

# MENA reconfiguring global balance

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**S P E E C H**

## 1. MENA as a key space of global rebalancing

The Middle East and North Africa — known under the acronym MENA — represent, more than ever, a crossroads of history, religion, energy, and geopolitics. Here, millennial civilizations, contemporary ideologies, and global economic interests collide and reshape themselves in a continuous process. We live in an era where transformations unfold at the pace of a historical revolution, and developments in this region have repercussions that reverberate worldwide. After more than seven decades of almost uninterrupted conflict, MENA now stands at the centre of a new strategic competition where energy, technology, and political influence intertwine within a transforming architecture of power:

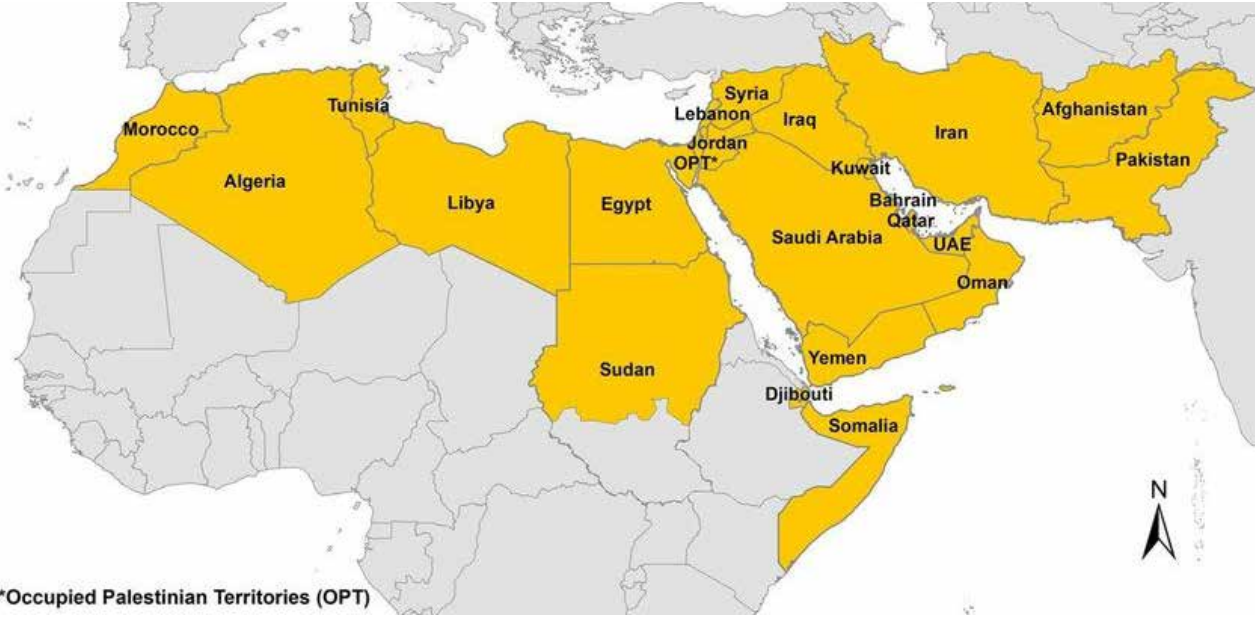
through which not only energy, but global stability itself, flows. Europe, faced with its own energy vulnerability since 2022, is rediscovering MENA's strategic role — not merely as an alternative source, but as an indispensable partner for energy transition and global security.

## 3. Strategic competition among major powers

Nowhere is the new global contest for influence more visible than in MENA. The United States, China, Russia, the European Union, and regional actors — India, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt, and others — simultaneously compete for space, resources, and narrative control. The United States seeks a balance between partial disengagement and sustained influence, relying on selective partnerships and the consolidation of the Abraham Accords. China promotes a subtle strategy: through the Belt and Road Initiative and



● ATLANTIC COUNCIL



**\*Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)**  
The map highlights countries that are often associated with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.  
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The region has become the symbol of the emerging multipolar world — one without a single hegemon, but with a complex network of regional and global powers that cooperate, compete, and condition one another. This multipolarity does not signify fragmentation, but rather a redistribution of decision-making centres and their adaptation to the logic of strategic interdependence.

## 2. Energy, strategic interdependence

Energy remains the keystone of power in the Middle East. The Persian Gulf States — Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates — still hold a dominant share of the world's oil and gas reserves. However, they no longer play the passive role of resource suppliers. Over the past two decades, these countries have evolved into strategic decision centres, diversifying their economies and investments in technology, infrastructure, defence, and green energy. A new form of power is thus emerging: not the one that merely extracts the resource, but the one that transforms it, directs it, and connects it. Green hydrogen, solar energy from the Maghreb, trans-Saharan interconnections, maritime corridors, and port infrastructures now form the circulatory system of the global economy. Energy has become not only the source but also the language of contemporary geopolitics. As shown in my previous analyses on BRICS and "Globalisation 2.0," the redistribution of energy and technological flows is shifting the global centre of gravity from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific, with MENA serving as the critical interface between the Global South and the industrialised North. Energy corridors — from Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb to Suez and the Eastern Mediterranean — are the arteries

its mediation role (e.g., between Iran and Saudi Arabia), it asserts itself as a major economic and diplomatic actor — without direct military presence. Russia, though weakened by the war in Ukraine, maintains strategic anchors in Syria, Iran, and Algeria, cultivating asymmetric networks of influence. The European Union remains the main trade partner, yet it still lacks a coherent security strategy for the region. Meanwhile, India discreetly expands its economic and technological footprint in the Persian Gulf and East Africa, while BRICS+ increasingly emerges as an attractive platform for Arab states seeking to diversify their financial and energy partnerships. Regional actors are also asserting greater autonomy:

- Iran capitalises on the "Axis of Resistance" (Hezbollah, the Houthis, Shia armed groups);
- Saudi Arabia diversifies its partnerships and aspires to a global role within BRICS+;
- Turkey adopts a flexible stance between NATO, Russia, and the Muslim world;
- Israel, as I have shown in the study "Super Sparta", strengthens its technological and intelligence power, but faces a serious erosion of image and growing diplomatic isolation amid the Gaza crisis.

In the logic of the new realpolitik, competition is no longer purely military but also narrative: each actor strives to define the meaning of world order, to impose its own framework of legitimacy and its own version of international normality.

## 4. Security, instability — fragile equilibria

The Gaza crisis remains the epicentre of tensions. After a year of open conflict, the human and political toll is tragic: tens of thousands of victims, massive destruction, a paralysed peace process, and a climate of hatred fuelling new gen-

erations of radicalism. The assassination of Hamas and Hezbollah leaders has not brought stability, only a pause between two phases of the same confrontation. The war in Gaza has become a symbol of a world increasingly unable to negotiate lasting peace — the latest agreement concluded in Egypt being a telling example. Behind the military confrontation lies a battle for narrative control: who is the aggressor, who is the victim, and who defines the legitimacy of action? This is the purest expression of the strategic narrative — a concept that redefines the relationship between power and perception in the 21st century. The expansion of the conflict through at-

tacks from Yemen and the pressure on Red Sea maritime routes shows that regionalised warfare has already become a reality. Against this backdrop, Egypt, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia attempt cautious mediation efforts, but the lack of consensus among major powers keeps peace as more declarative than substantive objective. Security in MENA today is a fragile mosaic in which local stability depends on global balances, and each conflict represents a link in a broader geopolitical chain. In a deeper historical sense, we are witnessing a reactivation of post-Ottoman fragmentations, where symbolic frontiers have returned stronger than geographic ones.

## 5. MENA as laboratory of the new world order

The Middle East and North Africa have become the testing ground of the multipolar order. Here intersect the new forms of power: economic, energetic, technological, and informational. Here, too, the parameters of European security are indirectly being shaped. The region is no longer merely an object of great power competition, but an autonomous actor capable of influencing global trends. In a world where the "force of arms" is increasingly replaced by the power of connections, true influence will be measured by the ability to understand, anticipate, and connect. The future will not belong solely to the greatest powers, but also to those who can build bridges between them.

*The full speech was delivered at the 11th MEPEI Forum "Middle East from Chaos to the New (dis)Order".*



● A visitor discusses products at a booth at the 29th Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining, and Petrochemical Exhibition, also known as Iran Oil Show 2025, in Tehran, Iran, on May 11, 2025.  
● SHANA

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