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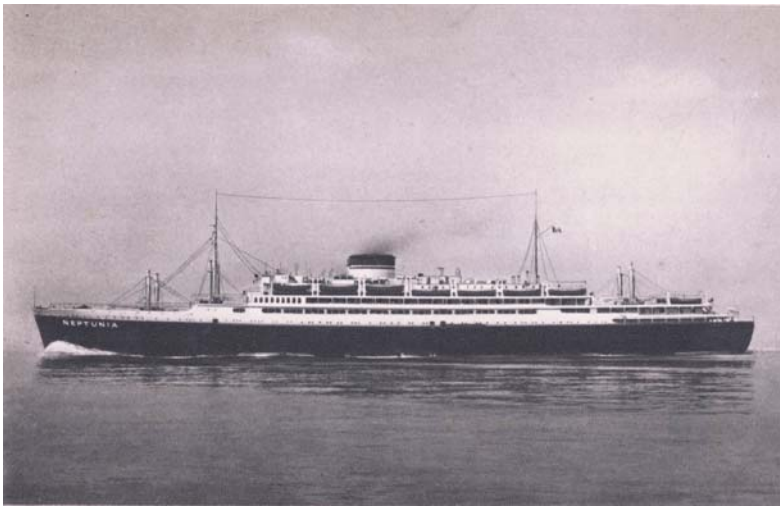

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THE FORTIFICATION OF THE ARAB STATES' BORDERS IN THE SUB-REGIONAL CONTEXTS

La fortificación de las fronteras de los Estados árabes en los contextos subregionales

La fortification des frontières des États Arabes dans les contextes sous-régionaux

Said SADDIKI[1]

I.INTRODUCTION - II. THE FORTIFICATION OF ARAB BORDERS: SECURITY AND POLITICAL GOALS - 1. BORDER WALLS IN THE MAGHREB REGION- 2. BORDER WALLS IN THE MIDDLE EAST - III. THE FORTIFICATION OF ARAB BORDERS AND EXISTING REGIONAL SUBSYSTEMS - IV. CONCLUSION

ABSTRACT: The post-cold war period has witnessed a remarkable increase of the fortification and militarization of territorial borders as a direct result of new transnational challenges, including terrorism, irregular migration, drug trafficking and weapons smuggling. Today, there are about 65 border walls around the world; most of them were built in the last three years especially in the Arab World and Eastern Europe. Although the fortifications of the Arab States' borders differ in contexts and reasons, they are generally similar in structure and techniques used in their construction. The prevention of irregular immigration remains the major goal in the other regions of the world especially in North America and Eastern Europe; however, security goals, mainly the prevention of the infiltration of armed groups, are the main reasons of the fortification of Arab borders. In addition to the security goals, the current Arab border fortifications intend to prevent regular migration, goods smuggling, and drug trafficking. Furthermore, this policy strives, in some cases, to unilaterally impose the de facto border. The key question the paper addresses is: to what extent does this fortification of Arab borders reflect the nature of the existing regional subsystems? The paper takes into account that Arab regional subsystems are characterized by mutual mistrust and suspicion, which prevent Arab states to adopt common security border policies. In addition, the current border policies are inseparable from the way in which the postcolonial Arab states' borders were drawn.
KEYWORDS: Border, fence, wall, trench, Arab States, regional subsystems, border fortification, immigration and armed groups.

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RESUMEN: El periodo posguerra fría ha sido testigo de un aumento notable de la fortificación y militarización de las fronteras territoriales como resultado directo de los nuevos desafíos transnacionales, incluidos el terrorismo, la migración irregular, el tráfico de drogas y el contrabando de armas. Hoy en día, existe alrededor de 65 muros fronterizos en todo el mundo; la mayoría de ellos fueron construidos en los últimos tres años, especialmente en el mundo árabe y Europa del Este. Aunque las fortificaciones de las fronteras de los Estados árabes difieren en contextos y razones, en general son similares en estructura y técnicas utilizadas en su construcción. La prevención de la inmigración irregular sigue siendo el objetivo principal en las otras regiones del mundo, especialmente en América del Norte y Europa del Este; sin embargo, los objetivos de seguridad, principalmente la prevención de la infiltración de grupos armados, son las principales razones del fortalecimiento de las fronteras árabes. Además de los objetivos de seguridad, las fortificaciones actuales de las fronteras árabes pretenden evitar la migración regular, el contrabando de bienes y el tráfico de drogas. Además, esta política se esfuerza, en algunos casos, para imponer unilateralmente la frontera de facto. La principal cuestión que trata este artículo es: ¿en qué medida la fortificación de las fronteras árabes refleja la naturaleza de los subsistemas regionales existentes? El articulo toma en consideración que los subsistemas regionales árabes se caracterizan por la desconfianza y la desconfianza mutua, lo que impide que los Estados árabes adopten políticas comunes para la seguridad de las fronteras. Además, las políticas fronterizas actuales son inseparables de la forma en que se dibujaron las fronteras de los Estados árabes después de la etapa colonial.
PALABRAS CLAVE: Frontera, valla, muro, trinchera, Estados árabes, subsistemas regionales, fortificación fronteriza, inmigración y grupos armados.

RÉSUME : La période de l'après-guerre froide a connu une augmentation remarquable de la fortification et de la militarisation des frontières territoriales, conséquence directe des nouveaux défis transnationaux, notamment le terrorisme, la migration irrégulière, le trafic de drogue et la contrebande d'armes. Aujourd'hui, il existe environ 65 murs frontaliers dans le monde entier. La plupart d'entre eux ont été construits au cours des trois dernières années, en particulier dans le Monde Arabe et en Europe Orientale. Bien que les fortifications des frontières des États arabes soient différents ; dans leurs contextes et leurs raisons, leur structure et leurs techniques, elles demeurent néanmoins similaires. Si la prévention de l'immigration irrégulière reste l'objectif majeur dans les autres régions du monde, notamment en Amérique du Nord et en Europe de l'Est, dans le monde arabe les principales raisons du renforcement des frontières sont d'ordre sécuritaire, principalement la prévention de l'infiltration des groupes armés. Outre ces objectifs de sécurité, les fortifications actuelles de la frontière arabe ont pour objectif d'empêcher les migrations régulières, la contrebande de marchandises et le trafic de drogue. En outre, cette politique s'efforce, dans certains cas, d'imposer *de facto* la frontière. La question principale qu'aborde cet article est la suivante : dans quelle mesure la fortification des frontières arabes reflète-t-elle la nature des sous-systèmes régionaux existants ? Cette analyse prend en considération le fait que les sous-systèmes régionaux arabes se caractérisent par la méfiance réciproque qui empêche les États d'adopter des politiques communes en matière de sécurité frontalière.

MOTS CLÉS : Frontière, barrière, mur, tranchée, États arabes, sous-systèmes régionaux, fortification des frontières, immigration et groupes armés.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the Arab world, the construction of border barriers is relatively a new phenomenon compared to other cases across the world. Except for walls built on the perimeters of the old cities to protect them from attacks of invaders and looters, the pre-colonial Arab world was almost entirely open and with no internal borders because it was governed, most of the time, by large empires. During the colonial period, some colonial authorities erected fences along some borders as the Italians did when they constructed a 186-mile barbed wire fence along the Libya-Egypt border in the region of Cyrenaica to prevent guerrillas from getting reinforcements and supplies from Egypt and slipping back and forth across the border.[2] In Palestine, the British Mandate constructed fences along the Palestine border with both Lebanon and Syria to prevent militants from joining the 1936–1939 Palestinian revolt. Those fences were abandoned and dismantled during World War II.[3]

The first modern separation barriers in the Arab World were built by Israel in the occupied territories. In the aftermath of the 1967 war, Israel constructed a huge sand wall (was knowns as the Bar-Lev Line) stretched for 170 kilometers in the Sinai Peninsula to consolidate the military gains resulting from the war.[4] In the 1980s, Morocco constructed a 2,200 km military sand wall in Western Sahara as a defensive line against the separatists.[5] The Western Sahara wall was considered the longest military barrier at the time. In the early 1990s, Kuwait erected barbed wire fences along its border with Iraq in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Since then, the Arab region has witnessed a growing number of border barriers over the past two decades due to the new security challenges facing the region, making the Arab world the most walled region in the world. These walls and fences are not just physical fortifications, but are also sophisticated, high-tech, and costly surveillance systems.

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[2] Vanderwalle, D, *A History of Modern Libya,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 30.

[3] Saddiki, S, *World of Walls: Structure, Roles and Effectiveness of Separation Barriers,* Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017, p.27.

[4] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[5] Saddiki, S, "The Sahara Wall: Status and Prospects", *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 27, No 2: 2012, pp. 199-212.

The regional subsystem is an appropriate framework to study the phenomenon of the fortification of national borders in the Arab world "since most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones,"[6] and also because the nature and structure of the regional subsystem largely affect border management policies. The Arab world, as a large region, has been divided by some authors into three regional subsystems: the Gulf, the Levant and the Maghreb.[7] Some authors regard the Middle-East as two small separate subsystems: the Gulf and the Levant. For historical and social reasons, this paper distinguishes between two main quasi-autonomous Arab subsystems: The Middle-East and the Maghreb. Arab regional subsystems are not strictly separate from each other and there are no buffer or insulator states between them. Rather, they are intertwined and interdependent, but each one is characterized by a specific structure, entities and interactions. Egypt can be seen as a joint country between the two regional subsystems, but it is more connected to the Middle East region. Arab regional subsystems are formed by states that are relatively equal in weight[8]. There are no big powers that can impose themselves as uncontested regional hegemon, or at least as pivotal states, in all Arab subsystems. Therefore, ambitious regional actors are in constant competition for regional influence and leadership. Regardless of the major influence of non-state actors on the current border management in the Arab world, states remain the main actor in the Arab regional subsystems.

Security threats, disputed borders and competition for influence are the main determinants that generate Arab regional subsystems. Bury Buzan and Ole Wæver argue that regional security complex (RSC) mainly depends on security interdependence among a group of states or other actors within a region.[9] The structure and determinants of Arab subsystems are ever-changing and affected by a large set of determinants that shape the preferences of decision-makers including security threats, disputed borders and competition for influence. Although Israel was seen in the past as the main threat to the Arab 'security', especially in the Middle-East, it is no longer the source

[6] Buzan, B, and Wæver, O., *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.4

[7] Ibid., p. 188.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., p.229.

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of security and military threats. Instead, it is seen by some Arab leaders as a potential partner against new security challenges.

II. THE FORTIFICATION OF ARAB BORDERS: SECURITY AND POLITICAL GOALS

Despite the diversity of goals of contemporary border security barriers, they can be summarized in four major objectives: to prevent the infiltration of members of armed groups and separatist movements; to stop irregular migration; to prevent smuggling of all kinds of contraband – foods, drugs, weapons…— or only to impose de facto borders. In the Arab world, most of the new border fortifications have been created for purely security purposes that are imposed by new cross-border security challenges. Irregular migration is the main cause of most physical border walls around the world, particularly in Europe and North America; however, most of the new Arab border barriers (fences, trenches, sand curtains…etc) have been built to stop infiltration of armed groups and arms smuggling. Although the fortifications that were built by some Arab countries on their borders in recent years differ in context and reasons, they are generally similar in shape, structure and techniques used in their construction.

1. BORDER WALLS IN THE MAGHREB REGION

The Moroccan-Algerian border has been closed since 1994, following an armed attack on a hotel in Marrakech, of which the Algerian security services were accused by Morocco. The current fortification of the Moroccan-Algerian border is carried out simultaneously on both sides and without coordination between the two neighboring countries. The competition for regional influence between Morocco and Algeria and their many political differences, especially on the question of Western Sahara, prevented the two countries from coordinating their efforts and agreeing on a unified strategy to fortify and monitor their borders. In 2014, Morocco began to build a fence along 150 km of its north-eastern border with Algeria. The fence is equipped with electronic sensors to prevent the infiltration of members of armed groups, migrants, and other irregular cross-border movements.[10] On the other side of the border, since 2013, Algeria began to establish its own border barrier with

[10] Saddiki, S., "Fortifying the Morocco-Algeria Border: Security Concerns and Regional Competition," paper presented at the International Conference "Borders, Walls and Vio-

Morocco. The Algerian barrier is a trench reinforced by an electronic system to strengthen monitoring on its land border with Morocco. In 2014, Algeria adopted a new security strategy that turned its borders with five neighboring countries, including Morocco, to military zones.

Although Morocco and Algeria have simultaneously initiated the fortification of their common land borders, the priorities of their objectives vary according to the specific challenges of each country. Combating the security threat of cross-border armed groups is the top priority of Algeria›s policy to control its borders, especially with Mali, Libya and Tunisia, whereas it is only a secondary objective with regard to its border with Morocco, where the fight against smuggling, especially gasoline, is the main objective.[11] Almost everything was being smuggled across the Morocco-Algeria border before the large fortification process that the two countries had pursued over the past three years. The smuggling was mainly carried out from Algeria to Morocco due to a large disparity in prices between the two countries, especially gasoline, which was benefiting from significant government subsidies in Algeria.[12]

For Morocco, preventing irregular migration and combating the infiltration of armed groups are the primary objectives of the fence that was built by the Moroccan authorities on some parts of its north-eastern border with Algeria. Although the land border between the two countries has been closed since 1994, it remains one of the most favored areas of sub-Saharan African migrants to enter Morocco via Algeria. Stopping drug trafficking on the two sides of the border is one the common objectives of both the Moroccan fence and the Algerian trench. While Algeria is the main source of hallucinogenic tablets seized in Morocco, the latter remains the main source of cannabis entering Algeria.[13]

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lence: Costs and Alternatives to Border Fencing" organized by the Raoul Dandurand Chair at the University of Quebec at Montreal, Canada, June 2-3, 2016.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Hanlon, Q. and Herbert, M. "Border Security Challenges in the Grand Maghreb.", *Peaceworks,* No 109, 2015, p.7.

[13] United States Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control*, March 1, 2010, p.108.

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In addition to the security objectives, political reasons are the indirect goal of fortifying the common borders between the two countries, especially from the Algerian side. Morocco has repeatedly called for the reopening of the land border between the two countries for economic reasons. However, Algeria still refuses to do so because it is not in its political and economic interest to respond positively to this request, at least in the near term.

As Algeria faces security challenges on its border with Tunisia and Libya, the Algerian government has begun building a wire barbed fence along its border with these two neighboring countries. The fence, which extends about 350 kilometers and is 3 meters high, aimed at the same security objectives as most other Arab countries› fortifications. The security turmoil in Libya is the most important factor that led Algeria to tighten control on its borders with Libya and Tunisia. Libya remains a fertile area for the activities of many cross-border armed groups which have carried out operations in neighboring countries. With regard to the immediate objectives, the new Algerian security strategy was meant to achieve two main goals: to stop the infiltration of armed groups and prevent the smuggling of weapons into the Algerian territory. It is worth mentioning that, in the past two decades, Algeria has witnessed a series of bombings of government and corporate buildings and kidnappings of foreigners carried out by members of armed groups traveling through its long border, especially in the south of the country.

On the Tunisian-Libyan border, the Tunisian government began building security fortifications on its border with Libya in April 2015 due to the security unrest in Libya. It is a double border barrier consisting of water trenches and a sand wall that were built in parallel to one another.[14] This fortification runs along 220 kilometers on the Tunisian-Libyan border of about 500 km and was built five kilometers from the border. The fortification was built with international financial and technical support and it cost about $75 million. This expense is relatively modest compared to budgets of some other border fences such as the Saudi fences on its border with Yemen and Iraq. Tunisia adopted this security strategy because of the growing security unrest in Libya. The decision to fortify the border is made immediately after the attack on the Bardo National Museum in Tunis in March 2015 carried out by terrorists who infiltrated into Tunisia through its border with Libya. So, the

[14] Amara, T., "Tunisia finishes Libya border fence intended to keep out militants." Reuters, February 6, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-tunisia-security-idUSKCN0VF0VR>

primary objective of the fortification of the Tunisia-Libya border is to stop the infiltration of members of armed groups from Libya into Tunisia.

In northern Morocco, the Spanish authorities have completely fenced off Ceuta and Melilla to prevent Sub-Saharan immigrants from entering the two enclaves.Ceuta and Melilla, and other Moroccan Mediterranean islands, are still occupied by Spain since the end of the Reconquista. The fencing of perimeters of the two enclaves began in 1993 with the support of the European Union (EU). Since then, Spanish authorities have reinforced and renovated these fortifications using advanced technology, including infrared cameras, video and audio sensors, monitoring towers and radar systems. The fences of Ceuta and Melilla are part of the EU›s policy of fortifying its external borders against irregular migration. Given the geographical location of these two enclaves as a de facto border of the EU in North Africa, they have become a destination for thousands of sub-Saharan African migrants over the last two decades. Irregular migrants prefer this destination because they can reach the «European Territory» once they enter one of the two cities, and this route is less dangerous than sailing on "death-boats" across the Mediterranean Sea or the Atlantic Ocean towards an unknown fate. In addition to the stated objective, the erection of fences of the Ceuta and Melilla has other long-term goals that are fundamentally linked to the legal and political status of the two disputed cities. It is therefore possible to say that the construction of these fences is one of the measures through which Spain aims to consolidate the status quo of the occupation as an essential element of a comprehensive Spanish strategy that takes various forms and steps, including the construction of wire fences, de facto delimitation of the border with Morocco, granting autonomy to the two occupied enclaves, frequent visits of the King of Spain and members of Spanish government to the two cities and the enactment of strict immigration laws.

In the south, Morocco built a sand wall in Western Sahara in the mid-1980s to stop attacks of the separatist movement.[15] This wall does not constitute Morocco‘s international border with Mauritania and Algeria. It is merely a defensive sand wall that was built on Moroccan territory leaving a buffer zone in the south and east of the wall to avoid chasing POLISARIO guerillas

[15] Saddiki, S., "The Sahara Wall: Status and Prospects"...cit., p.204.

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into Algerian territory or violating Mauritanian sovereignty. The wall has had a major impact on the conflict and favored the Moroccan military strategy.

Although the sand wall was initially built for defensive purposes, since the early 1990s, its functions have significantly changed after the establishment of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). At the end of 1997 and the beginning of 1998, MINURSO signed a military agreement with Morocco and Polisario, whereby the wall became a milestone for determining the obligations of the two parties and clarifying the operational framework of MINURSO ceasefire monitoring efforts.[16] Now, the sand wall is playing new roles pertaining to the growing security challenges in the Sahel and Sahara region, particularly irregular migration, drug trafficking and the activities of armed groups.

2. BORDER WALLS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

One of the direct security implications of the Second Gulf War in 1991 is that the states of the region started to fortify their borders by constructing fences equipped with advanced surveillance technologies. Iraq and Yemen are the most targeted countries by these border fences. However, it is worth distinguishing between barriers of Arab countries that are officially justified by security and political concerns and those established by Israel in order to perpetuate the occupation and annex more Palestinian land.

Kuwait was the first country to adopt this strategy in the Middle East. It erected a wire fence of 190 km along its border with Iraq after its liberation from the Iraqi invasion in 1991. The fence was built on the basis of Security Council resolution 687 of 3 April 1991 establishing a demilitarized zone between Iraq and Kuwait, which extended 10 km inside Iraq and five km inside Kuwait. In 2004, Kuwait decided to build a new wire fence along 217 Km of its border with Iraq from Umm Qasr to the confluence of the borders of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. In 2006, the Kuwaiti and Iraqi governments agreed to complete the wall. The agreement also included compensation for Iraqi farmers affected by this fence. The Kuwaiti fence had a principal political goal aimed at defining the international border between the two countries and preventing the re-invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. The secondary security

[16] MINURSO, Military Agreement No. 1 signed by MINURSO with the Royal Moroccan Army (RMA) and the Frente POLISARIO respectively, <http://web.archive.org/web/20090210055157/http://www.minurso.unlb.org/monitoring.html>.

goal intended to stop the infiltration of individuals trying to enter Kuwaiti territory. But with the changing security environment in the region during the years following the fall of Saddam Hussein›s regime, the secondary goal has become a primary objective, especially after Iraq has become a breeding ground for armed groups. This explains why the Kuwaiti authorities is constantly restoring, expanding and enhancing the fence by more with advanced monitoring technologies.

Saudi Arabia is one of the Arab countries most vulnerable to cross-border threats because of the length and porosity of its borders, as well as its proximity to unstable areas. Immediately after the Second Gulf War, Saudi Arabia began to think of building a border fence along its border with Iraq. In 2008, the Saudi Ministry of the Interior launched an international tender for the construction of a huge fence whose first phase was estimated to cost $907 million.[17] In 2009, Saudi Arabia actually started building a fence along 900 km on its border with Iraq. This security barrier consists of a three-tiered barbed wire, remote sensors, night vision cameras and military bases. The construction of the fence has been accelerated in recent years following the growing activities of the organization of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) near Saudi territory. On its southern border, Saudi Arabia started in 2003 erecting a border fence with Yemen along 1,800 km and three meters high, but the construction was halted due to Yemen›s objections. The erection of the fence resumed in 2011 after the outbreak of the uprising in Yemen.[18] The Saudi-Yemeni border fence is an example of how security reasons pushed the Saudi authorities to build one of the longest border fences in the world. The length and permeability of the Saudi-Yemeni border further exacerbate the security challenges. Irregular migration, drug trafficking, weapons smuggling and infiltration of militants are the most important reasons that led Saudi Arabia to allocate a huge budget to build this fence and reinforce it with sophisticated monitoring systems.

Although the UAE does not face direct security risks on its borders by armed groups, it has adopted a sophisticated border security policy. It has

[17] Global Security, "Saudi Border Security Program," *Global Security*, May 20, 2017. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/saudi/miksa.htm>.

[18] Fevrier, R., "La «grande muraille» de l'Arabie Saoudite contre l'Etat islamique," *Temps Reel*, January 18, 2015. <http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/monde/20150118.OBS0206/la-grande-muraille-de-l-arabie-saoudite-contre-l-etat-islamique.html>.

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fenced its entire border with Oman and equipped it with sophisticated surveillance technologies. Since 2005, the UAE has also initiated fencing its border with Saudi Arabia as part of a comprehensive UAE policy to secure its borders. Irregular migrants and smuggling, especially cars, are the most important reasons for fortifying the UAE border with Oman, whereas the political goal is the main proponent of the fortification of its borders with Saudi Arabia. The Emirati fence on the Saudi border primarily aimed at defining the de facto border, which has long been the subject of controversy because of the presence of significant oil reserves in some areas of the common border regions.

For its part, Oman decided to build a security fence on its border with Yemen after the intensification of Yemen›s internal crisis due to fear of its security repercussions and to stop arms smuggling and infiltration of members of armed groups. Since then, the Yemeni government has contracted with companies specialized in fortifying national borders, but there are currently no indications of the implementation of this project.

On the Egyptian-Palestinian border, Egypt began in 2009 digging an underground wall on its border with the Gaza Strip to block tunnels used by Palestinians to break the embargo imposed on Gaza since 2007. The wall consists of iron sheets and sensors, which are connected to pipes that can be used to saturate the ground around the wall with pumped-in seawater in order to make the tunnels collapsible.[19]

Israeli separation barriers, whether inside Palestine or on its borders with the rest of the Arab states, are one of the pillars of the Israeli security doctrine. Since its inception in 1948, Israel has erected various separation walls and barriers, which, though are different in structure and effectiveness, are similar in purpose. Israebs fences and walls can be distinguished, based on their geographical locations, into three types: barriers separating Israelis and Palestinians, barriers separating Palestinians themselves, and de facto border barriers separating Israel from Arab states. With regard to the objectives of the Israeli barriers, although each of them was established in a special context, their goals are highly intertwined. This reality is largely explained by the assumption that Israeli walls and fences derive their political rationale from the same policy. Security concerns and the annexation of more Palestinian

[19] Ursula, L., "Egypt's Wall," Middle East Research and Information Project, February 2010. <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero020110>.

land are the cornerstones of this Israeli policy. The intensified militarization of Israeli dividing lines and the establishment of buffer zones with Arab countries, whether in Gaza, the West Bank, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria or Jordan, aimed at perpetuating the occupation or at least monitoring the «other side". Regardless of UN resolutions recognizing the existence of the Jewish state within the 1949 armistice lines, the way and context in which it was founded made Israel in a hostile environment and abnormal situation. Although most Arab states recognize Israel at least implicitly, their people have never accepted normalization with the Jewish state. The Israeli separation walls reflect, to some extent, the constant fear which Israel feels.

On the Syrian border with Turkey, after the escalation of the civil war in Syria and the spread of security repercussions to neighboring countries, the Turkish government decided to establish a security fortification on its border with Syria, which extends over 900 km to stop the entry of militants from Syria into Turkish territory. This decision was made immediately after the suicide bombing in the town of Suruç in the South East of Turkey, which killed 32 people in July 2015.[20]

III. THE FORTIFICATION OF ARAB BORDERS AND EXISTING REGIONAL SUBSYSTEMS

Regional changes have prompted Arab states to radically change their border policies in recent years. New border policies take different aspects, including the erection of walls and fences, digging trenches and using advanced security control mechanisms. Accordingly, many questions are raised about the relation between this phenomenon and the situation of Arab "nation-states". Is the fortification of territorial borders an aspect of the erosion of Arab states or a consolidation of their sovereignty and capability to control their territories?

Some liberal theories affirm that the nation-state is undergoing further erosion and decay because of cross-border security challenges, modern technological developments in transport and communication, and the growing influence of non-state actors. This view sees the current fortification of na-

[20] Calderwood, I., "Shutting the door after the horse has bolted!", *Daily Mail*, October 16, 2015. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3274756/Shutting-door-horse-bolted-Turkey-begins-build-wall-border-Syria-bid-halt-jihadis-crossing-illegally-join-ISIS.html>.

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tional borders as a desperate attempt by the nation-state to confront different aspects of globalization and cross-border interactions. However, assuming that the nation-state is losing its control over the national border is misleading because it erroneously presumes that the nation-state has effectively monitored its border in the past, but in fact, there was no «golden age» of absolute state control over national territory.[21] The fact that the state was constantly changing undermines the argument of a borderless world and the demise of the nation-state and gives more relevance to theories arguing that the fortification of national borders by building walls or digging trenches reaffirms the centrality of the nation-state as the dominant actor in both national and international affairs.

In fact, the current fortification of the frontier is a manifestation of instability resulting from the unipolar system and the emergence of independent sub-groups in failed states that pose a real threat to the internal security.[22] In order to maximize national security in this anarchical environment, states take preventive measures to fortify their borders.[23] In other words, border fortification reflects the nation-state's determination to protect sovereignty against external threats to its national security, as well as its constant tendency to stabilize existing borders.

Given recent theoretical and practical developments in international politics, it is more likely that territorial borders in the Arab region or elsewhere, despite all the challenges they face, do not tend to disappear or eclipse, but they are also not immune to change. Instead, they are being reshaped by creating new methods of monitoring and controlling cross-border movements, including the militarization of some areas to exclude irregular transnational activities. Even in Western countries, although the traditional military and economic functions of the border are declining, the fortification of borders

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[21] Thomson, J. and Krasner, S., "Global Transactions and the Consolidation of Sovereignty," In *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s*, edited by Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James N. Rosenau, 1989, Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, p. 189.

[22] Beaulieu-Brossard, P., and David, C.P., "Le blindage des frontières selon les théories des Relations Internationales : contribution et dialogue," *L'Espace Politique,* July 18, 2013. <http://journals.openedition.org/espacepolitique/2637>.

[23] Waltz, K., "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security* 25, no. 1: 2000, p. 30.

to control irregular aspects of globalization has expanded considerably. Even if globalization has diluted military and economic borders, it has significantly enhanced the border policing function.[24] In the Arab world, despite all the dangers that threaten Arab states, especially after the "Arab Spring" uprisings, they remain until now the main political and economic actors and the symbol of national identity. In addition to security objectives, the fortification of borders of Arab countries borders can also be regarded as a means to legitimize their existence.

In terms of existing regional subsystems, external determinants are the most important reasons for the current fortification of Arab borders. Moreover, these factors are closely related to the nature of existing regional subsystems, especially the Maghreb and the Middle East. Most of these fortifications reflect the mutual suspicion and fear among neighboring Arab countries and their inability to agree on common ways to secure their borders. This anarchical and confused situation has prompted many countries in the region to unilaterally secure their borders with more physical and virtual fortifications. In addition to the reasons mentioned above, there are two important historical factors that have created the ground for this turbulent and anarchicalregional situation: First, the arbitrary demarcation of the territorial borders by the colonial powers and, secondly, the way in which the post-colonial Arab states were constructed.

In the Maghreb, although Morocco and Algeria signed a land demarcation agreement on July 15, 1972, which ratified by Algeria on 17 May 19, 1973, Morocco waited almost a decade to ratify it on May 28, 1992. Morocco's delay in ratifying this agreement had raised Algeria's fear of Morocco's ambitions for regional hegemony. The fortification of the Moroccan-Algerian land border can be seen as an aspect of the current Maghreb subsystem, which is marked by a regional anarchy because of mutual fear and suspicion between the two rival states and the absence of a strong regional organization that can foster trust between them. At the same time, there is no real common enemy that can push the two countries to reconcile their border policies. The sand wall in Western Sahara falls within this context and reflects the complex (intra)-regional rivalry between Maghreb countries, especially Morocco and Algeria. In contrast to most analysts, who see the Western Sahara issue as

[24] Andreas, P., "Redrawing the Line: Borders and Security in the Twenty-First Century." *International Security* 28, no. 2: 2003, p. 84.

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the main cause of the permanent tension between Morocco and Algeria, I argue that this dispute is merely an aspect of the existing Maghreb regional subsystem, which is reflected in the competition between the two countries.

In the Gulf region, there are no serious internal threats. Major security threats come from cross-border armed groups and neighboring countries. Gulf states successfully contained the potential security and social internal threat thanks to huge oil revenues. At the regional level, despite the existence of an important regional organization that includes all the countries of the region, namely the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), has not yet been able to adopt common policies for joint management of internal and external borders. This highly ambiguous regional situation is explained by many factors including competing foreign policies of the member states of the GCC, the absence of trust among them, and some latent border disputes that are still unresolved. A similar situation exists to the relations between the Gulf states and their neighbors in the region, mainly Yemen and Iraq. This explains why these two countries are the most targeted Arab countries by border fortifications from the other side of their borders. Today, the Gulf region is the most fenced place in the World. It is, in fact, a complicated border fencing that applies to bothexternal and intra-regional borders in the Gulf.

IV. CONCLUSION

The new Arab border barriers are primarily constructed for security reasons, mainly to prevent the infiltration of armed groups, but, in the same time, they reflectsthe nature of the existing Arab regional subsystems. In other words, terrorism and other trans-border security threats are the direct reasons of this phenomenon; however, the architecture of the current regional subsystems and the nature of the balance of power between neighboring Arab countries are the major determinants of their policies toward further fortification of their common land borders.

Although the new Arab border barriersare build in different security and political contexts, they are generally similar in structure and techniques used in their construction. However, the Arab states differ in the capabilities to invest high-technologies in fortifying their borders. Gulf States allocate huge budgets to engaged with international companies in fencing and equipping their borders with high-tech control systems, whereas the Maghreb states

use relatively low technology systems and traditional means in fencing and trenching their borders.

Despite all the external challenges faced by the nation-state in the Arab region, it remains the most powerful symbol of the peoples identity. This national identity is currently the main determinant of Arab states' foreign policy more than pan-Arab and religious principles of solidarity. Although new different fortifications of Arab borders reflect part of the external threats, they also show the ability of Arab states to adapt to these challenges and imitated policies of other states in fortifying territorial borders. However, the preservation of territorial unity and the existing borders of Arab states –especially those with different ethnics, sects, and languages– depends not only on fighting external challenges posed by the chaotic regional system but also on the ability of Arab states to achieve equitable distribution of wealth and power.

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