain how the relationship between those variables create the regional system.

#### **4-2. Buzan's theory and a new variable in the regional security complex**

This study argues that regional actors define and design their relationships on the basis of the "problematic" in their regional system. Then the position of the "problematic" in Buzan's theory as an added variable, and how it can determine the relations between the four elements will be discussed.

##### **4-2-1. The "boundary" variable in the wake of the "problematic"**

As Buzan and Weaver define, the "boundary" separates a regional complex from other regional suites. It should be taken into account that a security complex is where the specific security relationship separates a group of countries from the rest. In a regional security complex, security interdependence among the members is much stronger than their security relations with transregional states. The boundary among regional complex can be drawn by their relative indifference to each other's transactions. Paying attention to the boundary as a variable, implies that neighborhood is very important in Buzan's view. This importance is due to the fact that most countries are more worried about their neighbors than the distant countries. The criterion for determining the boundary, from Buzan's view, is the degree of indifference or sensitivity to regional interactions. (Buzan & Attarzadeh,1396)

In this study, when talking about the border, we are actually referring to the lines that surround a set of actors whose relationship has created a special formation of power (a structure) and are engaged in regular patterns of interaction (process). These actors are separated from others through the

boundaries determined by a problematic. (Burcher, James, & Sobhdel, 1382:220). In this study the authors believe that the problematic as a variable, helps to determine the boundary of a regional system. It determines which countries of a regional system should be involved in a certain problematic.

Indeed, the domain of the countries engaged in the "problem and problematic" is a determining factor in a regional system. The "problematic" can involve four categories of countries. First, countries that are themselves engaged in the "problematic". Second, countries whose direct benefits in the engaged countries are endangered. Third, countries that which have no direct interest in the engaged countries, but they seek to influence the interests of their competitors there, or share a stake in the future of the engaged countries. Fourth a set of countries compelled or persuaded by the countries of the two previous categories to accompany and intervene.

What has been said so far implies that in the shadow of the problematic, the boundaries of a regional system may become restricted or expanded? In a regional system there can be several borders, that a regional actor may be involved in some and not in others. In other words, as there can be several problematics at the same time in each region, the borders are numerous. Since each of the countries in a region may have interests in various issues and problems, they may therefore be involved in several issues at the same time. Therefore, the boundaries in a regional system may completely overlap, interfere in parts around a problematic, or be completely distinct; each one around a distinct problematic. These types of boundaries can be described as interconnected boundaries. The boundaries in a region may also be completely distinct each one surrounding a specific problem. In a way that solving a problem will eliminate a boundary. So the regional boundaries can be fluid and constantly changing. In the model below, different types of border formation are shown.

Figure 1. Separate Boundaries of each other

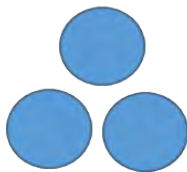


Figure 2. Boundaries of Integration

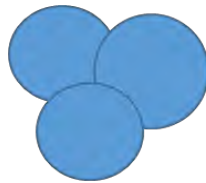
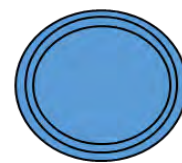


Figure 3. Overlapping Boundaries



Other similar modes are imaginable by merging the above forms. For example, a region with two or more overlapping boundaries and one or more distinct boundaries, or a region with two or more merged boundaries, and one or more distinct or overlapping boundaries.

**4-2-2. The "Pole" variable in the wake of the "problematic"**

Buzan and Weaver believe that the distribution of power in a regional security complex determines its structure. The distribution of power, or polarity, depends on the number of major and influential actors in each regional security complex. When there are two main actors, the region is called bipolar. (Buzan, Weaver, & Ghahramanpour, 2009). This definition is correct, but the problem lies where it can't explain why a regional power interferes in a regional problem and not in another one. For example, Israel is one of the main powers in the Middle East, but it does not interfere in many problematics of this region, or Turkey as another main power in this region, interferes in the problem of Syria, but not in Yemen's crisis. The authors believe that, this is the problematic that determines which of the main poles of power are involved. In other words, within every border, created around a "problematic", one or more countries are more active and influential than others and make others to accompany. The number of actors in each border represents the polarity there. As discussed earlier, there can be several problematics in each region at the same time. Different problematics in a region can create different boundaries, and in each boundary the same actor or different ones may play a role. Accordingly, there may be different poles or the same ones in a boundary. For example, alongside the problematics related to the failed states of Yemen, Syria and Iraq, the problematic of Palestine and Hezbollah still persists. In response to this recent problem, Israel and Egypt may also play a role alongside other regional powers.

**4-2-3. The "Anarchy" variable in the wake of the "problematic"**

Buzan and Weaver see anarchy as the lack of central authority throughout the regions, which is the result of lack of central authority through the international system. Although anarchy has different forms, there is anarchy in the regional arenas, as there is in the international arena. Anarchy is not a framework with relatively stable features, but a situation in which many models can be imagined that some will exacerbate the issue of national security and some will mitigate it. Therefore, the first requirement of the

regional security complex is the existence of an anarchy (Buzan & Weaver; Ghahranmpour,2009). The main question is: "what causes the anarchy to emerge as a spectrum, in which various forms of anarchy is imaginable". The authors' answer is that, this is the problematic that shapes anarchy spectrum and determines the type of anarchy in the regional security complexes. The density of anarchy rises when the problematic in a regional security complex provokes the competition and hostility among states. Each state pursues its own maximum interests, and governments can't resolve the problematic through cooperation and making their goals consonant. In this case, not only the regional problematic remains unresolved, but it will prolong and, intensify the hostilities. On the contrary, the density of the anarchy reduces when the problematic provokes the member states of a region to adopt a minimum definition of their sovereignty and interests in favor of the region, and to coordinate their goals in order to resolve the problematic. So, what intensifies or diminishes anarchy in a regional system is related to the type and nature of problematics in a regional system and also the amount of compromise and cooperation between poles of power there. For example, in Europe the problematics are of collective concern, such as the environment, and therefore the density of anarchy is low, but in the Middle East, problematics such as failed states have aggravated the competitions and anarchy has condensed.

#### **4-2-4: The " Pattern of Interaction" variable in the wake of the "problematic"**

Different perspectives have been put forward, on the factors that cause tension and conflict or friendship in countries' relations (Hafeznia and et al, 2014:1). Buzan believes that the pattern of interactions in the form of friendship or hostility is the evolved dimension of the power structure. The interactions of the material structure which is related to the number of poles of power in a region, shape different interactive patterns of "friendship and hostility" (Buzan & Attarzadeh,1396). First, the author believes that the pattern of interactions is the outcome of former variables. Second, the current problematic in a region determines the pattern of interactions and the relationship between the power poles that affects their interests. When the nature of the problematic stimulates and intensifies competition between poles of power the pattern of interaction will certainly be hostile. For example, the failed states of Syria, Iraq and Yemen is the problematic that has led to a hostile interaction between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Middle



East. In contrast, Britain's Exit from the European Union, as a problematic has led to a pattern of relations based on cooperation between EU and Britain, due to its different nature. The interactive model created based on coordination of goals and orientations of the poles that ultimately leads to resolving the problematics and reduces the density of anarchy will be a model of cooperation and friendship. But the interactive pattern based on the lack of coordination of goals and orientations of the poles that is unable to solve the problematics and intensifies the anarchy in a regional system, will be an interactive model based on conflict and competition. Therefore, it can be said that the interaction pattern resulting from this process in each regional system is a fluid pattern with different aspects such as; the pattern of positive interaction (cooperation), the pattern of negative interaction (hostility and competition) or a combination of both interaction patterns (Cooperation-competition).

### **5. Discussion**

The position of Armenia on the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is reflected in the following provisions:

1. independence of Nagorno-Karabakh from the central government of Azerbaijan;
2. absence of enclavement of Nagorno-Karabakh through the functioning of the Lachin corridor as a permanent territorial corridor between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh;
3. security guarantees for Armenians living in the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The position of Azerbaijan regarding the Karabakh conflict is registered in the so-called "Karabakh Charter" (or "Charter of Four"). The Azerbaijani position on Nagorno-Karabakh can be reduced to the following requirements:

1. withdraw Armenian troops and the population from the occupied Azerbaijani territories with the restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan;
2. return refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh to their own homes and provide them with security guarantees;
3. provide the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh, both Armenian and Azerbaijani, with the right to self-government.

Today, the views of politicians discussing ways to resolve the conflict in the NKR are still determined by their national and political affiliation. Moreover, all the statements of the main participants in the NKR dispute are highly straightforward. Moreover, the Republic of Azerbaijan, which perceives Armenians (including NKR) as invaders of Azerbaijani territory, introduces diplomatic restrictions on the entry of Armenian citizens, as well as Russian citizens with a Russian name in Azerbaijan. The official ambassador of Azerbaijan to Russia, Bülbüloğlu, spoke in an interview about ways to resolve the conflict saying: “As a person who has visited Armenia and Karabakh three times in recent years, I can say for sure that a dialogue between the two nations is possible, but Russia must make the most mediation efforts to make the occupation policy come to its end.” Similar opinions are expressed by all officials and researchers who perceive the territory of the NKR as part of Azerbaijan (Gasnov and Bülbüloğlu, 2019).

The adjustment of the Nagorno-Karabakh’ border is not an insurmountable problem in the context of the conflict settlement; this wasn’t a key issue during the negotiation process and it has good prospects for a resolution today.

Both Armenians and Azerbaijanis demand the security of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh in accordance with internationally recognized guarantees. This implies that security will be guaranteed both to the Armenian majority of the population and the Azerbaijani minority.

So, the power separation is a sphere in which the opposing positions of the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides of the Karabakh conflict can be integrated. At the early stage of resolving the conflict, it is advisable to use the format of distribution of power in Nagorno-Karabakh just like the consociationalism-based model of Bosnia in 1995-1997. Due to the low level of confidence of the conflicting parties to each other, an agreement on the distribution of power should be complemented by elements of self-government.

It is also appropriate to provide the territorial-demographic differentiation of the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities to ensure the security of both population groups. There should be two ethnic zones formed: Armenian and Azerbaijani. The Armenian ethnic zone should include the regions of Nagorno-Karabakh populated by Armenians, whereas the Azerbaijani ethnic

zone should include Shusha and Lachin districts, which are mainly populated by Azerbaijanis.

It's important to provide Azerbaijanis living in Karabakh with the possibility to return to their homes and ensure safe living in the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The separation of power between the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh will allow both parties to ensure equal position in resolving socio-political issues on the basis of a balanced combination of conceptual and integrative elements in the separation of powers.

Markedonov notes in a number of articles on the subject of Nagorno-Karabakh the hopeless implementation of the Madrid principles, evaluating them as a "rhetorical figure", and not a real algorithm aimed at reaching peace. Moreover, the author rightly believes that the peace agreements are ambiguous. Including guarantees of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, they imply an intermediate status of Nagorno-Karabakh, the status of which in the end will be determined by means of the will of the people. At the same time, the author notes the lack of thought in the details of the implementation of these principles: there are no clear decisions on maintaining the Lachin corridor, no description of the positions of the Minsk Group if one of the warring parties refuses to allow the presence of OSCE representatives (Markedonov,2018).

Therefore, the specifics of the Karabakh conflict and the identified key needs of the conflict parties show that it cannot be resolved exclusively at the local level. It requires a combination of local settlement measures with interstate and supranational measures to settle down the Karabakh conflict.

#### **4-3. Applying the theory of regional security complex for the Middle East in the wake of the variables: the "individual" and the "structure of the international system"**

The variables studied so far, have been regional variables. These five variables have the potential to explain all regional systems, due to the similarities of regional systems. But when the Middle East regional system is to be studied, due to its specific characteristics, it is necessary to examine two other variables; the role of the individual and the changing structure of the international system. The first variable is related to the domestic level, and the second one is related to the international level. This means that the regional system of the Middle East can't be studied by just discussing the

regional variables without considering the domestic and international variables. Therefore, these two variables are going to be discussed here. It may be argued that, since Buzan considers the power structure in the regional system as one of his four variables, and the structure refers to the major states of a regional system, he indirectly considers the role of the individuals or in fact the political leaders. But it should be noticed that although Buzan has referred to the power poles in general, he did not pay attention to the psychological, behavioral, and normative values of the leaders when examining the power poles in the Middle East regional system, while in order to study the regional system of the Middle East, considering the role and position of leaders is a priority. In any regional system such as the Middle East, where individuals or leaders are the main decision makers, examining power poles regardless of their role and position will be an incomplete review.

#### **4-3-1. Sixth variable; Individual**

The Middle East is one of the few regional systems, where due to the weakness of social institutions, public opinion and political institutions, individuals have a substantial role in designing, formulating and implementing policies. In fact, it is not in vain to say that a leader in the Middle East can be considered as a state. As most of the leaders in the Middle East are interested in foreign policy, they formulate the interactions in the region by themselves. So they are not just domestic actors representing merely their own country, but they are regional actors, affecting the entire region.

Indeed, in most of the political systems of the Third World, including the Middle East, for a variety of reasons, such as the delay in modern statehood, the weakness and ineligibility of decision-making institutions, authoritarianism, dynastic political system, and militarism, individuals play an influential role in decision making. Although individuals are important and influential in both developed and undeveloped political systems, their significance and influence is undoubtedly much more remarkable in the third world political systems, and perhaps it is not exaggerated to say that in some of these systems, it is the first and most influential variable in both domestic and foreign policy. Hence, the leaders, especially in Third World and some regions such as the Middle East, decide on their foreign policy orientation and their regional pattern of interactions, based on their

perceptions of their country's history, social norms and values, and also their personal characteristics.

In this regard, the specific characteristics of decision makers and elites are among the most important factors influencing the formation and direction of foreign policy. This variable encompasses all characteristics of decision makers including their values, talents and past experiences. The characteristics which distinguish their behavior and therefore their foreign policy choices from each other. (Rosenau,1971:108). The influence of individual variable on foreign policy is based on the principle that decision-makers, as individuals, have specific personal characteristics that make their decisions, and their foreign policy behavior distinct from others.

Individual characteristics include: decision makers' perceptions, motives, preferences, leadership and decision-making style, worldview and system of beliefs. These characteristics derive from education and socialization, personal habits and experiences, conceptualization, class, intellectual origin and talent of leaders. (Dehghani Firoozabadi,2010:70) Recent researches in the field of political psychology and neurology indicate that the assumption that objective reality is available to policymakers is false and misleading. Their argument is that the roots of a political decision can be in the basic patterns of personality and brain responses to internal irritating challenges. As Snyder and Brooke say outer reality or the external world is actually a mix of what decision makers consider important. (Simon,1985:293-297) In general, in the approach that considers individual as an analytic variable, the basic question is that "who holds the key position in decision making?" or in other words, who gives the final verdict? Especially in critical situations who is the pioneer in decision making, who ends the previous measures and adopt new policies and decisions. In this situation, those who are close to the leaders of the political system play an important role. It is believed that leaders do not appreciate real reflections and suggestions, they simply want advisers to reinforce and validate their beliefs and decisions. (Goldgeiger, 1997:140-146).

Based on this approach, to understand the regional system of the Middle East, it is necessary to recognize its leaders, especially those who are at the head of the power pyramid in countries that are known as the poles of the region. Policies adopted by the leaders affect the elements that shape the

regional system in specific and the overall regional system of the Middle East in general.

In fact, the militant, competitive or peaceful personality of the leaders and decision-makers of the power poles in the Middle East can create two scenarios. The leaders can compromise and coordinate their goals with each other to resolve the problematic and thereby contributing to an anarchy modification or they may pursue contradicting goals causing the continuation of the problematic and consequently deepening the anarchy in the region. The question we are going to answer here on is “how an individual can interact with the five variables described in this study as discussed below:

- ✓ The individual and the problematic: The leaders of the Middle East define their regional problematics on the basis of their worldview. For example, Jamal Abdul Nasser defined all the issues related to the Arab world as a problematic, while the current Egyptian president does not.
- ✓ The individual and the anarchy: Middle Eastern leaders determine the degree of anarchy's severity in the region, through their definitions of their sovereignty. For example, in the present situation Iranian and Saudi leaders' definitions of concepts such as national sovereignty, national interests and national security are so rigid and contradictory that they have intensified the anarchy in the Persian Gulf region.
- ✓ The individual and the power structure: It was mentioned earlier that when examining the main power poles in the Middle East, in most cases, the leader himself is almost the whole state. For example, in Iraq during the reign of the Ba'ath Party, the government was in synonymous to Saddam Hussein or in Egypt, at the time of Nasser the government was in synonymous to Nasser.
- ✓ The individual and the boundary: Leaders, based on their comprehensive or limited worldviews, shrink or enlarge the boundaries of regional systems. Leaders who have a national worldview just react to problematics that affect their national interests or national security, but those who have transnational worldviews, draw extensive boundaries for their region. For example, Jamal Abdul Nasser based on his Pan-Arabic views, was sensitive about all aspects of the Arab world, but Anwar Sadat used to focus merely on Egypt's interests and concerns.

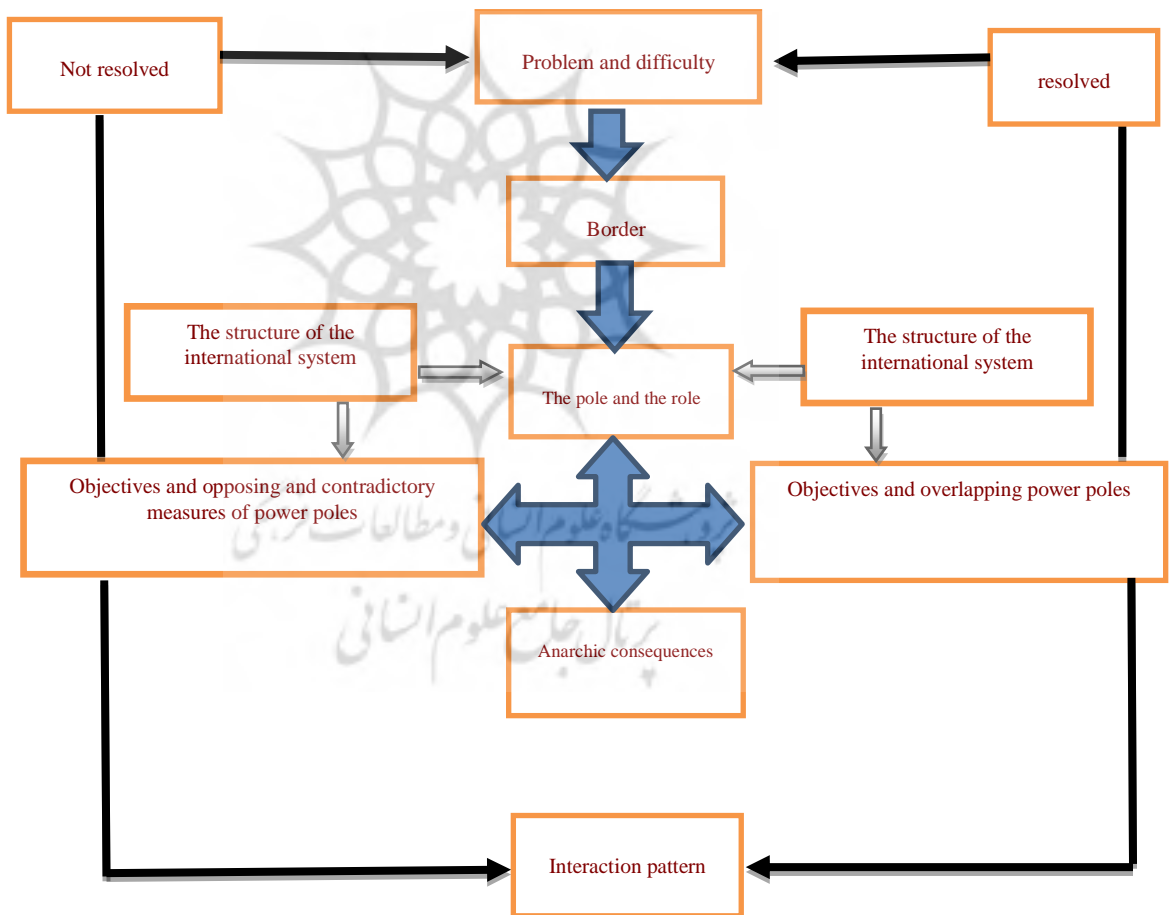
- ✓ The individual and the patterns of interaction: It is obvious that the leader or the leaders with their cognition and definition of the problematic, also by shrinking and enlarging the boundaries of the regional system and its affection on anarchy determine the patterns of interaction. These patterns in the Middle East are totally dependent on the character of the leaders. For example, Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman's antagonistic figure has caused him to confront Yemen, Qatar, Iran and even Turkey.

**4-3-2. The seventh variable; the structure of the international system**

this variable refers to the distribution of power in the international arena. The current power structure of the world includes a combination of one superpower (America) and several global powers (China, the European Union, Japan and Russia) (Buzan; Heydari, 2010:116). The Middle East is of particular importance for international powers due to its importance in various dimensions, mostly strategic and economic. Therefore, the quality of events and developments in this region are important for them, and especially for the United States. The great powers intervene in the problematics of the Middle East regional systems in three ways. First, the contemporary superpower and the great powers intervene directly in the Middle East problematics, due to their direct interests and concerns in the region such as America's military strike to Afghanistan or Iraq. Second, the superpower and the great powers may pursue their interests through supporting opposition groups in the countries affected by the problematic, such as America's support for Kurdish or Syrian opposition groups in the failed state of Syria. Third, the superpower and the great powers, persuade their allies in and out of the region, to pursue their interests, as did the United States to get Turkish cooperation to invade Iraq. Fourth, the leader, the king, or other individuals at the helm of power in the Middle East especially those at the head of the regional poles, themselves, demand a degree of intervention from trans-regional powers, like Saudi Arabia's attempts to involve the US in a military strike against Yemen.

If the objectives and proceedings of the trans regional powers in reaction to the problematic of failed states are contradictory, and at the same time, the regional allies in the Middle East have conflicting goals about the problematic, this can lead to a lack of resolution and may increase the consequences of anarchy in the region, and the interaction pattern created will be pessimistically looking based on "conflict and hostility" and

optimistically looking based on "conflict and competition". But if the superpower and the great powers have non-conflicting objectives about the Middle East's problematics, they will persuade their allies to balance and cooperate. In this case there will be the potential for collaboration to resolve the problematic. Then the consequences of anarchy in the region would decrease and, optimistically looking, pave the way for the creation of a "cooperative-competitive" pattern of interaction or pessimistically looking a pattern based on "cooperation". The relationship between the variables discussed above can be presented in the following model.





#### **4-4. The failed state of Syria and the regional security complex**

It was mentioned that the problematic is the main variable which should be considered as the focal point when explaining a regional system. There are many problematics in the Middle East that we can't review them all here. Therefore, we have to choose one important and prominent problematic in the Middle East regional system, and apply the theory of regional security complex along with its new variables, to explain it. The chosen problematic which is going to be addressed here, is the problematic of the Syrian failed state. This problematic has affected the whole regional system of the Middle East.

The Syrian crisis is one of the most complex crises in Arab societies, which continues for many years (ahmadipour, Mousavi Shafaei, and pourdast, 2019:90). In the failed state of Syria, due to various economic, political, security, social, and other problems, the government is not necessarily the single and the most powerful institution that has authority. There are groups within this country that have some form of authority. (Lynch,2016:26). In the failed state of Syria, the weakness of the government caused local identities to appear in contrary to the national identity. These identities and local groups have resorted to foreign aid, especially from Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, to confront the ruling government. Foreign aid claims have been responded by the foreign governments who are seeking opportunities, and thus Syria's control over its territory has weakened. In fact, this is the intervention of foreign governments that binds the problem of a failed state such as Syria to a regional system or regional security complex. Now the main question is "why one should consider a failed state like Syria as one of the main problematics of the Middle East regional system".

First, the existence of failed states can lead to the displacement of power in the structure of a regional system. Second, the failed states aggravate the rivalries between other states in a regional system. Third, the failed states lead the regional system to tension and competition, due to the tensions and rivalries they create. Fourth, the continuation of the state's failure means that the quality of interactions, and the nature of regional system, is based on a certain situation.

Fifth, the state's failure causes the trans regional actors to intervene in circumstances of that regional system. Interventions of trans regional actors can be an independent intervention in the problematic, or it can be requested

by the regional actors. Now that the problematic of state failure and its relation to the Middle East regional system was reviewed, the next step is to clarify how the problematic of the state's failure in Syria is able to define and determine other variables in Busan's theory of regional security complex.

**4-4-1. The Problematic of state failure in Syria and the "Boundary" as a variable**

In determining the boundary on the basis of the problematic of state failure in Syria, it should be noticed that in addition to Syria, which countries in the region are affected by this problematic. Apart from Iran and Hezbollah, which have direct interests in Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey also have intervened in this problematic, as they seek their interests in the future of Syria and seek to undermine the interests of Iran as their regional rival. Israel also seeks to guarantee its own interests by carrying out some military operations against Syria. In addition, Saudi Arabia, through creation of an Islamic military alliance has involved other countries, including Afghanistan, Oman, Yemen, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. So, the border that has been drawn up around the Syrian problematic includes east of Afghanistan, southeast of Oman, south of Yemen, west of Morocco, northwest of Turkey and north of Iran.

**4-4-2. Problematic of state failure in Syria and "Anarchy" as a variable**

In the Middle East regional system, the existence of failed states such as Syria has led to an increase in anarchy. Failed states such as Syria are not only unable to manage their domestic affairs including political, economic, and so on, but also create instability and insecurity, thereby causing fear and concern to members of the regional system, especially its main actors. Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey's inability to coordinate their goals and actions has caused the Syrian problematic not to be solved so far. This will increase the consequences of anarchy in the region. This situation has actuated various actors to take control of the region and thus has highlighted rivalries and hostilities. It should be pointed out that the problematic of failed states is not the only reason for the increase in the consequences of anarchy in the Middle East regional system, but due to the state failure in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, this problematic is one of the main reasons for the increase of anarchy in the current context of the Middle East regional system.

**4-4-3. The Problematic of state failure in Syria and “Interaction Patterns” as a variable**

Just as in anarchy, the patterns of interaction are also dependent on domestic, regional, and international factors, and can't be merely attributed to a particular factor, such as the Syrian failed state. In fact, the failed state of Syria is the context in which the pattern of interaction between involved states can be defined. When Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran are incapable of resolving the problematic of the Syrian failed state, this will increase anarchy in the region, so that Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey are seeking help inside Syria, in the region and the world, their interaction pattern is based on competition and hostility. This is the pattern emerging as the outcome of all the variables examined in relation to the Syrian failed state. However, it should be mentioned that there are now other problematics in the region, such as failed states of Yemen and Iraq, and the problematics of Bahrain, Hezbollah and Palestine-Israel, reviewing each of them requires separate consideration of the pre mentioned variables.

**4-4-4. The Problematic of state failure in Syria and the “Structure” as a variable**

The Relation between the Problematic of the Syrian failed states and the structure (distribution of power) in the Middle East regional system is related to the number of major actors in the region. Although this problematic does not play a decisive role in determining the distribution of power in the Middle East regional system, it can be used to determine how many main poles are actively and consistently involved. In response, it should be said that among the countries that lay within the border drawn around the problematic of Syrian failed state, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey are more active than others. Hence, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are the three main states that have been seriously and continuously involved with the Syrian problematic. These three states believe that their national securities have been more affected by the failure of the Syrian government. These countries are attempting to attract the coordination of other countries, such as the formation of an unwritten coalition between Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Iraq to fight ISIS and terrorists, or an unwritten coalition between Turkey and Qatar to support the Muslim Brotherhood or the Saudi-led Islamic coalition to fight terrorism.

Therefore, it can be said that the Syrian failed state has become an arena for regional competitions. (Salhani,2013; AlJazeera,2013; Natali,2016:253).

Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar consider Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and Hezbollah as the main cause of the conflict in Syria. Iran, in turn, reacts to Sunni Arab radical societies and the Salafist and Wahhabi ideology that directly targets Shi'a and non-Sunni Arab societies in the Middle East. Hence, what began as a popular protest against Assad, has become a representative sectarian war (2016:253-254). The Syrian civil war is also in the midst of a conflict between Sunni Arab opposition and jihadist groups, whilst ignoring the Sunni Muslim community, it prompts tensions between Kurds and Arabs.

On the other hand, the Syrian government is a threat to stable states and the whole region. Failed states often threaten other stable countries in the region. Persian Gulf monarchies, that are dependent on oil revenues or the authoritarian regimes who suppress their societies, are significantly challenged by the reduction in global oil prices, population growth, increased energy consumption, the growing demand for political freedom and costly regional conflicts (Al-Khateeb,2010:4-8;Natali,2016:251). Turkish President Rajab Tayeb Erdogan has failed to consolidate the democratic government and solve the Kurdish problem that has been struggling for decades. The resurgence of the Kurdistan Workers Party) PKK (against the Turkish government in July 2015, after a two-year ceasefire, has crippled parts of the south-east, while expanding to some of the city centers in the west and center of Turkey. (Gurcan,2015; Natali, 2016:251-252). The Kurdish rebellion and the Kurdish issue have not been resolved as a border threat. PKK insurgents have established bases in Kurdish areas of northern Iraq, Syria and Iran, and they have the public support of millions of people who seek more autonomy or independence in these areas. The coalition's support of the Kurdish forces in Syria affiliated to PKK, has exacerbated the perception of the threat to Turkey and Turkey's commitment to prioritize the fight against the PKK, rather than confronting ISIS.

To understand the three poles of power; Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey's viewpoint towards the Syrian failed state, and the feasibility of solving the problematic, the authors analyze the documents related to foreign policy of these three countries and the statements of their political officials using qualitative content analysis method. The data obtained from the study of the documents, evidence and statements of the officials of the three countries of

Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey about Syria, can be divided into four categories:

First feature; their viewpoint toward current Syrian government: While Iran considers Bashar al-Assad's government to be completely legitimate and believes that he is fighting terrorism, Saudi Arabia and Turkey consider Bashar al-Assad's government illegitimate and under the influence of Iran.

Second feature; their viewpoint toward challengers of the current Syrian government; Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey do not have any criterion for assessing the legitimacy of the challengers. While Iran considers unarmed opponents to be legitimate and armed ones to be illegitimate, Turkey and Saudi Arabia regard all opponents of Bashar al-Assad as legitimate, except the groups that are known as the international terrorist organizations. There are also a number of exceptions such as: Saudi Arabia opposing to the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, while Turkey supporting them.

Third feature: their viewpoint about the solution of the problematic of Syrian failed state: All three countries divide the solution in to two dimensions: political and military, and at three levels: domestic, regional and international. While the two countries of Saudi Arabia and Yemen consider the solution in two dimensions: political and military, Iran considers the solution merely political and believes that military confrontation must be limited to the terrorists. But the problem is that the three countries do not agree on which of the opposing groups are defined as terrorists.

Fourth feature: their viewpoint about the desirable future state in Syria: All three countries have a set of common criteria for the desirable future Syrian government, such as free elections, democracy, and preservation of the independence and territorial integrity of Syria. But the problem is that, Saudi Arabia and Turkey do not have a place for Assad in the future government, while Iran insists on foreigner's not electing candidates for future elections in any position, so that Assad can also be a candidate. While Saudi Arabia and Turkey believe that moderates should take positions in the future government, Iran insists on the election of the authorities by Syrian people. Therefore, in general, it can be said that the three regional poles of power mentioned above, do not agree on these four features. Thus, at least until the near future, there is no clear prospect for resolving Syria's problematic.

What Iran wants during the civil war, is that the current Syrian government can regain its sovereignty over its territory. Although Turkey also wants the Syrian government's sovereignty over the Kurdish territories of Syria and has so far requested joint work with Iran, but when the Syrian government wants to regain control of the province of Adlib, (the distance between Jarabulus and Azaza in northern Syria and other areas mentioned as a "tension reduction"), faces serious opposition from Turkey.

From the beginning of the Syrian crisis till the liberation of Aleppo in 2015, Turkey and Iran had serious disagreements. But after the liberation of Aleppo, when Iran and the Syria focused on fighting ISIS, and when Turkey was seeking to curtail the activities of the Syrian Kurds, the two sides came to a close.

Although Saudi Arabia, is not concerned with the developments in Syria as much as Turkey, has been eager to overthrow the government of Bashar al-Assad. According to reports, Saudi Arabia and its allies are going to rebuild the US-backed areas. If so, Saudi Arabia will rebuild the provinces of Haskah, Riqa, and the east coast of the Furat River in the west of Deir ez-Zor, which turns into a place to confront Syria. Given that the Syrian Kurds are backed by the United States; Turkey will not tolerate Saudi action. Although Turkey welcomes any support of the Syrian opposition, with the exception of the Kurds.

#### **4-4-5. The Problematic of state failure in Syria and the "Individual" as a variable**

In all three countries, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the individuals position is decisive in determining the policies of each of the countries in the Syrian government; now Saudi Arabia, Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud the king of Saudi Arabia, and especially Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has a key role in determining Saudi politics on Syria. Given that the king is suffering from Alzheimer's disease, Mohammed Bin Salman is the unofficial king of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed Bin Salman.

Based on the results obtained from the qualitative content analysis method, it can be said briefly that Malik Salman has a divergent, evolutionary, and bold spirit. Malik Salman courageously dared to break the tradition and, with the gradual elimination of rivals, actually gave power to his thirty-two-year-old son. This kind of personality has led to an aggressive or revisionist approach in their foreign policy. The Saudi-led coalition military strike in Yemen is an example of Salman's revisionist foreign policy. Mohammed bin

Salman (crown prince) believes he plays a key role in Saudi decision to intervene in the Yemen civil war. According to a report, Mohammed Bin Salman also has a major role in helping the Syrian rebels to abandon Bashar Al-Assad. Mohammed Bin Salman, is referred to as the architect of the Yemen war and the Qatar siege campaign, as well as the leader of Saudi Arabia modernization. (Deutsche Welle,2015) He is known as a pragmatic character inside Saudi Arabia and an aggressive character in confrontation with foreigners, especially Iranians. The attempt by Mohammed Bin Salman to modernize his country has transformed Saudi Arabia into the leader of the Sunni Arab world and the leader of confronting Shiite Iran.

His decisions in foreign and defensive policies also point to this fact. (Huggler,2015). Therefore, Mohammed Bin Salman can be referred to as an aggressive, revolutionary, and pragmatic character. The collection of these psychological characteristics has led Saudi Arabia to launch an aggressive, revolutionary, or revisionist foreign policy in the Middle East. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, due to the religious nature of the government and the position of the supreme leader as the head of the country, and the importance of the government (the executive branch of the political system) which is elected by the people, the "individual" has a special place in decision making.

The main principles of the Middle Eastern foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran have sustained for long. This can be mostly attributed to the leadership of Ayatollah Khamenei. He considers himself a revolutionary who should follow the principles of the Islamic revolution such as defending Palestine, destroying Israel, exporting the Islamic Revolution to the region, interacting and awakening the nations of the region, and confronting the presence of foreign powers in the region. The focal point of his character is the emphasis on being revolutionary. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran called the developments in Syria measures taken by regional and regional dissidents to undermine the changes in the resistance axis, and fully supported the Syrian government through the Quds and Hezbollah armies. So the foreign policy based on revolutionary approaches can be called an evolutionary foreign policy.

Party system in Turkey caused the role of individuals to be important. As democratic processes within the party do not make sense in the Turkish party system, all leaders tend to be authoritarian. In fact, in the Turkish party

system, not a political thought, but a few key figures are at the center of party processes. That is why the analysis of individual as a variable is necessary. Since Erdogan has become the Turkish president, he has been more at the center of the foreign policy process than former presidents. In other words, since 2003, Rajab Tayeb Erdogan is the most important figure in the political life of Turkey, insofar as this dominance is significant even on the basis of Turkey's standards. He has gradually dominated all political, military, and even judicial institutions of Turkey. According to the studies, it can be said that Erdogan is psychologically and behaviorally a person who believes he is able to control events. So he has an over-active political orientation, especially towards the Middle East and specifically toward Syria and Iraq. He believes in uncompromising dichotomies like friends and enemies, and justice and injustice. He also has suspicions about the actions and motives of others and he is constantly criticizing his external environment. (Görener & Ucal,2011:368). It can be said that foreign policy driven from this intellectual and behavioral framework is a transformational and revisionist foreign policy, especially in relation to the Middle East.

#### **4-4-6. The Problematic of failed state in Syria and the “international system” as a variable**

Although the present international system, according to theorists, is a uni-multi-polar system, centered on the United States as a superpower and a few great powers (Buzan, Heydari,1389:130), but This does not mean that all major powers are involved in the Syrian crisis. Indeed, what we see today is merely the engagement of the United States as an international pole in all Middle East crises, including the failed states as well as Russia's involvement as a major trans-regional power in the Syrian crisis. If we consider the European Union as a power pole, there are some limited roles in following the US in the region. On the other hand, there is no indication that other major transatlantic poles such as China and Japan want to intervene in the Middle East problems.

This means that, when examining the impact of the structure of the international system as a variable, we should simply address the policies of the United States and Russia, and examine the impact of the two countries' policies on the failed states. Syria is the only area in which Russia and the United States are simultaneously involved and competing. This means that



the developments in the future of Russia-United States relations affects the Syrian crisis.

**4-4-7.US and the problematic of the Syrian failed state**

US policy toward Syrian crisis since its beginning in 2011, has changed due to Syrian field developments, regional developments and US policymakers understanding of the nature of these developments. US policies and reactions to the Syrian since its inception in March 2011 contains some very important points that are being addressed.

- ≠ US Silence along with consent at the start of the Syrian crisis was due to the country's initial hope that the Syrian developments were similar to those of other Arab countries, such as Tunisia and Egypt, and the consolidation of the moderates in the country.
- ≠ The lack of military intervention in Syria was due to the Iraq experience, as well as the Obama administration's Middle Eastern approach. The United States of America believed that Iraq's experience has indicated that the collapse of the central government can't necessarily lead to the end of the crisis and the formation of a democratic state, despite the fact that it costs a lot for the United States.
- ≠ Lack of support from US western allies for a military strike against Syria, after the British Parliament voted against it and when Germany announced its opposition (Laub & Masters,2013).
- ≠ The reinforcement of extremist groups such as ISIS and Al-Nusra Front, as a result of the financial and military support of regional actors such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar on the one hand, and the entrance of Iran and Hezbollah into the Syrian crisis, led US officials have come to the conclusion that they need to change their policy. Therefore, they supported the Kurdish forces.

One of the most important goals of the US and its regional allies is to limit the benefits and influences of Iran and Russia and to form a pro-American government in Syria. In the current situation, the new US government has defined its priority as to fight against ISIS, especially in Syria.

**4-4-8. Russia and the problematic of the Syrian failed state**

Basically, after the end of the Second World War and the formation of the East and West blocs, Syria joined the Eastern Bloc under Soviet protection due to the Ba'ath Party rule and its socialist tendencies. This situation lasted until the end of the Cold War, and Russia tried to maintain its traditional

allies after the Cold War. This brief historical background implies that Syria is of great significance for Russia. Syria has geostrategic and geoeconomic significance for Russia in a way that preserving Syria helps Russia to strengthen its Middle Eastern position. Syria's geoeconomic significance for Russia can be considered from two perspectives: The Syrian weapons market and hydrocarbon potential in terms of investment and transport. Al-Saadi, (October6,2016). What has been mentioned so far about the importance of Syria caused Russia's intervention in the Syrian crisis. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011 the forms of Russian intervention have changed. In the early days of the Syrian crisis, the Russian government was silent in the hope that the Syrian government could overcome the emerging crisis itself. As soon as the regional actors began intervening in the Syrian crisis, the Russian government provided indirect military supports to Syria.

With the internationalization of the Syrian crisis and the intervention of transregional actors in the crisis, Russia has also sought to pursue its goals through weapons aids and political support in international assemblies especially in the Security Council. Indeed, as the Syrian crisis intensified, and the regional and transnational interventionists in Syria raised, Russia has also changed and updated its policy towards the Syrian crisis. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's first active presence in the Middle East as a major global power was the direct military presence in Syria in October 2015. This presence has exacerbated tensions in relations between Russia and the West.

The fight against ISIS in Syria has turned into at least three different conflicts: first, a severe civil war in Syria, second, part of a regional conflict, and third, a wide global conflict against terrorism and extremism, which is part of the competition between the United States and Russia and at the same time, part of the competition between the majority of the Arab world and Iran. Also, the war with ISIS is part of an emerging struggle to identify the "federalism" or independence of Kurdistan, which includes a wide range of separate Kurdish identities, Turkey and the Arab world. The conflict also involves the entire Syrian population (more than half of its citizens are now refugees or displaced persons). The influx of refugees has put pressure on Turkey and Jordan and ISIS attacks outside the Middle East threatened security of the United States and Europe. (Cordesman,2016). This data

represents a widespread and accurate picture of a huge human catastrophe. The shadow of war remains as a serious problem. (Cordesman,2016) This security dilemma has created a huge stream of refugees that could destabilize all the countries of the region and Europe. (Natali,2016: 256).

### **5. Conclusion**

In this paper, we tried to apply the variables presented in the regional security complex theory; "border, pole, anarchy and interaction pattern" and add a common variable called "problematic" for all regional systems, as well as two specific variables, called "Individual" and " the structure of the international system", specifically for the Middle East, to show the organic relationship between variables of a regional system or a security complex and through this we added to its explanatory and analytical richness. So it can be said that there are a number of common variables applicable for all regional systems, but at the same time there are a number of specific variables in each region which requires specific investigation.

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