CONSTRUCTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST AS A SEPARATE REGION

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ABSTRACT

CONSTRUCTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST AS A SEPARATE REGION

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The thesis attempts to illuminate the construction process of the Middle East as a separate region. Within this context, it first seeks to find out what a region means. For this sake, the thesis outlines the historical development of the discipline of geography and the changing meanings of region in line with the disciplinary developments. Furthermore, it concentrates on the emergence of the region Middle East, its denomination and transformation along with changing international politics. Finally, the thesis evaluates the existence of the ethnocentric geographical term Middle East within the context of current global conditions.

Keywords: Middle East, Region, World Regions, Space, Place, Geography, Culture.

ÖZ

ORTA DOĞU'NUN AYRI BİR BÖLGE OLARAK KURGULANMASI

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Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

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Bu tez çalışması Orta Doğu'nun ayrı bir bölge olarak kurgulanma ve ortaya çıkma sürecine açıklık getirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu bağlamda bölge kavramının anlamı sorgulanmaktadır. Bu amaçla, coğrafya disiplinin tarihsel gelişimi ve bölge kavramının bu gelişmelerle birlikte değişen anlamları üzerinde durulmaktadır. Bu teorik çerçeveye ek olarak Orta Doğu bölgesinin ortaya çıkışı ve uluslar arası güç politikalarına paralel gerçekleşen dönüşümü üzerinde durulmaktadır. Son olarak, Avrupa-merkezci bir kavram olarak Orta Doğu kavramının cari küresel şartlar dahilinde anlamı sorgulanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Orta Doğu, Bölge, Küresel Bölgeler, Uzam, Yer, Coğrafya, Kültür

To My Brothers,

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAG: Association of American Geographers

EB: Ethnographic Board

EU: European Union

FAO: Food and Agricultural Organization

ILO: International Labor Organization

IR: International Relations

MEAC: Middle East Air Command

MEC: Middle Eastern Command

MED: Middle East Department

MESC: Middle East Supply Centre

SWANA: Southwest Asia and North Africa

UN: United Nations

US: United States

WHO: World Health Organization

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The argument that we live in a transforming world in various spheres from economics to cultural politics is not a contentious one. The transformation is at the heart of the existing turmoil. This amorphic situation leads to discussions in academia that question the fundamentals of modernity and its defining concepts. The developments after 9/11, the so-called project of the greater Middle East and upcoming crises in the region, rising nationalisms and xenophobia throughout Europe, the resistance against Turkey's membership in the European Union (EU) and the recent crisis based on series of cartoons published in Denmark, deem to be offensive by Muslims, seem to have brought about a new phase in global affairs and in the paradigms defining this situation. What the theory of 'clash of civilizations'[1] means in this context, how it is possible to come up with a theory like this, where and how to end this so-called clash, are some of the points of contention defining the present time. People have increasingly begun to ask questions similar to these and the academic works devoted the issue have mounted up.

Against this background, I have decided to focus on culture and its spatial aspects, with particular emphasis on the Middle East. More precisely, I am interested in finding out how the academic discipline of geography has approached the present transformation and its regional dimensions. Geography is the chosen framework for my study since the issue of spatiality, region and transformation is above all the

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[1] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72/3 (1993): 22-49.

subject matter of this discipline. Moreover, as a region the Middle East is located in a central position in these discussions as the heartland of Muslim cultures, increasingly recognized as the 'other'.

Actually, the region Middle East was first denominated and defined by a political geographer, namely Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914). This leads me to the problematic central to my research: the construction of the Middle East as a separate region. In this sense, I am interested in the meaning of place, region and culture in the historical development of the discipline of geography generally – with its various sub-branches such as cultural, regional and political geography.

The thesis is comprised of eight chapters. The second chapter of the thesis is devoted to the historical development of geography as a discipline, which outline the German, French and American schools of human geography. After summarizing the basic characteristics of different schools of human geography, the conventional and the new regional geography are examined in the third chapter. This chapter also includes a discussion of different approaches to 'region'. The fourth chapter deals with the rising of post-structuralist understanding in geography, and its concrete expression with the theory of Anssi Paasi. The effects of these developments will be evaluated within the context of International Relations (IR) discipline. In the fifth chapter, the construction process of Middle East as a separate region is addressed. The chapter begins with the initial identification of the region and its denomination. Here, I try to clarify the historical evolution of the region along with the British and American imperial politics. Then, I summarize the developments in the region after the Cold War. The sixth chapter examines some different identifications such as 'Orient' and 'Fertile Crescent' that have been used for the same area. The conceptual

background of the terms will also be searched. After submitting a brief genealogical background of these ethnocentric terms, the reasons behind the persistence of the ethnocentric term Middle East, both in academic and popular discourses, is questioned. In the seventh chapter, the Middle Eastern international politics is briefly evaluated within the context of IR discipline. The chapter ends with an assessment of Middle East as a geographical category.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GEOGRAPHICAL THOUGHT

There is no unspatialized social reality.[2]

1. Space, Place and Culture

The 'place' is a way of perceiving the world, as opposed to signifying a stable reality of global space. It is a way of 'seeing' that gives meaning to the world. It involves judgments not just about spaces but also about peoples' lives.[3] Regions might be considered as places of larger scales, involving mostly macro politics.[4] Any definition of place or region constitutes an ontological and epistemological perspective since it involves judgments about what exists and in which particular way the world is perceived. Thus, any definition or a theory about place or region has far-reaching implications from our daily practices to the metaphysics of the world.

Doing geography is not a simple act of engaging in neutral observations about the world. It is largely conditioned by the legacy of previous generations and their political commitments. The notions, concepts and tools of geography are the products of a subjectively experienced history and a part of power struggles.[5] More specifically, the discipline of geography is directly related to the project of empire building. The 19th century geographers of Britain, Germany and America took pride

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[2] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 46.
[3] Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 16.
[4] Cresswell, 13.
[5] Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 16.

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in taking part in imperial projects.[6] Moreover, the most important source of the imperial project was the belief in the superiority of Western civilization over all other civilizations and cultures as addressed in the studies of new cultural geography.

Time-space compression emanating from globalization did not devalue the importance of place. In contrast, it caused the rising of consciousness about place and the struggles over place.[7] Cultures continue to organize themselves spatially. Today humans confront each other more in cultural terms than physical terms.[8] Cultural power has emerged as no less important than other forms of power. At this juncture, culture wars have become crucial to transform the existing spatial structures. As Don Mitchell states, culture war "is both a reflection of, and an ongoing contribution to, the geographies we build in the world. Each successive battle transforms the geography in which it takes place and therefore creates new contexts –new geographical situations- within which the next round of struggle occurs".[9] However, we should keep in mind that these struggles are not only related to cultural issues but also to economic and political fortunes of various regions and their peoples. While a new political or economic context emerges, concomitant with it, a newly emerging cultural context is also the case. The restructuring of social relations occurs simultaneously in economic, political and cultural spheres.[10]

The indispensable universality claim of civilizations inclines to trigger struggles over space since it bears a hegemonic character. However, cultures are depicted as more

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[6] Lewis and Wigen, 17.
[7] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996)
[8] Joël Bonnemaison, *Culture and Space: Conceiving a New Cultural Geography* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 90.
[9] Don Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 11.
[10] Mitchell, 11-12.

tolerant to other cultures than civilizations do to other civilizations. It is delineated as the soul of our time that civilizations are being associated with a more confrontational language than cultures being done. In this context, cultural geography is the study of both cultures and civilizations.[11]

The so-called postmodern philosophy is reflected to social sciences roughly as a 'cultural turn' since for postmodern thought culture occupies the central position. It has found its expression in geography as in many branches of social sciences with the emergence of new studies on culture and cultural geography. The language of space-place and culture has become popular in all branches of social sciences.[12] For Edward Soja this was a reassertion of space in social theory with the help of postmodern theoreticians.[13] In this context, the 'cultural turn' in geography has proceeded correspondingly to the 'spatial turn' in social sciences.[14]

Actually, the postmodern turn has laid stress on the 'spatial'. In this respect, one of two leading figures of post-structuralism, Michel Foucault, interrogated space with both its materiality and ideology for the sake of understanding how power is constituted and how it operates in the modern world system. In the article entitled "Of Other Spaces" he states

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermaldynamics- *The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space*. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the

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[11] Bonnemaison, 76.
[12] Mitchell, 57-59.
[13] Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertation of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London, New York: Verso, 1989)
[14] Mitchell, 57-61.

near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment. I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.[15]

There is nothing natural about place.[16] The so-called naturalness was created by people who held power to define the positives and negatives relating to places and regions. Again, resistance against established meanings becomes possible through subversion of spatial categories and their attached meanings.

No need to say that these issues are largely ignored by the disciplines of both International Relations and traditional regional-human geography. However, new cultural geography and critical studies perceive place through the lenses of political and cultural conflicts. Place and region were created by social and political processes. More importantly, they are the instruments of maintenance and transformation of the established relations of power, domination and exploitation.[17] If place and region are constructed socially, it should be possible to change the existing structures of power and domination through human capacity.

2. The Bases of Contemporary Human Geography

Different countries have developed different approaches in human geography. More precisely, German, French and American approaches had evolved to different schools of human geography. Each school had its own characteristics which mostly did not emanate from scientific concerns but originated from political objectives and cultural inclinations.

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[15] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16 (1986): 25.
[16] Cresswell, 27.
[17] Cresswell, 27-28.

2.1. Landschaft Geography and Political Geography of German School

The idea of nation is central to the German geographical thought from the very beginnings of geography. Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) is a crucial figure since he inspired the scholars of his time and leading geographers of upcoming generations either directly or indirectly. For Herder, nation is an organic entity in its historical growth and defined by its distinctive culture. He emphasized the role of culture in the transformation of natural environment and creation of peculiar landscapes. A people's distinctiveness is achieved through the optimal use of nature. Again, in line with dialectical understanding it is achieved by letting the environment affect its culture.[18]

Johann von Herder was among the first to criticize a universalistic understanding of culture and he spoke of cultures in the plural. He argued that different nations have different cultural heritages and thereby display their own peculiar life styles via their cultures.[19] This idea implies that different cultures may coexist in equal terms with each other. His recognition of cultural relativism was somehow a part of a project that sought to mark German distinctiveness from other European cultures. In underlining the German distinctiveness he did not turn to environmentalism of his age. Rather, he referred to the particular historical path of local people in their relation to the environment. The peculiar relationship between people and nature constitutes the soul of culture.[20]

The second figure in German school of geography is Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), considered to be the father of political geography. In his book, *Anthropogeography*,

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[18] Bonnemaison, 19.
[19] Mitchell, 22.
[20] Mitchell, 15.

published in 1883, he applied the social Darwinist thought to nations, which were treated as organisms. For Ratzel, the adaptation process of peoples and cultures to natural environment either determines their fate or liberates them from environment.[21]

The early theory of environmental determinism was set again by Ratzel in the last decades of 19th century. Through his organicist understanding, he reduced society to nature.[22] According to his theory, just like other organisms states need to grow in order to live. Here the state becomes the spatial expression of the relationship between people and environment, with social Darwinism finding an expression in anthropo-geographical determinism. As such, it was used for legitimizing social, economic and political ambitions of imperial powers of Western world.[23] Nations as geographical actors could be compared according to their harmonious relation with their environment.[24]

However, by the first decades of 20th century this determinism began to lose its prior function while the space of the globe was getting increasingly closed. The absolute space of prior age transformed into the relative space of the closed globe. As a response to this change, geography was defined in new terms by Richard Hartshorne (1899-1992); as a 'science of regions'. Later, another understanding led by Carl Ortwin Sauer (1889-1975) would focus on cultural differences that created different regions. [25]

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[21] Bonnemaison, 19.
[22] Mitchell, 18.
[23] Mitchell, 19.
[24] Bonnemaison, 21.
[25] Mary B. Pudup, "Arguments within Regional Geography," *Progress in Human Geography*, 12/3 (1988): 370, Don Mitchell, 20.

For German geographers their discipline was a natural science of society, though it somehow acknowledged possibilities for different societies. Darwinism and organicism deeply affected their thought. They used an empiricist and descriptive approach in their studies. Again the idea of 'landscape' –Landschaft- as an expression of nature and culture interaction developed in German school, and the geography became the science of landscape, 'Landschaftskunde'.[26]

2.2. French School of Geography

Another tradition in geography is the French school of *la geographie humaine* associated with Vidal de la Blache (1845-1918) at the end of 19th century. It mainly dealt with the way natural and cultural worlds interplayed with each other.[27] It bore an influence of German geography. Vidal is also considered to be the founder of the French school of geopolitics. He emphasizes the historical continuity in the formation of regions that might transcend political divisions. He adopted the method of 'chorology' and took into account human beings so long as they shape the landscape. His philosophy was more possibilistic rather than deterministic.[28] Environment both sets limitations and offers possibilities, and people choose among various possibilities. For Vidal, region means a homogeneous physical environment. The response of local people to this physical environment gives rise to *genre de vie,* local culture.[29]

The Annales school of historical scholarship also exerted its influence on the French geography since Fernand Braudel's –the leading figure of Annales school- historical approach is based on the mutual relationship of temporal and spatial structures.

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[26] Bonnemaison, 21.
[27] Cresswell, 17.
[28] Bonnemaison, 23.
[29] Bonnemaison, 25.

Actually in French academia, geography is considered closer to humanities, especially to history, than to natural sciences and Braudel was influenced by the leading French geographer Vidal de La Blache. Similarly, Braudel would influence some geographers with his comprehensive historico-geographical analysis.[30]

2.3. American School of Geography

In the first half of the 20th century there were two schools of geography in the United States (US). The first school appeared in the universities located in the Midwest of US. This school saw the space in terms of its economic potentials. The idea of economic landscape ignored the historical and cultural construction of regions. The space was organized to regions according to its economic potentials.[31]

The second school, namely Berkeley school, was founded by one of the central figures of American school of geography, Carl Sauer. It emerged as a reaction to the utilitarian and functionalist approach of the Midwestern school. Sauer was a leading figure in geography due to his rejection of simple deterministic arguments of environmental determinists such as Ellen Semple and Ellsworth Huntingdon.[32] He was influenced by Ratzel and Landschaft geographers of Germany. He rebelled against productivistic determinism of the Midwestern school. For Sauer economic determinism is no less dangerous than determinism of naturalism.[33] The best way to deal with these determinist pitfalls was actuating the concept 'culture', since it bears an unpredictable character. Against the errors of environmental determinism, Sauer put culture at the heart of geography in his seminal article "The Morphology of

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[30] Andrew M. Kirby, "Survey 10: Le Monde Braudellien" *Environment and planning D: Society and Space* 4/2 (1986): 215–216.
[31] Bonnemaison, 28.
[32] Cresswell, 17.
[33] Bonnemaison, 29.

Landscape" published in 1925 and the article signified the beginning of cultural geography.[34]

Accordingly, the inventive character of culture provides new opportunities for human society. He was concerned about the material aspects of culture, namely landscape. Geography was the study of landscape shaped by *genre de vie* of local culture. He argued that it is not nature but culture that sets the terms for human life.[35] He drew his ideas upon the German intellectual tradition. He borrowed many ideas such as cultural particularism or 'culture area' from scholars like Herder and Ratzel.[36]

To Sauer, culture consists of cultural traits that might be either visible or invisible.[37] The visible elements of culture are the material aspects of civilizations and could be observed through landscape. On the other hand, there is an invisible culture, which is neglected by geographers. Customs, religions, languages and belief systems form the invisible aspect of culture. These are mostly related with the identity of the culture, which is expressed via geosymbols. The landscape of any culture is molded not only by practical concerns but also by the geosymbols as an expression of their indigenous faith and values.[38] Both the visible and invisible cultural traits amalgamate into cultural ensembles, attaching themselves into a region from where they can expand towards outside.

Actually the pupils of Sauer produced large body of work relating to the history and identity of tribes and cultural groups of Latin America. And more importantly, these works led to the concept of 'culture area', which is very crucial not just to geography

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[34] Bonnemaison, 30.
[35] Mitchell, 21.
[36] Mitchell, 22.
[37] Bonnemaison, 31.
[38] Bonnemaison, 33.

but also other branches of social sciences.[39] By the help of his legacy, American cultural geography has become a fertile ground for utilization of neighboring disciplines within the framework of geography, and succeeded to be the most global and comprehensive part of human geography.[40]

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[39] Bonnemaison, 34.
[40] Bonnemaison, 34.

CHAPTER III

REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

1. Conventional Regional Geography

From the 16th century on, horizontal space began to be designated as composed of 'natural regions' each of which inclining to establish an administrative unit, a state.[41] By attaching themselves to a natural region, states would strengthen their power, and for this sake sometimes they would seek to expand to other territories. However, at the turn of the 20th century the state-centered ontology was largely abandoned. Geographers such as Andrew J. Herbertson (1865-1915) and Vidal de la Blache focused on the particular nature of the regions at the expense of state-centered perspectives.[42]

Regional geography, as a study of regions of all sizes, was the predominant way of doing geography until the second half of 20th century.[43] Geographers sought to define particular and unique characteristics of regions. This led to studies of specifying regions and drawing boundaries between them. The regional geography basically sought to describe specific places in order to acquire the real characteristics of these places. The geographer would discover the inner features of regions and make a synthesis out of those features. The features could vary from the physiographic to the

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[41] John Agnew, "Region, Place and Locality: Introduction," in *Human Geography: An Essential Anthology*, ed. John Agnew, David Livingstone and Alisdair Rogers (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 366-367.
[42] Gordon Macleod and Martin Jones, "Renewing the Geography of Regions," *Environment and Planning D. Society and Space* 19 (2001): 672.
[43] Cresswell, 16.

economic ones and from biotic to cultural ones.[44] Thus making exhaustive descriptions –starting with the bedrock, soil type and climate and ending with culture- of regions defined the discipline from the second half of 19th century until the second half of 20th century. These studies were lacking a theoretical content. This practice is called chorology, a spatial version of chronology. The famous American geographer Richard Hartshorne is associated with this approach.[45] For chorologists, description of an area and its interpretation is an unproblematic process. Accordingly, the visual, statistical and cartographic representations define the undisputed reality of the real world.[46]

For traditional geographers regional geography represents "the highest form of geographer's art".[47] Historically, the importance of regional geography originates from authors like Halford John Mackinder (1861-1947) and Andrew J. Herbertson (1865-1915). It has been one of the main topics of the disciplinary debates of geography throughout the 20th century. According to this line of thought, the surface of the earth is split to separate regions that are complex and unprecedented assemblages of natural world and man-made phenomena. At this point, the regional geographers would first illustrate the regions of the world, then analyze them with the help of the sub-disciplines of geography – such as human geography, political geography and cultural geography- or -if need be- with the help of other branches of social sciences. Finally, he/she would make a synthesis of regions into a whole.[48]

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[44] Pudup, 373.
[45] Cresswell, 16.
[46] Pudup, 374.
[47] John Fraser Hart, "The Highest Form of the Geographer's Art," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 71 (1982): 1-29.
[48] Ronald J. Johnston, *A Question of Place: Exploring the Practice of Geography*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 39.

In the period after World War II, the consensus among the regional geographers on the conventional methodology of regional geography began to decay. The quantitative revolution that occurred throughout all branches of social sciences could easily find its tract in the discipline of geography.[49] By the 1960s and 1970s the belief in science was strong among geographers. The disappointment of geographers with geography as an ideographic pursuit led them to apply the strict rules of scientific methodology to geography. The universal principles that were sought required generalizations and laws that were applicable to any place in the world. So the 'spatial science' approach was born. This movement replaced region with space since the term space is more abstract and bears connotations of universality. Here space was considered as an empty container and the people lived in it were out of question since the law-like generalizations sought precluded human capacity.[50]

Due to the impacts of the quantitative revolution, the idiographic and particularity-based regional tradition waned. The 'spatial science' and its modeling approach dominated the field. However, the understanding of region as an organizing principle of geographic data continued. The positivist philosophy of science that guided the spatial science approach stimulated research for the laws of spatial behavior. Geographers believed that human behavior could be predicted and planned, and thereby regional geography could be devised in order to regulate and prosper the lives of modern citizens.[51] Here, the modernist philosophy neglected the historical foundations of regional formation and its contingent character.

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[49] Pudup, 370.
[50] Cresswell, 19.
[51] Macleod and Jones, 673.

By the late 1970s, the modernist regional geography of 1960s was being under attack. The quantitative wave and the hiatus it created reached an impasse. The pluralist methodology born out of these debates has continued till today and defines the current epistemological picture of geography. Besides, the infertility and the failure of the quantitative movement provoked the contentious claims of traditional regional geographer on the discipline.[52] These arguments of the late 1970s and early 1980s encouraged a wave to return to chorography. Some traditionalist regional geographers began to assert their authority in geography, and tried to revive regional geography in classical terms[53] though it was not in line with the spirit of the time to study space, time and society separately.[54] Against the fragmentation of geography into various sub-branches, region was proposed as a unifying theme since the idea of region locates at the convergence point of these sub-branches.[55] Although not in the way defended by traditionalists, again others underlined the vitality of regions in practicing geography and stated that "we do not need regional geography, but we do need regions in geography".[56]

In the early 1980s, the spatial science approach disintegrated. The result was going back to theory to revise the discipline. Because scholars did not want to go on with a purely spatial definition. So they looked for an inspiration to other branches of social sciences such as sociology, economics and history.[57] At the time of disciplinary turmoil, the behavioral and humanistic geography had already taken their place among alternative approaches. However the search for a more comprehensive theory

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[52] Pudup, 370.
[53] See Johnston pages 40-41 for the initiatives to revive conventional regional geography.
[54] Pudup, 373.
[55] Hart, 17-18.
[56] Johnston, 43.
[57] See for example, Doreen B. Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labor: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (London: Macmillan, 1984)

continued along with new theoretical backgrounds. One of the early critics was Derek Gregory. In 1978, he criticized the reduction of space to a mere container for social processes and he rejected the idea that spatial structure determines social structure.[58] Again, authors like David Harvey, Doreen Massey, Allan Pred and Edward Soja refused the underlying positivist methodology of geography and they referred to the limitations of quantitative studies.[59]

2. New Regional Geography

De la Blache and Sauer inclined to study rural images and places. However, at the end of 20th century, it was not possible to understand modern rural life, let alone urban styles, with the premises of traditional regional geography. And scholars inspired by Marxism, post-structuralism and feminism began to approach place and region more critically.[60] Johnston summarizes the new regional geography as follows: "the foundation of this new approach is the recognition that spatial variations are fundamental to the organization of society, with the world comprising a complex mosaic of specific places within which general processes are enacted but whose features cannot be accounted for by those processes alone".[61]

By this new understanding, the spatial science approach, which sought to determine the general spatial laws governing various societies in a nomothetic manner characterized the 1960s and 1970s, was rejected. Secondly, at the other end of the line idiographic analyses of chorology could not be an alternative to nomothetic analyses since it barely focused on specific features of places and therefore failed to explain general processes going under. Neither the all-encompassing generalizations

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[58] Derek Gregory, *Ideology, Science and Human Geography* (London: Hutchinson, 1978)
[59] Pudup, 377.
[60] Cresswell, 26.
[61] Johnston, 49.

nor the singularity-based approaches could help to understand the inner workings of societies. Finally, this new approach referred to the organization of society via the organization of space –by creating various places and regions- and opened a door for critical estimation of the influence of existing power relations over regional structures.[62]

Since the importance of 'milieu' is underlined by cultural geography under various names such as place, region, locale and locality; the geographers made use of the sub-discipline of cultural geography. And actually, the difference among the sub-disciplines of geography was becoming more and more blurred. Nigel Thrift was among the first to lay stress on culture as a place-specific context.[63] He questioned the social action in terms of structure-agency dualism and applied the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens to geography.

In 1984, instead of describing and interpreting the landscape of any region, Denis Cosgrove focused on the very idea of landscape itself, which is very fundamental but never questioned concept of geography. In his study "Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape" Cosgrove argued that the modern concept of landscape is just a way of seeing among possible many others, and represents the bourgeois claims to land and the properties on land.[64] To that day, the social and historical origins of the idea of landscape had been simply ignored.[65] Cosgrove's study on the origins of the self-given concept of landscape, which is crucial to the making of geography,

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[62] Johnston, 48-49.
[63] Nigel Thrift, "On the Determination of Social Action in Space and Time," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 1 (1983). The article is reprinted in Nigel Thrift, *Spatial Formations* (London, Sage Publications, 1996)
[64] Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984)
[65] Pudup, 378.

referred a new phase for epistemology of geography since his study involved a genealogical analysis of a self-proven concept of geography.

Landscape refers to the visible features of an area that can be viewed from one point. It comprises a portion of earth's surface with a visioning subject. The subject locates himself/herself outside of land. In this respect, "we do not live in landscapes- we look at them".[66] Actually when we consider the colonial history, in which the gaze of the colonialist defined some areas as blank and waiting to be discovered, but not as places to live in. In a way, the geographer becomes an outsider of any landscape. Particularly in the context of colonial geographies, the landscape idea becomes very crucial to understand the current relations of power and domination.

Similarly, the old and new versions of regional geography favor a historical approach to regional formation. However, this doesn't mean that the historical approaches of both versions indicate the same framework of study. Traditional regional geography dealt with the succession of landscapes as the expression of changing cultural forms. So they were oriented towards the exhaustive description of material culture of each region. The adaptation process of people to nature was synthesized through an inductive methodology. On the other hand, the new regional geographers refused the idea of a simple adaptation process. An emphasis has been put on constant readjustment process through time. More importantly, the history is not studied exclusively through material reality but also with the structure of social relations that are not observable.[67]

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[66] Cresswell, 11.
[67] Anne Gilbert, "The New Regional Geography in English and French-speaking Countries," *Progress in Human Geography* 12/2 (1988): 220-221.

The new regional geographers avoid reducing regional formation to a single phenomenon that explains various spatial formations. They seek to synthesize economic, cultural and political processes. Although, the synthesis of regional phenomena was advocated and proposed by traditional regional geographers such as Sauer and Hartshorne, these studies remained largely descriptive, lacking a theoretical content.[68]

3. The Regions of Geography

The question what constitutes a 'region' in regional geography has never been clearly defined. Mostly, regions have been defined around physiographic provinces and these provinces can range from a village to a continent.[69] In addition, there has been an implicit underlying assumption that the physical features that constitute a physiographic region will also constitute a region of human geography. This is called 'naturalism' since it acts on the assumption that physiographic regions constitute parallel regions of human geography.[70]

Again regions of conventional geography could be defined as 'subjective artistic devices'. "They must be shaped to fit the hand of the individual user. There can be no standard definition of a region,"[71] as it was stated by John Fraser Hart in his address to the Association of American Geographers (AAG) in 1982. In this context, regions are understood as either self-given natural places of physiography or useful subjective devices of geographer in his/her study. The theory of region was simply neglected by traditional regional geographers. Instead, empirical methodology dominated the field.

[68] Gilbert, 211.
[69] Pudup, 373.
[70] Pudup, 375.
[71] Hart, quoted in Pudup, 373.

In the 1980s, it was possible to think of three perspectives in approaching to regions. At this point, it is useful to mention Anne Gilbert's well-known conceptualization of regions in her article of 1988. In this article Gilbert defines three general categories to cover the all-existing literature on the issue of her time. These can be identified as Marxist, humanistic and post-positivist understandings of region. The Marxism-inspired understanding emerged mostly among English-speaking geographers. They define region as a spatial response to the social processes deriving from the capitalist mode of production.[72] It is a local response to the capitalist process.[73] In this approach, regional variation is problematized and studied. The regional differentiation is basically understood with the logic of capital circulation and region becomes the tangible result of production relations. Some of these studies emphasize the production of cultural differentiation in line with the parallel process of spatial differentiation.[74] They focus on the creation of particular regions via the production processes. The novelty of the approach is in its inclusion of new dimensions to focus on nature/people relations. The human-created societal relations are considered as the prime unit of regional geography.[75] The historico-geographical materialism of capitalism sets the ground for these studies. [76]

The second view of region, the humanistic approach, considers culture to be the central focus of study. It stresses the subjective, the experiential and the emotional stock of human subjects. Common culture of a group and its peculiar way of relation with particular places leads to social consciousness that defines a region.

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[72] Gilbert, 209.
[73] Macleod and Jones, 674.
[74] John Urry, "Social Relations Space and Time," in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures,* ed. Denis Gregory and John Urry (London: Macmillan, 1985).
[75] Gilbert, 210.
[76] Macleod and Jones, 674.

Psychological and humanistic dimensions that give order to natural world also provide regional consciousness.[77] The humanistic aspects, such as sense of place or attachment to the place of dwelling that are played down by positivist approaches, have begun to be studied by geographers like Yi-fu Tuan[78] and Nicholas Entrikin[79] in the late 1970s.

In this sense, a region becomes a focus of cultural identification. This approach represents the cultural turn in the discipline of geography and adopts an interpretative methodology for outlining the meaning of place for various peoples. In English speaking world, David Ley and Anne Buttimer are the other prominent names.[80] In French school of humanistic geography, the collective aspects of culture are emphasized at the expense of the English individualistic understanding. Pierre Bourdieu, with his structuralist philosophy, has exerted some influence on French geographers. Accordingly, the regional identity derives from common networks of information and practices that gives meaning to material world. The common communicative processes build up the collectivity of a group and its appropriated space.[81]

At this point, we should be aware that the meaning of 'culture' in humanistic understanding is different from the traditional Sauerian geography. For Sauer, culture is understood through its material imprints on landscape, and geographer analyzes material artifacts to identify a region. These new geographers, on the other hand,

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[77] Gilbert, 210-211.
[78] Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977)
[79] Nicholas J. Entrikin, "Contemporary Humanism in Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 66 (1976): 615-632.
[80] Macleod and Jones, 673-674.
[81] Gilbert, 211.

underline the humanistic aspects associated with a specific region and the people who live in it. Human purposes that provide sense of place and region are addressed. Socially constructed nature of culture has been studied heavily by this new generation of geographers.[82]

The third group of geographers tends to understand a region in terms of power/domination relations within society. [83] What constitutes a region is directly linked to the nature of relations that produces and reproduces society. In this respect, region is understood as an active medium for social interaction. A medium within which people, nature and social relations take place in specific time-space setting.[84] It is "lived through not in".[85] Thrift places the subject at the center of new regional geography. He puts an emphasis on the constitution of self and identity, assorted emotional repertoires available to actors, diverse knowledge created through discourses and the re-construction of regional identity and emotions.[86] Again in a similar fashion, Macleod and Jones argue that "to comprehensively unravel the disparate practices, metaphorical orderings of space, as well as the economizing behaviors and political strategies that are themselves constitutive of regions and nations; we need to practice a geography of regions". [87]

The structuration theory of Anthony Giddens has been used in the construction of regions. According to this theory, social relations are structured in time and place. Region is considered both as a medium and an outcome for and of social relations.

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[82] Gilbert, 211.
[83] Gilbert, 212.
[84] Macleod and Jones, 675.
[85] Nigel Thrift, 38.
[86] Nigel Thrift, "For a New Regional Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 15 (1990): 456-465.
[87] Macleod and Jones, 676.

The region as a structure bears holistic character. Accordingly, the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and the complex relationship among its parts constitutes a greater totality. In this respect, a region could not be grasped without considering the specific way of relationship of individuals and groups.[88] For instance, Pred defines region as a process of continuing practices taking place in a particular time-geography setting.[89] The process involves a gradual transformation of society via the reproduction of social practices.

In sum, simple and direct relationship between people and nature studied by chorology was transcended by inclusion of political, economic and cultural structures of society in the study of geography. This new wave is nourished with social theory and other branches of social sciences.

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[88] Gilbert, 212.
[89] Allan Pred, "Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and Time-geography of Becoming Places," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 74 (1984): 280.

CHAPTER IV

CULTURE, REGION AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
DISCIPLINE

1. New Cultural Geography

The discipline of geography has been affected also by the new trend of cultural studies as in many other braches of social sciences. The rebirth of cultural geography is in a way related to the evolution of social sciences that largely worked with positivistic methodology, such as economics, sociology. This positivist trend of 1950s found its expression in geography with the 'new geography' movement. Accordingly, the organization of human societies can be explained spatially by the scientific laws that can be inferred from social, economic and spatial structures. However, the failure of quasi-mathematical models[90] has paved the way for more culturally oriented approaches.

Not just in cultural geography but in all sub-branches of human geography culture has become an issue of study. And a compromise has emerged, acknowledging that culture is spatial. While old cultural theory highlighted *time*, dealing with the transmission of culture from generation to generation; new cultural theory stresses *space* over *time*. In this respect, culture is composed through space and as a space. Here, the prevalence of spatial metaphors such as realm, medium, level, map, sphere

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[90] David Harvey, *Explanation in Geography* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969)

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or zone in defining culture can be thought as a result of affiliation between space and culture.[91]

There is no such thing as culture. In other words, culture itself does not have any explanatory power of its own. It does not provide means of explanation by itself. The important thing is that the struggle over culture or cultural conflict is indispensably geographic too.[92] Cultural tensions shape and reshape the places we live in just as they are shaped by geography itself.

Cultural geography has reinvented itself in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly with the contribution of British geographers. In the 1980s British geographers, deriving inspiration from British cultural studies, were oriented towards a new way of critical understanding of geography of cultural processes. Peter Jackson[93] in 1980 and Cosgrove[94] in 1983 voiced a new approach dealing with issues of power and dominance. They called attention to the areas never dealt by geographers and proposed a politicized concept of culture. Role of space, place and region began to be studied in the context of cultural power. What is more is that this movement led to the so-called cultural turn in geography.[95]

At the end of 1980s, the distinction between radical geographers and humanistic geographers became blurred due to the convergence of these separate approaches in their search for inspiration from social theory and emerging cultural studies approach. The new cultural geography emerged in this context. It emphasized the

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[91] Mitchell, 63.
[92] Don Mitchell, 12.
[93] Peter Jackson, "A Plea for Cultural Geography," *Area* 12 (1980): 110-113.
[94] Denis Cosgrove, "Towards a Radical Cultural Geography," *Antipode* 15 (1983): 1-11.
[95] Mitchell, 57-58.

role of place in the issues of race, gender and class being studied by critical theory.[96]

The issues studied under cultural geography vary according to the social and political climate of the time.[97]

Cultural space is configured on the basis of spatial representations. Particularly for humanistic geographers, it might be argued that the representation of a geographic being is more important than the real thing itself. Actually the reality of the geographic thing is being possible only through its representations, namely through values, iconography, images and beliefs.[98] In this context, cultural space could not be framed without referring to the realm of iconography, geosymbols and the spatial indicators that shape identity. And each region and political system is based on this cultural space.

In the early 1980s, geographers began to use culture increasingly as an explanatory instrument.[99] Culture emerges at the heart of civilizations and transferred through generations. It is an act of developing intellectual and moral faculties especially by education. It is the fulfillment of human spirit; the course from the inferior order of the body to the superior order of mind.[100] It is related with local conceptualization of world that gives meaning to the lives of people of that place. In this respect, it is directly linked with the sphere of religions and beliefs.

Civilization is a refinement of thought, manners, or taste. It comes from the word *civitas*, the city and is associated with civility. It originated in France and then

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[96] Cresswell, 27.
[97] Linda McDowell, "The Transformation of Cultural Geography," in *Human geography: Society, Space and Social Science,* ed. Derek Gregory, Ron Martin and Graham Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 61.
[98] Bonnemaison, 41.
[99] Bonnemaison, 55.
[100] Bonnemaison, 58.

became widespread throughout Europe.[101] Europe began to characterize itself as the civilization of 'Occident' as distinct from Orient.[102] It is linked with the notions of development, modernity and progress against the negative connotations of the barbarian cultures. It is the totality of religious, moral, social and material features of a society.

The relationship between culture and civilization varies from author to author or from country to country. But in terms of their scales there is a compromise that civilization represents a larger spatial extent and wider meaning than that of culture. Civilizations are made up of great cultures and geographical patterns of humankind.[103] In this respect, a civilization is an aggregate of political, social, cultural and economic totalities. Here, culture represents the soul of civilization.

As a contemporary of Fernand Braudel, Pierre Gourou argued that humans shape their environment and landscape according to their civilizations. Each civilization constitutes its own landscape to create a proper living ground of own. Civilizations even determine the perception of time and space.[104] A region also can be thought as a combination of several landscapes that have common founding characteristics of their own or an association of various landscape images. By the way of representations and geosymbols, landscape is always a cultural space performed over a natural space.[105] It introduces and displays the civilization that has produced it.

The American school defined contours of geography of 'culture areas' and geography of civilizations, which constitutes the large body of French geography.

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[101] Bonnemaison, 71.
[102] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage Books, 1979), 10-11.
[103] Bonnemaison, 75.
[104] Bonnemaison, 36.
[105] Bonnemaison, 52.

Some French geographers have studied specific civilizations. For instance, Xavier de Planhol has studies the Arabic and Islamic region, and Pierre Gourou has studied the various parts of Asia in terms of regional cultural traits and imprints of culture on landscape.[106] Accordingly, each civilization constitutes a cultural region mostly based on a religious culture. Each civilization gives shape to the landscape of its region and determines the way of spatial organization of society. Briefly, this approach can be defined as a civilizational perspective on space, place and region.

2. A Theory of Region Building: Anssi Paasi

Anssi Paasi developed probably the most comprehensive and clear theory of region building.[107] He proposes a framework for acquiring a better understanding of regions and their emergence in historical context. He takes regions not as static forms but as material dynamic signs of the development of society.[108] The particularity of a region should be studied reflexively by focusing on the political, cultural, economic and academic discourses. He approaches to the process of region building by highlighting the institutionalization of regions. Region is a concrete form of geohistorical process materializing through individual and institutional practices in a specific time-space setting. Therefore, time-space, society and institutions are considered as integral to this process. The relationship between the local and the global scales and micro and macro spheres are needed to be integrated for a better analysis of geohistorical process.[109]

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[106] Bonnemaison, 55.

[107] Anssi Paasi, "The Institutionalization of Regions: A Theoretical Framework for Understanding The Emergence of Regions and the Construction of Regional Identity," *Fennia* 164/1 (1986): 105-146; Anssi Paasi, "Deconstructing Regions: Notes on the Scales of Spatial Life," *Environment and Planning A* 23 (1991): 239-256; Anssi Paasi, "Place and Region: Regional Worlds and Words," *Progress in Human Geography* 12/3 (2002): 802-811.

[108] Anssi Paasi, Place and Region, 802.

[109] Macleod and Jones, 677-678.

Paasi analyzes regionalization process within four stages. These stages are not distinguished and separate from one another or occurring in a line of linear sequences. They are mutually constitutive. He calls the first stage as *the assumption of territorial awareness and shape*. Here, the economic, political and cultural practices of a society interacts with each other in a way to attach a territorial unit a distinct identity of its own through an assumption of boundedness in individual and collective consciousness. This presumes a hegemonic dominance of one geographical imagination over others. An explicit identity is sine qua non of a region's existence.[110] The second stage is *the formation of conceptual and symbolic shape*. This shaping is not fixed or ultimate but marks a contested and continuous struggle over symbols. It is represented by power-laden symbols such as flags, cartographies and memorabilia that give a region its symbolic ordering. Again, the very naming of a region is crucial to create an image of a region in collective consciousness of both insiders and outsiders.[111] The third stage is *the emergence of institutions*. For Paasi institutions consist of education, the law, both governmental and non-governmental regional organizations, regional media and informal conventions like customs. The more regional scale organizations -political, cultural or economic- are instituted, the more regional consciousness becomes consolidated. These organizations provide the material and mental instruments for the production and reproduction of regions. He attaches the key role to the journalists, academics, teachers and politicians.[112] In this context, the macro-reproduction of a region could not be possible without institutions. The final stage is the *establishment of a region*

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[110] Anssi Paasi, "Re-constructing Regions and Regional Identity," Nethur Lecture given on 7.11.2000, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, 7; Ronald J. Johnston, *A Question of Place: Exploring the Practice of Human Geography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 71.
[111] Anssi Paasi, Re-constructing Regions, 8. ; Macleod and Jones, 679.
[112] Macleod and Jones, 680.

both spatially and intellectually. At this stage a region achieves an institutional and identifiable unit in the organization of human society.[113] Once it is established – whether with an administrative status or not- the mechanism of expectations secures the reproduction of region's identity. However, it will always be open to challenges both from within and outside the region.[114]

3. Region and International Relations Discipline

Studies related to 'region' in International Relations (IR) discipline can be dated back to the aftermath of the Second World War. But as a result of the bipolar system these studies could not reach to an important level.[115] By the mid-1980s region studies in IR gained a momentum. With the collapse of the bipolar international system and the acceleration of globalization process regional institutions began to play a more central role in IR. Some new organizations emerged and some others expanded their membership. Growing attention on regional organizations led the regional studies to become more sophisticated in both theoretical and methodological perspective.

The discipline of IR has considered region within the context of regionalism, regional subsystems and regional organizations.[116] What qualifies as a region has not been crucial for IR scholars since the interactions of national elites has been much more important than the abstract questions on region.[117] Again in some cases,

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[113] Macleod and Jones, 680.
[114] Johnston, 71-72.
[115] Hilde Dominique Engelen, "The Construction of a Region in the Baltic Sea Area," paper presented as part of the conference Fifth Pan-European Conference, Section 33-9, Hague, 11.09.2004, 3.
[116] Louis Cantori and Steven Spiegel, *The International Politics of Regions: A Comparative Approach* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 1-3.
[117] William Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem: A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory," *International Studies Quarterly* 17/1 (1973): 96.

regions have been thought as an issue of area studies and they have been perceived as the result of foreign policies of some powerful states.[118]

But beside the growing number of topics and writings there is no standard definition of region in IR terminology. Different scholars define region in different terms. Geographical proximity, regularity and intensity of interactions, recognition as a different area, interrelatedness, institutional relations, shared cultural norms, homogeneity, interdependence, loyalty and many other elements have been used to describe the region.[119]

Different theoretical approaches take into account different elements while talking about the issue. For instance Neo-Realists define regions merely as alliances formed in order to achieve national interests.[120] On the other hand, Neo-Functionalists advocate that the increasing interdependence between the states forces them to increase the cooperation between and this will lead to political integration. Constructivists emphasize the role of identity and its construction. According to Constructivists regions are formed on the bases of shared identity. They argue that this shared identity will pave the way for shared practices and institutions.[121]

After the end of Cold War studies on region has increased. The region-building approach of the geographer Anssi Paasi has been transferred to IR discipline in the early 1990s.[122] This constructivist approaches began to problematize the ontological status of regions. Accordingly, regions are not pre-given or natural. This

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[118] Cantori and Spiegel, 1.
[119] See, Thompson, 94; and Bruce M. Russet, "Delineating International Regions," in *Quantitative International Politics*, ed. J. David Singer, (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 317-351.
[120] Engelen, 6.
[121] Engelen, 7.
[122] Christopher S. Browning, "The Region Building Approach Revisited: The Continuing Othering of Russia in Discourses of Region-Building in the European North," *Geopolitics* 8/1 (2003): 46.

constructivist approach has mostly been adopted in the studies relating to northern Europe, where new regional bodies such as Council of Baltic Sea States, Barents Euro-Arctic Region and Northern Dimension Initiative have been emerging after the end of Cold War.[123]

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[123] See; Engelen, Browning.

CHAPTER V

CONSTRUCTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST AS A SEPARATE REGION

1. The Invention of the Middle East

"Where is the Middle East?" Roderic Davison asked the question in 1959 in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*.[124] A quarter century later Nikki R. Keddie asked, "Is there a Middle East?"[125] These questions are still waiting to be answered. Today, these questions are more popular. The passing years have not helped but made the answers more ambiguous. The conceptual evolution of the term Middle East may help us to define the contemporary state of the region more clearly. The historical background of the emergence of a region called 'Middle East', the term's attached meanings, its historical package, and its transformation process in line with geopolitical calculations can provide us with some information about the future of the concept.

Firstly, the term Middle East was invented by an American naval officer Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914). Mahan is associated with his famous book: *The Influence of the Sea Power upon History*.[126] His writings attracted more attention in Britain than it did in United Sates (US) and he became the first foreigner accepted to

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[124] Roderic Davison, "Where is the Middle East?" *Foreign Affairs* 38 (1959): 665-675.

[125] Nikki R. Keddie, "Is There a Middle East?" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4/3 (1973): 255-271.

[126] Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783* (Boston: Brown and Co., 1893).

London's exclusive Army and Navy Club.[127] The Russian expansion and German penetration to Ottoman lands directed Mahan's attention to Asia. One of his articles on Asia, "The Persian Gulf and International Relations" appeared in *National Review* of London in September 1902.[128]

In the period, there was a great power rivalry on the Persian Gulf between Britain and Russia. The rising German power in the region with the Berlin-Baghdad railway project had made new calculations necessary. Mahan, as an advice to British officials, proposed British-German cooperation against Russia to keep it out from the region. He defended a strong British naval force in the region.[129] Mahan called this ambiguous region as 'Middle East'. He stated that

> The Middle East, if I may adopt a term which I have not seen, will some day need its Malta, as well as its Gibraltar; it does not follow that either will be in the Gulf. Naval force has the quality of mobility which carries with it the privilege of temporary absences; but it needs to find on every scene of operation established bases of refit, of supply, and in case of disaster, of security. The British Navy should have the facility to concentrate in force, if occasion arises, about Aden, India and the Gulf.[130]

So the term Middle East began its journey. Here Mahan had not drawn the exact boundaries of the Middle East. But he just referred to the sea route approaches to Persian Gulf.[131] Two months after the article of Mahan, a special correspondent of *The Times* from Tehran, namely Valentine Chirol (1852-1929), began to publish a

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[127] Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 22.

[128] Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The Persian Gulf and International Relations," *National Review,* September 1902, cited in Adelson, 22.

[129] Davison, 667.

[130] Mahan, The Persian Gulf and International Relations, quoted in Adelson, 22-23.

[131] Davison, 667.

series of articles under the heading "The Middle Eastern Question".[132] Chirol had

read Mahan and used the term for the western and the northern approaches to

India.[133] He popularized the term. Later he revised the articles and published them in

a book named *The Middle Eastern Question, or Some Problems of Indian*

Defence.[134] He referred to the changing balance of power in the eastern and western

approaches of India due to the advancing technology steam-powered ships and

locomotives.[135] The quasi-insular position of India was under threat.

Chirol's Middle East covered both the sea and the land approaches to India, the Gulf,

Persia, Tibet, Iraq, the eastern coasts of Arabia and Afghanistan. He stated that

> Those regions of Asia which extend to the borders of the India or command
> the approaches to India, and which are consequently bound up with the
> problems of Indian political as well as military defence. The Middle Eastern
> Question is itself only a part of a much larger question upon which the future
> of Asia depends…It is the outcome of that constant projection of European
> forces –moral, commercial and military- into Asia which is slowly but
> steadily transforming all the conditions that enabled us to achieve… a
> position of unparalleled ascendancy in the Asiatic continent.[136]

The Middle East of Chirol comprised various countries, cultures and landscapes. It

was not defined in terms of historical or geographical unity but constructed along

with British security concerns. However, the British and American global policies

would elevate the notion up to a point that would change the perception of Southwest

Asia throughout world.

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[132] Valentine Chirol, "The Middle Eastern Question," *The Times*, 1902-1903, cited in Davison, 667.
[133] Davison, 668.
[134] Valentine Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question and Some Political Problems of Indian Defence* (London: J. Murray, 1903)
[135] Adelson, 25.
[136] Valentine Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question,* quoted in Davison, 668.

In the interwar years the rising Jewish migration to Palestine and the discovery of new oil reserves in the Arabian Peninsula attracted British attention to the westward area of Mahan's original Middle East.[137] Before the discovery of oil, Middle East had just meant vast arid lands that had strategic importance for the defence of the British Empire.[138] Collapse of the Ottoman Empire and end of its rule in the Balkans changed the political geography of the region. So the denomination of the region was modified in line with British imperial politics. The Middle East began to move westward to cover some parts of the Near East. In 1921 Winston Churchill established a Middle East Department (MED) in the Colonial Office to supervise Transjordan, Iraq and Palestine.[139] With the establishment of this department, Middle East was expanded towards the eastern Mediterranean.[140] According to Royal Geographical Association's Permanent Commission on Geographical Names after the dissolution of Ottoman Empire, the term Near East should have been used just for the Balkans.[141] The area between the Bosphorus and India would be called as Middle East. However, the term Near East continued to be used for the Asian parts of the Ottomans. Many British institutions retained the term Near East in their titles.[142] According to Thomas Scheffler, this emphasis on the distinction between the Near

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[137] Pınar Bilgin, "Whose 'Middle East'? Geopolitical Inventions and Practices of Security," *International Relations* 18/1 (2004): 26. Oil has continued to be the major element in the international politics of the region. On the issue see, William Zartman, "Political Science," in *The Study of the Middle East: Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and the Social Sciences*, ed. Leonard Binder (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1976), 300.
[138] Adelson, 2,7.
[139] Davison, 668.
[140] Thomas Scheffler, " 'Fertile Crescent', 'Orient', 'Middle East': The Changing Mental Maps of Southwest Asia," *European Review of History* 10/2 (2003): 265.
[141] Davison, 668.
[142] Scheffler, 266.

East and Middle East was just a reproduction of old cultural division between Asia and Europe. [143]

The approaching Second World War reshaped the region. The British policy-makers of the time began to use the term for the area from the North African and Asian lands to the west of India. Changing military calculations led to the inclusion of some countries and exclusion of some others. By 1932, the separate commands of Royal Air Force, namely the Middle Eastern Command (MEC), headquartered in Iraq, and the Near Eastern Command, headquartered in Egypt, were merged, and it was called as Middle Eastern Air Command (MEAC).[144] MEAC had control over Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Palestine, Iraq, Trans-jordan, Aden, Cyprus and Persian Gulf.[145] During the war the Middle East of British Army had changed in line with the British wartime interests. Eritrea was excluded from Middle East in September 1941 and included again five months later. In 1942 Iran was included in the Middle East.[146]

In 1941, Britain set up the Middle East Supply Centre (MESC) to deal with the region in economic terms. The Centre was developed to centralize trade control and economic mobilization in the region to the advantage of the Allied powers. Its jurisdiction involved Malta, Cyprus, Lebanon, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Somali lands, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Egypt, Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Turkey.[147] Wilmington and Evans argue that MESC signs a breakthrough moment in the attempts to unite the region. Accordingly, this wartime organization was an outstanding example of a newly emerging international

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[143] Scheffler, 265.
[144] Lewis and Wigen, 65.
[145] Davison, 669.
[146] Davison, 669.
[147] Martin Wilmington and Laurence Evans, *The Meaning of MESC THE story of the Middle East Supply Centre* (New York: SUNY Press, 1971), 5.

cooperation and economic regionalism.[148] Before the establishment of these wartime institutions, the term Middle East had not been in public use. The term had been used inconsistently either to refer to Eastern Mediterranean or to the countries such as Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. It had great impact on regionalist thinking and self-identification of the Middle East as well.[149]

The center of the region switched from India to Cairo in line with changing geopolitical rationale.[150] This shift was in no way related to devising a more appropriate geographical category in accordance with any scientific inquiry. It was just the transformation of British strategic needs. Some scholars argued that Middle East had a geographical unity on the bases of various phenomena such as Islam, commercial unity, aridity and etc.[151] Davison argued that all such justifications except British military regulations fail when they are tested.[152] In this context, the Middle East of World War II was similar to that of Mahan-Chirol pattern for reflecting the strategic perceptions of British-American interests.[153]

The term Middle East continued to be used in a loose sense. Churchill initiated to move the center of the region from Cairo to Istanbul.[154] However, he was not clear with the terms Near East and Middle East, and their relation to one another. He proposed to divide Asia to four parts. Accordingly, there should have been the Near

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[148] Wilmington and Evans, 2.
[149] Wilmington and Evans, 3.
[150] Davison, 669.
[151] Nikki R. Keddie, 255-271. For Keddie uniting characteristics are Islamic culture, semi-arid climate and pastoral nomadic life. However, she has referred to the increasing disparity in the region. Again, William McNeill in his book *A World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971, 13.) defined the region with its aridity. Another scholar Ewald Banse claimed that uniting features of the region were Islam, climatic aridity and the nomadic life of Bedouins, quoted in Scheffler, 263.
[152] Davison, 670.
[153] Scheffler, 268.
[154] Davison, 670.

East, the Middle East, the East and finally the Far East.[155] But the wartime interests got the upper hand and Churchill's initiative failed. After the war, the efforts to return to the old terminology of Near and Middle Easts reappeared. However, proposals to fix the names of the region were rejected due to the fear of leading to more confusion.[156] Because it had become an "accepted practice to use the term 'Middle East' to cover the Arab world and certain neighboring countries" and there was "no reason to change it"[157] as it was stated in an answer to a question in the British Parliament in 1946.

Thus, the enlarged Middle East spread to cover the area from Afghanistan to Libya. After the war the term Middle East and its new meaning gained popularity in both Britain and US.[158] Later on, the extent of the region was modified in line with cultural and historical reasons. While the Somalia was excluded from the Middle East, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco were included.[159]

Until the late 19th century, the Ottomans had represented the East of European politics. However, the deeper penetration of the Western influence throughout world had required a distinction between the Near and the Far East. The British archeologist David George Hogarth (1862-1927) published his prominent book *The Nearer East* in 1902 and defined it as

> Our region, therefore, will embrace all south-eastern Europe below the long oblique water-parting of the Balkans; all the islands eastward of Corfu and Crete, which themselves are included; all the north-eastern corner of Africa

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[155] Davison, 669-670.
[156] Davison, 670.
[157] Davison, 672.
[158] Lewis and Wigen, 65.
[159] Lewis and Wigen, 65.

that is fit for settled human habitation; and all of Asia that lies on the hither side of a truly distinctive natural boundary. [160]

By the early 20th century, the term Near East was very popular, particularly among the diplomatic circles.[161] It was used to denote the Ottoman lands in Southeastern Europe and Southwest Asia. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire led the disappearance of the term from public vocabulary. The environmental unity lacks for both regions. However, Near East has continued to be used particularly in philology and ancient history.[162] The newly formulated Middle East, to a large extent, was covering the Near East of the early twentieth century and gradually replaced it.

At the institutional level the vagueness has continued. For being the most comprehensive international organization, United Nation's (UN) perspective on the issue is crucial and illuminating. The term Near East has generally been outmoded in UN circles.[163] Middle East became a usual term in UN platforms as a response to the colonial connotations of Near East. The real issue for UN was to delimit the Middle East. In 1948, an ad hoc committee assigned with specifying the region came with the list of some countries that were considered to take place in the Middle East: Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Lebanon, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Ethiopia, Egypt and Greece.[164]

According to the United Nations backed *Encyclopedia of the United Nations and International Agreements* Middle East "is applied to the countries of Southwest Asia and Northeast Africa: the Asian part of Turkey, Syria, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Bahrain, Kuwait, Katar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Southern Yemen

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[160] David George Hogarth, *The Nearer East* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902), 2.
[161] Lewis and Wigen, 66.
[162] Lewis and Wigen, 66.
[163] Davison, 673.
[164] Davison, 673.

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and Saudi Arabia. In the cultural sense also to Afghanistan and Pakistan".[165] However, this definition does not overlap with UN's institutional definitions. Actually, various specialized organizations of the UN make their own identifications and definitions. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank prefer different names –Middle East and Near East- for the region.[166] Again, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) use various terms such as West Asia, the Eastern Mediterranean or Arab states for the region.[167] In this respect, the region suffers more than any other region from the confusion in geographical identification.

After Second World War, the imperial concerns over Middle East was taken over by US from Britain. US would basically follow the path of Britain.[168] Middle East became a popular term in US, though there was no officially recognized Middle East.[169] Some specialists in US, particularly the cartographers of National Geographic Society insisted on the old denomination: Near East, extending from Egypt to Iran, Middle East, extending from Afghanistan to Burma and finally the Far East.[170] However, these attempts failed in US as it had failed in Britain. As of November 1, 1956 *The New York Times* wrote: "Middle East is now used in preference to Near East to conform to the change in general use".[171] The areas covered by these terms were roughly equivalent. In this respect, the demise of the

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[165] Edmund Jan Osmanczyk, *Encyclopedia of the United Nations and International Agreements* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 1990) quoted in Joseph G. Rahme, "Ethnocentric and Stereotypical Concepts in the study of Islamic and World History," *The History Teacher* 32/4 (1999): 475.
[166] Rahme, 475.
[167] Rahme, 475.
[168] Adelson, 214.
[169] Davison, 673.
[170] Davison, 673.
[171] *The New York Times Index*, (1956), 751, quoted in Davison, 673.

Ottoman Empire, its expulsion from the Balkans and the newly emerged powers in the region led the transformation of the Near East to Middle East to the end of 1950s.[172]

In 1957 US President Dwight D. Eisenhower addressed to the congress on the situation in the Middle East. Eisenhower proposed to help economically and militarily to the states "in the general area of the Middle East"[173] in order to prevent Soviet influence in the region. US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles defined the relevant region as "the area lying between and including Libya on the west and Pakistan on the east and Turkey on the north and the Arabian peninsula to the south, plus the Sudan and Ethiopia". [174] However, a year later in 1958 US State Department changed the definition of the region to "Egypt, Syria, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms".[175] This definition excluded many parts of the previous one such as Pakistan, Turkey, Libya, Iran and etc. Then to the end of the 1958, newly created Aegean and Middle East Division under State Department covered the countries Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Since we consider Greece and Turkey as a part of Aegean, there remain just four countries in Middle East.[176] No Arab country was included to this new definition. This confusion in nomenclature is the result of 20th century great-power politics and their changing interest calculations.

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[172] Davison, 674.

[173] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Special Message to the Congress on the Middle East Situation" in *Dwight D. Eisenhower Library* January 1957, www.eisenhower.archives.gov/midleast.htm (15 September 2006)

[174] Davison, 665.

[175] Davison, 665.

[176] Davison, 666.

According to Davison the area referred by Middle East was so heterogeneous to label with a criterion of unity or even a multitude of criteria.[177] Thus, for Davison the mere criterion has been the military and political interests of outside powers. He criticized the arguments aiming to define the region under a common attribute. Actually, these proposals could not achieve a certain success to convince academic community. Unifying themes proposed by various scholars such as shared values, religion, aridity or struggle to modernize traditional life forms have been continuing to be effective.[178] However, these proposed unifying themes have been very controversial. In fact, in 1959 Etzel Pearcy, the geographer of American State Department, remarked that Middle East could not be defined.[179]

2. Middle East After Cold War

After the end of the Cold War, there emerged a need for cutting up the world in a new fashion. The First, the Second and Third worlds of the Cold War lost its explanatory power. There is an urge for establishing new geographical frameworks.[180] Geographical frameworks aim to provide appropriate tools for understanding the world. However, none of them are unbiased or objective. They impose their ideological background. In this regard, inquiring global geographical concepts and their intellectual history become very helpful for understanding the world we live in.

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[177] Davison, 674.

[178] For Example, William McNeill in his book *A World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971, 13.) prefers the term Middle East and defines the region with its aridity (p.13). Again, for Bernard Lewis Middle East forms a unity with its strong geographical features, common history and aridity: Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), 10.

[179] G. Etzel Pearcy, "The Middle East: An Indefinable Region," *Department of State Bulletin* 23 (1959): 407-416 quoted in Davison, 674.

[180] See, Huntington, 22-49; Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History," *The National Interest* Summer 1999; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997)

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Middle East began to transform functionally and structurally. The end of the Cold War changed the global context of the international relations. Neither the Soviet desire for a southward expansion towards warm waters nor the American policies to prevent a communist expansion were valid. The bi-polar world system of the Cold War was out of date. In this context, the meaning of the Middle East has indispensably begun to change. On the other hand, a structural transformation of the region was occurring due to the newly independent Muslim states of the Caucasus and Central Asia such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This enlarged region was sometimes referred as 'New Middle East'.[181]

Historians sometimes inspire other disciplines and international politics is not an exception. Their search for global history writing directs them to finding out convenient geographical units for a global history. The writings of British historian Arnold Toynbee[182] (1889-1975) on world history provide good examples of this approach. Accordingly, civilizations have been the operating units of human history. They have been the quasi-insular geohistorical formations of human development.[183] After the Cold War, the resurgence of religious and cultural discourses in contemporary world increased the popularity of civilizational approaches, as it has been the case for Samuel Huntington's thesis, "The Clash of Civilizations".[184] Toynbee's civilizational units of universal history have turned into clashing modern civilizations in Huntington's thesis. Civilization based demarcations between human

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[181]David Menashri, *Central Asia Meets the Middle East* (London: Routledge, 1998) and Bernard Lewis, "Rethinking the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs* 71 (1992): 99-109
[182] Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* 12 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1934-1961)
[183] Lewis and Wigen, 125.
[184] Samuel P. Huntington, 22-49.

communities perpetuate old dividing lines. In this regard, Huntington's thesis can be considered as a politico-geographical envisagement in accordance with American interests. It has been reproducing the old imaginary mental maps by underlining the civilizational fault lines.

Moreover, the period after Cold War witnessed a decline in the Arab unity movements. The first and the second Gulf wars underlined the divisions among Arabs. Again the Barcelona process of the European Union, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership project, was launched in 1995. The European Union initiated a new process with its Mediterranean neighbors such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Palestine, Tunisia and Turkey.[185] It has been aiming to promote cultural understanding and economical cooperation in the Mediterranean part of the Middle East. Unlike the Middle East of the previous times, this notion emphasizes the dialogue and mutual understanding over dominance. Pınar Bilgin calls this 'Mediterranean Middle East'.[186] Accordingly, the security of Europe was seen directly related to that of its neighboring countries. In this respect, the stability of the Mediterranean Middle East was crucial to Europe.[187] This is why the non-Mediterranean countries such as Iraq or Iran were not included in the process. Thus, we may argue that the construction of Mediterranean Middle East as a region was molded by European security concerns.

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[185]*Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia,* s.v. "Barcelona Process." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barcelona_Process (20 September 2006)
[186] Bilgin, 34.
[187] Bilgin, 34.

CHAPTER VI

ETHNOCENTRIC DENOMINATIONS AND THE MIDDLE EAST

1.The Orient, Fertile Crescent and The Middle East

Middle East is an ethnocentric term. It implies an entity that considers itself the center and defines others accordingly. Similarly, Near East is another earlier, first coined in 1869, Eurocentric term that covers the Balkans, Anatolia, the Levant and Mesopotamia. [188]

We know that all societies produce their own representations and designs. In this regard, the Arabic term of 'Maghreb' that refers to the North African lands to the west of Egypt is also an ethnocentric term. However, the point here is that any culture other than modern West could not convince other cultures to the validity of its own conceptualizations. Today, the widespread usage of Eurocentric terms like Middle East implies the hegemonical character of western-originated discourses. The adoption of the term by the local population of the region shows the breadth and depth of western influence. The ascendancy of the western world realized both in material and representational terms. In this context, the popularity of the notions like Middle East is both a result and an instrument of western material dominance. Moreover, the transformation of these concepts and their meanings occurs in tandem with military, political, economic and technological developments. These developments change the physical reality and its perception by people.

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[188] *Oxford Online Dictionary*, s.v. "Near East" (10 August 2006)

New proposals after the collapse of the Soviet Union for a 'Greater Middle East'[189] reflect the changing conditions and thereby changing calculations in international politics. The motivations behind the inclusion of newly independent Central Asian states to Middle East can be explained by an American intention to hold Islam in check and control the energy resources of the region.[190] At this point, the real issue has been the transformation of a region along with a non-regional country's changing interest identifications. New denominations change not only the extension of a previously defined zone but also the policy projections towards that region. In this context, 9/11 attacks triggered the reappearance of 'Greater Middle East' projection with new dimensions. In fact, it can be argued that projections incline to turn into projects. Thus, the changes in denominations represent a change both in symbolic and material world. Again, we may argue that changes in geographical discourses indicate transformation of our mental maps.

Prior to Middle East, there was the concept of Orient. The evolution of the conceptual context of the term may tell us some information about the contemporary situation. Modern studies on the Orient can be started with the late 18th and the early 19th centuries. The motivation behind these studies was the curiosity about the eastern world and the aspirations to dominate this geography. According to Said, the political and the cultural aspects of this drive could not be separated, since it was the culture that determines the political.[191]

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[189] Robert D. Blackwill and Michael Stürmer, *Allies Divided: Transatlantic Policies for the Greater Middle East* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1997) Again the term was reintroduced in the summer of 2004 at the G8 summit by US President George W. Bush. The term has begun to be used for referring the new approach of US towards Middle East.
[190] Bilgin, 28.
[191] Said, 10-12.

The study of the Orient by Westerners was in a way related to making of modern Europe. Since the region was discovered to be the cradle of civilization, Europeans would discover their civilizational roots in the area.[192] The archeologists began to explore the Phoenician, Hittite, Assyrian, Babylonian history. The discovery of the Indo-European language family in the late 19th century was another stimulating factor behind these studies.[193] It was about discovering the West out of Orient by creating memorial landscapes. Locating at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa, the region has been inspired to various mental maps in the course of history. It was the " '*Oriens*' of the Romans, the '*Mashriq*' of the Muslim Arabs and the '*Levant*' of the European merchants".[194]

Orient had originally been used to refer to Southwest Asia.[195] Before the birth of Islam, the Orient had denoted the common economical and cultural area around the eastern Mediterranean.[196] The Arab conquests of seventh and eighth centuries began to transform the content of the term. The expansion of the alien cultural realm of Islam at the expense of Christendom provided a new dimension to the term on the basis of Islam.[197] From this perspective, Morocco –that largely lies to the west of England- could be a part of oriental civilization. By the 18th century, the spread of colonial networks to India and China expanded the Orient to include these new areas. The difference of the term Orient from Asia was that it was always defined in

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[192] Scheffler, 256.
[193] Scheffler, 257.
[194] Scheffler, 258.
[195] Lewis and Wigen, 54.
[196] Lewis and Wigen, 54.
[197] Lewis and Wigen, 54.

cultural terms. The inclusion of North Africa or Southeastern Europe of the Ottoman times to Oriental realm has been the result of the term's cultural emphasis.[198]

According to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), the Oriental realm comprised four different worlds.[199] China and India represented the 'farther' East and the remaining worlds, namely Persia and Egypt, represented the 'hither' East. Accordingly, all these civilizations were Oriental in their essence for being stagnant and lacking freedom. However, the hither East civilizations were approaching the West more than the farther Eastern ones.[200] In this respect, the original oppositional cultural sphere of the West, the Middle East, has become an intermediary cultural zone between the West and more alien cultures of the farther East. However, it has continued to be seen as a distinct 'culture continent' that has been more Asian than European. [201]

Etymologically 'Orient' refers to the rising sun.[202] It began to be used as a geographical term in the late Roman Empire to denote the eastern administrative provinces of the Empire such as Libya, Egypt, Phoenicia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Greece and the Balkans. Later it had begun to be used for the eastern parts of the Roman-Christian world.[203] Similarly, The Muslim 'Mashriq' literally means the place of sunrise.[204] It is today used for the Muslim countries to the East of Egypt. More specifically, it has referred to the eastern half of the 'dar al-Islam' -the house of

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[198] Lewis and Wigen, 54.
[199] Lewis and Wigen, 63.
[200] Lewis and Wigen, 63.
[201] Lewis and Wigen, 64. The European inclusion of Morocco to Orient and thereby its inclusion to Middle East has become possible by this cultural emphasis.
[202] *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia,* s.v. "Orient." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orient (12 August 2006)
[203] Scheffler, 259.
[204] *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia,* s.v. "Mashriq" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashriq (12 August 2006)

submission or Muslim world. Here we see different cultures and their differing mental maps that give superiority to their own perception of reality.[205] It can be seen as a discursive struggle between '*res publica christiana*' and '*dar al-islam*' over the lands of the true faith.

The ancient Orient was considered to be the cradle of European civilization in the 19th century. However, the contemporary Orient began to be treated as the 'other' of Europe.[206] The alien lands of the region and its exotic culture began to be represented by the term Orient. Desert and the simple life style of Arab Bedouins were among the main characteristics of the Orient as an anti-image of dynamic and industrializing West.[207] Accordingly, the Orient was a distinct cultural continent that was vital for solidifying European identity.

There have been various terms to identify the region along with changing mental maps. Another term is 'Fertile Crescent'. The term was first coined by a University of Chicago archeologist James Henry Breasted (1865-1935) in 1916 and gained great popularity in academic and popular circles.[208] The crescent shape fertile region extends from northern shores of Persian Gulf to the Sinai desert of Egypt through Mesopotamia, southern Anatolia and eastern shores of Mediterranean Sea.[209] It is frequently referred as 'the cradle of civilization'. However, as a macro region, Fertile Crescent was unknown to the local peoples. It was the writings of an American

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[205] Scheffler, 260.
[206] Scheffler, 262.
[207] Scheffler, 262.
[208] James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Times: A History of the Early World: An Introduction to the Study of Ancient History and the Career of Early Man*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Ginn, 1944), 101. He stated in a footnote in page 101: "There is no name, either geographical or political, which includes all of this great semicircle. Hence we are obliged to coin a term and call it the Fertile Crescent"
[209] *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia,* s.v. "Fertile Crescent." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fertile_crescent (11 August 2006)

scholar that has given life to such a notion. The area is far from being integral in geo-morphological terms, because it consists various landscapes such as river valleys, seacoasts, mountain highlands, oases and steppes.[210] According to Scheffler, the driving force behind the creation of such a notion was creating a "catchy explanatory image that could be used not only for explaining the interplay of space, culture and politics from an environmental point of view but also for advancing hidden political agendas".[211]

For Breasted the history of the region is an age-long struggle between the southern desert wanderers and northern mountain peoples. "The history of the Ancient world, as we are now to follow it, was largely made up of the struggle between this *southern Semitic* line, which issued from the Southern grasslands, and the *northern Indo-European* line, which came forth from the Northern grasslands to confront the older civilizations represented in the southern line".[212] The wars between Rome and Carthage or Persia and Chaldea are just the scenes from that long history. Breasted concludes, "The result of the long conflict was the complete triumph of our ancestors, the Indo-European line, which … gained unchallenged supremacy throughout the Mediterranean world under the Greeks and Romans… the victory moved from the east end to the west end of the northern line".[213]

The invention of Fertile Crescent coincided with the rising of geo-strategic perception in the West. The book was about the ancient history of the region but the spirit of the time had captured its author. He seems to be aware of the strategic

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[210] Scheffler, 253.
[211] Scheffler, 253.
[212] Breasted, 172, emphasis original.
[213] Breasted, 174.

importance of the area just before the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.[214] The technological and military improvements of the time made it possible to imagine and envisage larger spaces that are meaningful to people. More importantly this design can be seen as an example of a new trend in western thought. It was about rising geostrategic awareness in a new fashion.[215] These larger spaces could be utilized for imperial intentions. Even an archeologist's concept could provide an appropriate tool for politicians. In this respect, there is a great similarity between Mahan's 'Middle East' and Breasted's 'Fertile Crescent'. In fact, the politicians, academicians and journalists of the time were successfully working together on the formation of new landscapes.

In this context, Fertile Crescent has been represented as the cradle of civilization to which modern West owes too much. It denotes a constant struggle, which has concluded by the ultimate victory of northerners, between the nomads of the north and the wanderers of the south. In this period, larger abstract spaces were invented through imperial lenses and these spaces were attached with political agendas, historical packages and civilizational elements.[216]

When we come to the case of Middle East, the situation is very similar to the aforementioned terms. Firstly, it is a 20th century British abstraction and an artificial strategic concept imposed from outside.[217] It became popular among scholars and politicians with the end of the Second World War. However, the boundaries of the region were not certain. In fact Davison argues that it is a futile attempt to specify

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[214] Scheffler, 255.
[215] Scheffler, 255.
[216] Scheffler, 255.
[217] Fawaz A. Gerges, "The Study of Middle East International Relations: A Critique," *British Journal of Middle East Studies* 18/2 (1991): 209.

any set of criteria for defining the so heterogeneous area of Middle East.[218] In this regard, its limitation is not a question of academic inquiry but more an issue of ideological positioning. Whether you include Turkey, Afghanistan, Israel or Central Asian countries to Middle East is a matter of ideological choice having actual repercussions. It is possible to define a Middle East in terms of pan-Arab ideals or Islamic community, Muslim umma, aspirations.[219] Actually some Arab scholars tried to substitute Middle East with Arab regional subsystem at the expense of non-Arab nations of the region. For example, Jamil Matar and Ali Dessouki proposed to abandon the concept Middle East in order to prevent western-created illusions about the region since the notion Middle East did not capture the historical reality of the area.[220] On the other hand, for Mohammed Riad the absence of a universally agreed definition of the term emanates from the fact that the region was defined from outside, not from within.[221] The contingent character of outside powers' strategic needs has led to this amorphic situation. However, a definition from within based on internal characteristics might be more consistent and stable.

The replacement of the term with another may not be possible due to the extension and popularity of the term in academic and public discourses. However, the awareness of the people about the genealogy of the notion will increase our consciousness about the region and its realities.

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[218] Davison, 674.
[219] Gerges, 210.
[220] Jamil Matar and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *The Arab Regional System*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1983), 24-31 quoted in Gerges, 210.
[221] Mohammed Riad, "A View from Cairo," in *The Middle East in World Politics*, ed. Mohammed Ayoob (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 18 quoted in Gerges, 210.

2. The Persistence of the Term Middle East

How could this ambiguous and ethnocentric term survive till today? When we consider that a comparable term defected by similar reasons, the Far East, replaced by another, East Asia, the issue gets bigger. Joseph G. Rahme argues that there are various reasons that explain the persistence of the term.[222] First, it is a voluntary preference of the leading scholars in the field. For instance, Bernard Lewis discusses the appropriateness of the term in 1963 in his book *The Middle East and the West* and concludes:

> Yet, if we try to find an adequate substitute for these names we shall have great difficulty. In India the attempt has indeed been made to displace the Western-centred term Middle East by another, and the area has been renamed 'Western Asia'. This new geographical expression has rather more shape and color than 'Middle East', but is not really very much better. It is no misleading to view the region as the West of an entity called Asia than as the Middle East of another unspecified entity; moreover it is improper to designate it by a name which, even formally, excludes Egypt.[223]

He reiterated the same discussion in his 1994 published book *The Shaping of the Modern Middle East* and again rejected the efforts to replace the term with a more neutral one.[224] However, in East Asian studies the term Far East was dismissed by the efforts of careful scholars of the field.[225]

World regions such as East Asia, Middle East or Latin America have accelerated their institutionalization in the mid-twentieth century. The American entry into World War II has triggered the process since world regions are essentially Anglo-American constructions. In the early 1940's an Ethnographic Board (EB) was created to advise the American government on global geography. The EB was formed by

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[222] Rahme, 476-477.
[223] Bernard Lewis, 9-10.
[224] Bernard Lewis, *The Shaping of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 12.
[225] For a comparative assessment of the Middle East and Far East see Rahme, 476-477

gathering four academic organizations, the National Research Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Social Science Research Council and the Smithsonian Institute.[226] The war forced the EB to formulate better schemes than the conventional continental one. The basic categories of the Board were Europe, Russia, the Near and Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Africa and Latin America. In fact, this scheme would be the basis of the postwar area studies.[227] It was in a way mapping of cultural macro zones. With the end of the war, area studies centers were established in major American universities to enhance the American knowledge on various parts of the world. These centers were provided public funding. Their number began to increase. By the end 1960's, the new scheme of world regions was widely adopted by the American academia and began to spread to other parts of the world.[228]

Today, there are hundreds of centers, associations, departments, and periodicals that bear the term Middle East in their titles. These institutions naturally resist against changing their names once they were established. For example, the university where this thesis study has been carried out is '*Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi*' -Middle East Technical University- and any attempt to change the name of the university seems to be futile under current conditions. My last example refers another underlying cause for the persistence of the term: the adoption of the definition by local peoples of the region. In fact, there are a host of local institutions bearing the term in their names such as the '*Tayaran al-Sharq al-Awsat*' -Middle East Airlines- Lebanese national flag carrier airline, Turkish daily newspaper 'Ortadoğu' -The

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[226] Lewis and Wigen, 163.
[227] Lewis and Wigen, 163.
[228] Lewis and Wigen, 167.

Middle East- and Turkish governmental organization '*Orta Doğu Amme İdaresi Enstitüsü*' -Middle East Public Administration Institute.

The appropriation of the term by local people shows the depth of the Western hegemony over the region. However, the voluntary preference of local communities does not prevent the shortcomings emanating from this terminology. The privileged position of the people who have had the chance to make identifications and definitions continues along with these terms.

The world history textbooks are also important in the making of our geographical and historical perception of global processes.[229] They provide global and holistic perspective to students. The perspective of the authors of these books and their area of specialization determine the structure of these books and thereby students' perception of the world, both directly and indirectly. In a survey on twelve major world history textbooks, it has been found that only two authors, among the thirty-seven authors and co-authors, are specialists in Islamic or 'Middle Eastern' studies. What is more is that only one author sees Middle East as an erroneous term.[230]

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[229] Rahme, 478.
[230] For the details of the survey see Rahme, 478.

CHAPTER VII

THE MIDDLE EASTERN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

AND THE WORLD REGIONS

1. The Middle East within the Context of International Relations

Traditionally, Middle Eastern international politics has been evaluated in the context of harsh realistic theories.[231] In this sense, realism has been the sole explanatory tool to understand the region. The validity of critical approaches to international politics of the region has mostly been evaluated negatively.[232] There is a direct link between inventing regions and practicing security. In fact, the recent literature on regions and regionalism underlines the invented character of regions.[233] The security and military concerns have been the main reason behind the creation of regions. Many geographic sites such as Middle East, Latin America and Southeast Asia were actually first identified and named by military thinkers.[234]

Historically speaking studying the Middle East has mostly been a supplementary to great power politics. Visioning the Middle East through great power interests indispensably distorts our view. As it was stated in William Zartman's extensive research on the studies about Middle Eastern international politics, international relations of the region has generally been studied as an adjunct to great power

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[231] Bilgin, 25.
[232] Bilgin, 25.
[233] See Lewis and Wigen *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*; P. J: Taylor "A Theory and Practice of Regions: The Case of Europes'," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9 (1991): 183-195.
[234] Lewis and Wigen, xiii, 173.

politics.[235] Since the Middle East was designed by outside powers, the disregard of regional interstate relations becomes comprehensible. The foreign policies of great powers have drawn the contours of regional studies. The complex internal features the region were mostly omitted. This heritage has affected the later studies.[236] Thus, we may argue that the studies on Middle Eastern international politics are western-originated and power-laden.

In addition, the bi-polar international system of the Cold War contributed to depreciation of indigenous characteristics and regional demands. In this regard, the general practice of the Middle Eastern international relations can be criticized with being ethnocentric in the sense that it precedes the Western interests to regional ones.[237] Also, the region has not been studied in its own terms. Thus, envisaging the Middle Eastern international politics in line with global superpower rivalry has led to the distortion and misperception of the reality.

Moreover, the field of Middle Eastern international relations has been policy-oriented.[238] With the beginning of the Cold War, many graduate programs were initiated in US. The establishment of area studies programs was directly linked to the urgent need for regional expertise.[239] By the help of the area studies centers, the necessary information would be gathered to identify problems and produce solutions. Similarly, the Soviet interests on the region led the proliferation of research centers

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[235] William Zartman, "Political Science," in *The Study of the Middle East: Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and the Social Sciences*, ed. Leonard Binder (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1976) 299.
[236] Gerges, 211.
[237] Gerges, 211.
[238] Gerges, 213.
[239] Leonard Binder, "Area Studies: A critical Reassessment," in *The Study of the Middle East: Research and Scholarship in the Humanities and the Social Sciences*, ed. Leonard Binder (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1976), 1-2.

and periodicals in the Soviet Union.[240] The funding of these institutions, both in US and USSR, was directly linked to the actual policy concerns of these countries. Thus, these institutions could not emancipate themselves from direct governmental influences. The scholars are more concerned with policy prescriptions than deeper and more complex analyses.

2. World Regions and Middle East as a Geographical Category

Dividing the world into some basic units is useful for educational and practical reasons, but it sacrifices the complexities of global geography. At least we should keep in mind that many geographical categories are essentially problematic. The most fundamental geographical scheme is the continental one. This scheme guides not only our perception of natural world, but also our conceptions about human societies.[241] Accordingly, each continent experiences its distinct history. In this respect, the cultural positioning of the Europe and Asia in opposition to one another displays the breadth and depth of the continental scheme in our lives. According to Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen continental scheme obscures more than it reveals both in the realms of natural history and human geography.[242] Again it exaggerates the importance of Europe and its history in the evolution of human societies by elevating Europe's position on the world map.[243]

Probably the most problematic part of the continental scheme is the division between Europe and Asia. In contrast to other continents, it is not possible to talk about a natural dividing line between Europe and Asia. In fact, the birth of the continents

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[240] William Zartman, 300.
[241] Lewis and Wigen, 2.
[242] Lewis and Wigen, 3.
[243] Lewis and Wigen, 12.

was first realized by differentiating Europe from Asia.[244] Thus, the division between Europe and Asia is intrinsic to contemporary geographical scheme that gives Europe a continental status. A continental scheme accepting Europe and Asia as parts of a single continent would have been more correct.[245] However, this might have made it harder to define a distinct European culture and civilization in opposition to other civilizations. A distinct continent would lay the ground for a distinct culture along with geographical differentiation. In fact, these kind of metageographical frameworks serves to sustain various forms of environmental determinism, which ultimately explains the differences between human societies according to their physical environment.[246] In this context, the scholarly discourses of Asiatic Mode of Production or Asian form of despotic power were nourished from this underlying environmental determinism of the current metageographical scheme.[247] Europe alone could escape from geographical determination as it was argued by De La Blache: "because of the extremely varied physical environment of Europe in general, and France in particular, higher civilization came to exist in these places".[248]

Lewis and Wigen propose the world regions as better geographical categories.[249] First, they are not bounded with dictates of landmass shape. Second, they put Europe to its proper place. While Europe is usually accepted as consisting one or two world regions, namely Western and Eastern Europe, Asia being usually represented as five or six world regions, namely Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) -in other

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[244] Lewis and Wigen, 36.
[245] Lewis and Wigen, 36.
[246] Lewis and Wigen, 42.
[247] Lewis and Wigen, 43.
[248] Vidal de la Blache, quoted in Kevin Archer, "Regions as Social Organisms: The Lamarckian Characteristics of Vidal de la Blache's Regional Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83 (1993): 498-514
[249] Lewis and Wigen, 13,157.

terms the Middle East- East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Central Asia.[250]

Accordingly, Europe loses its equal status with Asia, which deserves more academic

inquiry due to its large geography and fruitful history. They define their attempt as

> …both to deconstruct and to conserve; to highlight fluidity and indeterminacy, but also to map out real geographical structures that we consider independent of anyone's attempts to understand them; to point out the conventional and constructed nature of the fundamental ideas of global geography, while yet denying that they are nothing but social constructs; and finally, to uncover the political motivation behind metageographical conceptualizations, without implying that they are all reducible to strategic interests.[251]

However, what Lewis and Wigen do in the last analysis is just a reproduction of the

map of Toynbee's civilizations[252] and thereby the taxonomy of the Huntington's

clashing civilizations[253]. In this regard, the macro regional scheme of Lewis and

Wigen is no less innocent than the civilizational perspective of Huntington. Both

theories are categorizing the world through civilizational dividing lines and

indispensably reproducing the old cultural configurations. Lewis and Wigen's

category of SWANA –in other words the Middle East- represents Huntington's main

threat against Western civilization. What Lewis and Wigen do is providing a

concrete geographical instrument to Huntington's thesis.

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[250] Lewis and Wigen, 15.
[251] Lewis and Wigen, 17.
[252] Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* volume 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959) 93 reprinted in Lewis and Wigen, 123. The world regional scheme of Lewis and Wigen is so similar to that of Toynbee's map.
[253] John Agnew, "Regions on the Mind does not Equal Regions of the Mind," *Progress in Human Geography* 23/1 (1999): 95. Here, Agnew rightly refers to the similarity between Lewis and Wigen's scheme and Huntington's civilizational designation.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

One who aims to develop an unbiased perspective about history or current political situation needs to understand the relationship between geography and politics. Without knowing how these two affect each other it is very hard for us to evaluate the ongoing international discussions on a meaningful bases. A key factor for understanding the historical background of the current problems is to understand the historical development of the terms which we use while speaking about those problems. Denomination of a place reflects the perception and the objective of the party, who makes the denomination about that place. From this perspective, learning the historical development of the term 'Middle East' can contribute much to our understanding of the current situation of the region in particular and of world in general.

The main aim of this thesis has been to illuminate the historical construction of the Middle East as a separate region and its actual reflections on global politics. Since the term Middle East has become very popular in various circles from the academic communities to international media, searching the various dimensions of the terminology about the region became more urgent. A genealogical study on the term provides us an important tool for comprehending the roots of current discourses on the region.

For this sake, in the first four chapters of my thesis I basically wanted to describe what region means. Just like many other concepts, region has meant various things

for people. I preferred geography as a general framework for my study. In fact, region has been problematized by geographers. Therefore, I have made a survey of the historical development of geography as a discipline and the changing meanings of region within the context of these developments. Here I have sought to outline the changing meanings of region and its contingent character. In this regard, for Marxists region has been a spatial response to the social processes deriving from the capitalist mode of production. It is about capital circulation and production relations. On the other hand, for the humanistic approach region becomes a focus of cultural identification. Common culture of a group and its peculiar way of relation with particular places leads to social consciousness that defines a region. Inspired by post-structuralist approaches scholars began to interpret region within the context of power relations and this has given birth to post-positivist approaches that consider region as an active medium for social interaction. This line of thought attracted the attention of scholars to the construction process of regions. Accordingly, regions were not natural. Nor they were independent from power relations. They were historically constructed. In time, studies concentrated on the cultural and the civilizational aspects of the issue have increased.

The Middle East, both as a term and as a region, is at the core of the discussions on culture, place, region and civilization. In fact, it was invented by British and American scholars in line with their political and military interests. Later on, cultural characterizations would become influential on the fate of the region and its representations in western-oriented discourses.

The region was defined from outside not from within. In the first decades of the 20th century, the term Middle East was referred to the Persian Gulf and its adjacent

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territories. In time, region had begun to move westward along with changing interest identifications. Later, the region has continued to take new shapes. And the term has sustained its contingent character. Political, economic and cultural interest calculations of extra-regional powers have always influenced the fate of the region. In this context, contemporary Middle East is partly a result of the historical interplay between the British-American policies towards the Middle East and the regions representations in political and academic discourses.

The creation of the Middle East as a separate region, in other words naming an area as Middle East, was directly related with creating a framework on which the imperial policies of the age was based. Simply, it was a creation of an appropriate context within which imperialistic policies could easily be devised on the area. In this regard, creation of some institutions and departments dealing with Middle Eastern affairs became possible with creating a Middle East in accordance with western interests. Again, establishing various institutions, centers, departments and journals studying on the Middle East has contributed to the persistence of the term. More precisely, denominating the region was a prelude to the discursive and institutional practices of the West over the area.

The region has mostly been associated with Islamic civilization. This situation paves the way for a civilizational perspective upon the region. Talking about Middle East is more or less talking about Islamic civilization and vice versa. In this context, it is possible to argue that creating a geographical category as Middle East and then its transfer to daily language have made it possible to speak about Islamic civilization through a seemingly unbiased language of geography. Otherwise, people should have talked with the language of cultural relativity rather than a scientific terminology.

Thus, the invention of the Middle East has contributed to the civilizational confrontation by providing a scientific backing. Also the stereotypes associated with Middle East could be devised easily after the emergence of a distinct region. For pre-Islamic times, a Middle East with its current borders would mean nothing to anyone. This shows that the current use of the term is meaningful with just the term's Islamic connotations. In other words, Islam has been the secret baggage of the term Middle East.

Without the imperial politics, there might not be a need for a region as Middle East. Thus, we owe the Middle East and the current discourses on the region to imperial rivalries. In this context, Middle East is a socially and politically constructed region. The current widespread Middle East perception has originated from a social and political milieu defined by Western political powers, cultural values and economic forces. It may not be possible to abandon the ethnocentric term Middle East due to its popularity and advanced institutionalization via a host of journals, departments, centers, associations and programs devoted to the study of the region. However, an increased consciousness on the genealogy of the term and its historical construction process can help us to save ourselves from falling into traps of academic and popular stereotypes and biased perspectives about the region and its peoples.

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