

# Rivalries In Comparative Regional Perspective: A Crucial Fault Line Within Regions

Thomas J. Volgy

Kelly Marie Gordell

Paul Bezerra

University of Arizona

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# Concepts and Measurements

- **Rivalry**: as strategic rivalry (Thompson 2001; Thompson and Dreyer 2011)
- **Rivalry field**: are the linkages between rivalry partners across rivalries in a region (e.g. Thompson 2016);  
The **density** of the rivalry field refers to the extent of the rivalry field (number of rivalries x number of linkages/(n-1 states in region))
- **Shocks**: large, abrupt, unanticipated, major political disturbances to domestic, regional or global environments (Diehl and Goertz, 2001)

# Comparative Regional Theoretical Framework

Region Baseline Conditions

“Fault Lines”

“Pacifying Conditions”

Hierarchical Conditions

No Hierarchy

Hierarchy

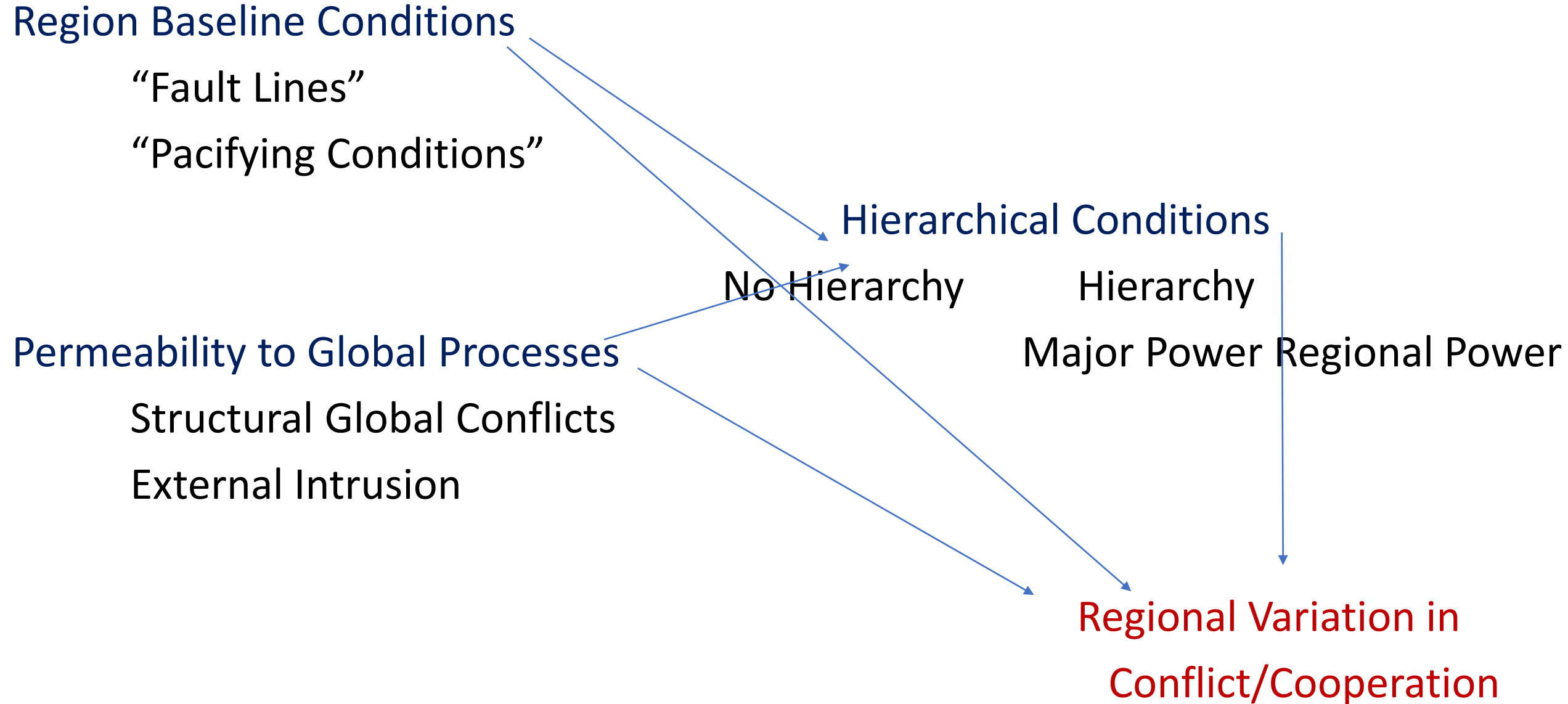
Permeability to Global Processes

Structural Global Conflicts

External Intrusion

Major Power Regional Power

Regional Variation in  
Conflict/Cooperation



# What we can learn from a comparative perspective

When the Middle East is one of a number of regions, classified by  
hierarchical type, 1960-2010

# Rivalries are highly salient predictors of regional conflict

- A simple correlation between the number of rivalries and the extent of regional conflict
- $r = .42$  with frequency of conflict (severe MIDs)
- $r = .51$  with diffusion of conflict (Number of states involved with severe MIDs)
- Rivalries are most likely to play out in regions without a regional hierarchy:

**TABLE 1A: Numbers of Rivalries by Type of Region.**

|                                     | Non-Hierarchy Regions | Regions with Hierarchy<br>Major | Regional |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Mean number of rivalries per region | 5.11                  | 2.91                            | 1.42     |
|                                     |                       |                                 |          |

| TABLE 5: OLS Regression Models for Major and Regional Powers and Regional Conflict, with Number of Severe MIDs in Region. |                   |   |                      |  |                         |  |
|---|-------------------|---|----------------------|--|-------------------------|--|
|   | Base Model        |   | Major Power Presence |  | Regional Power Presence |  |
| Hierarchy   | -                 | - | -0.167*** (0.030)    |  | -0.116*** (0.028)       |  |
| # Intra-Regional Rivalries <sub>t-1</sub>   | 0.024*** (0.004)  |   | 0.018*** (0.004)     |  | 0.020*** (0.004)        |  |
| # Civil Wars <sub>t-1</sub>   | 0.017*** (0.007)  |   | 0.004*** (0.007)     |  | 0.042*** (0.010)        |  |
| Territorial Claims <sub>t-1</sub>   | 0.156*** (0.053)  |   | 0.262*** (0.071)     |  | 0.183*** (0.050)        |  |
| % Regional Trade <sub>t-1</sub>   | -0.033*** (0.013) |   | - -                  |  | 0.009*** (0.019)        |  |
| % Regional Democracies <sub>t-1</sub>   | -0.156*** (0.042) |   | -0.069*** (0.053)    |  | -0.166*** (0.039)       |  |
| IGO Membership <sub>t-1</sub>   | -0.142*** (0.045) |   | -0.180*** (0.056)    |  | -0.159*** (0.048)       |  |
| External Alliances <sub>t-1</sub>   | 0.082*** (0.026)  |   | 0.048*** (0.029)     |  | 0.129*** (0.026)        |  |
| Cold War  | -0.072*** (0.023) |   | -0.061*** (0.025)    |  | -0.104*** (0.028)       |  |
| Time Counter  | -0.003*** (0.004) |   | -0.004*** (0.004)    |  | -0.006*** (0.004)       |  |
| Constant  | 0.233*** (0.042)  |   | 0.217*** (0.048)     |  | 0.164*** (0.048)        |  |

# Can comparative analysis uncover unique regional properties?

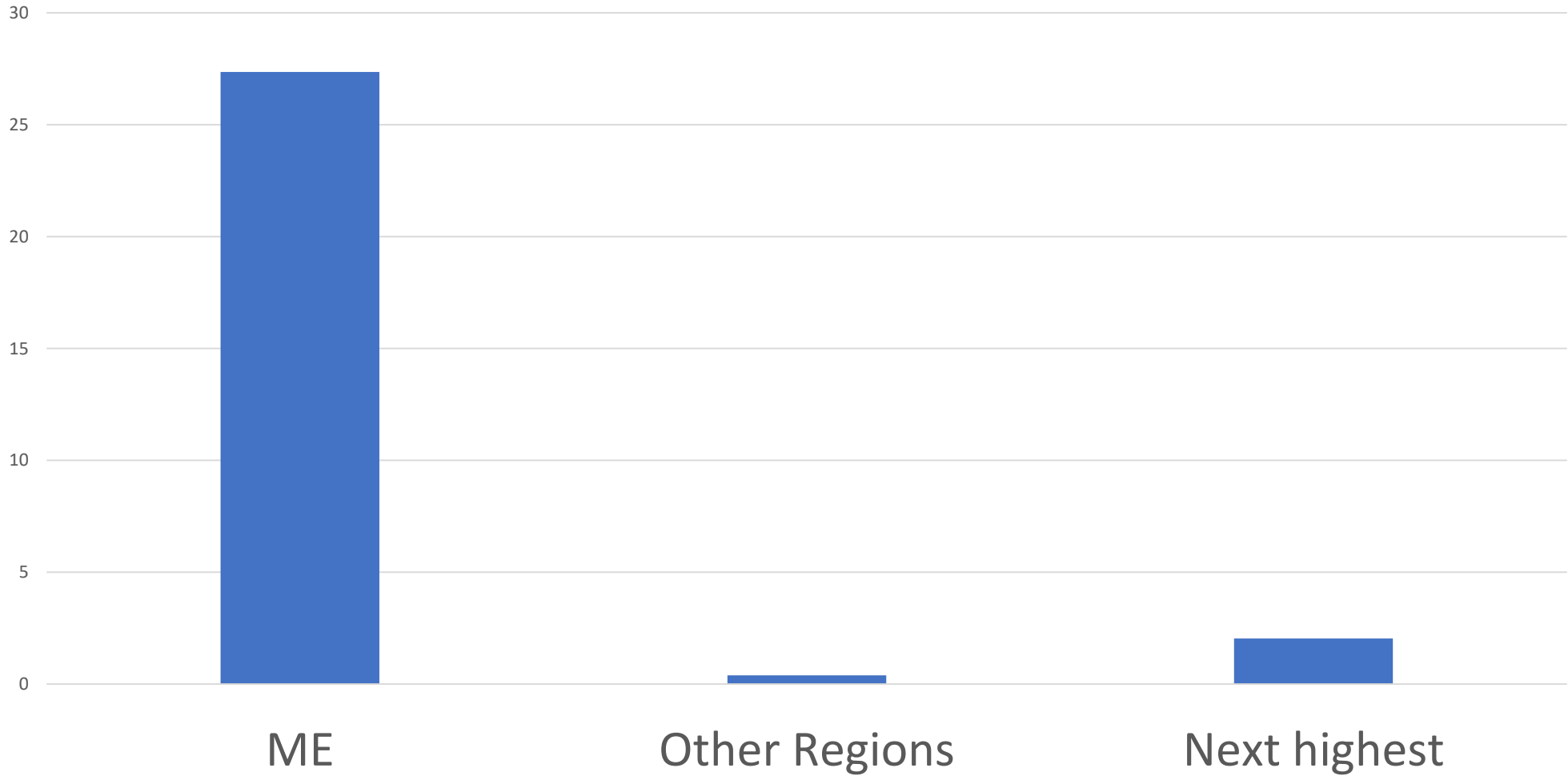
The Middle East as a uniquely rivalry-ridden region: cursed with explosive fault lines, limited pacifying conditions, an absence of regional hierarchy, and substantial intrusion from outside powers.

These are the primary conditions suggested by a comparative regional analysis that create consistent, high levels of regional conflict.

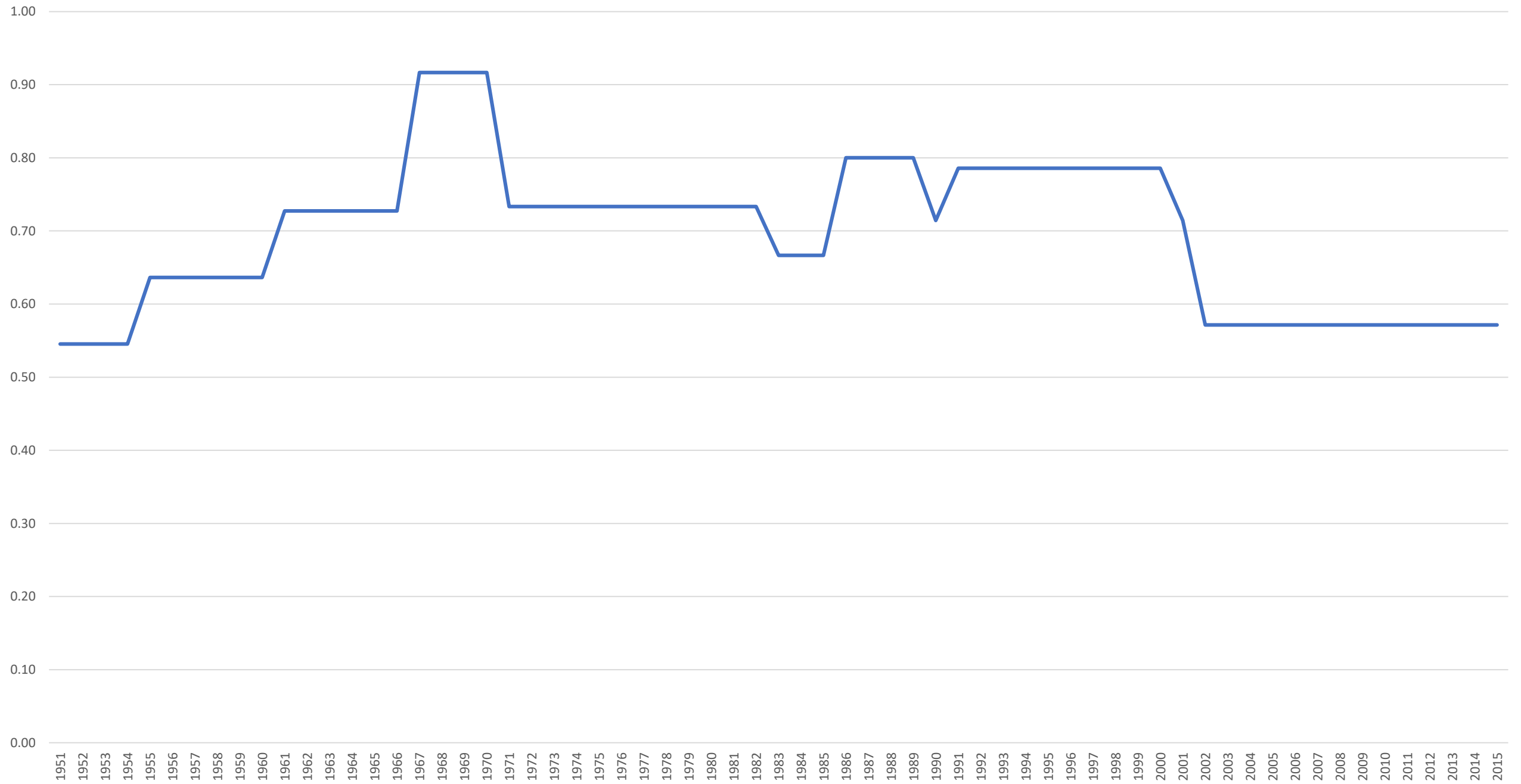
**BUT:** Of these conditions the extent of intra-regional rivalries in the Middle East, considered either as the number of rivalries or the extent of the “rivalry field” constitute particularly unique conditions for the region.



## Average Rivalry Density Scores for the Middle East versus Other Regions, 1950-2010.

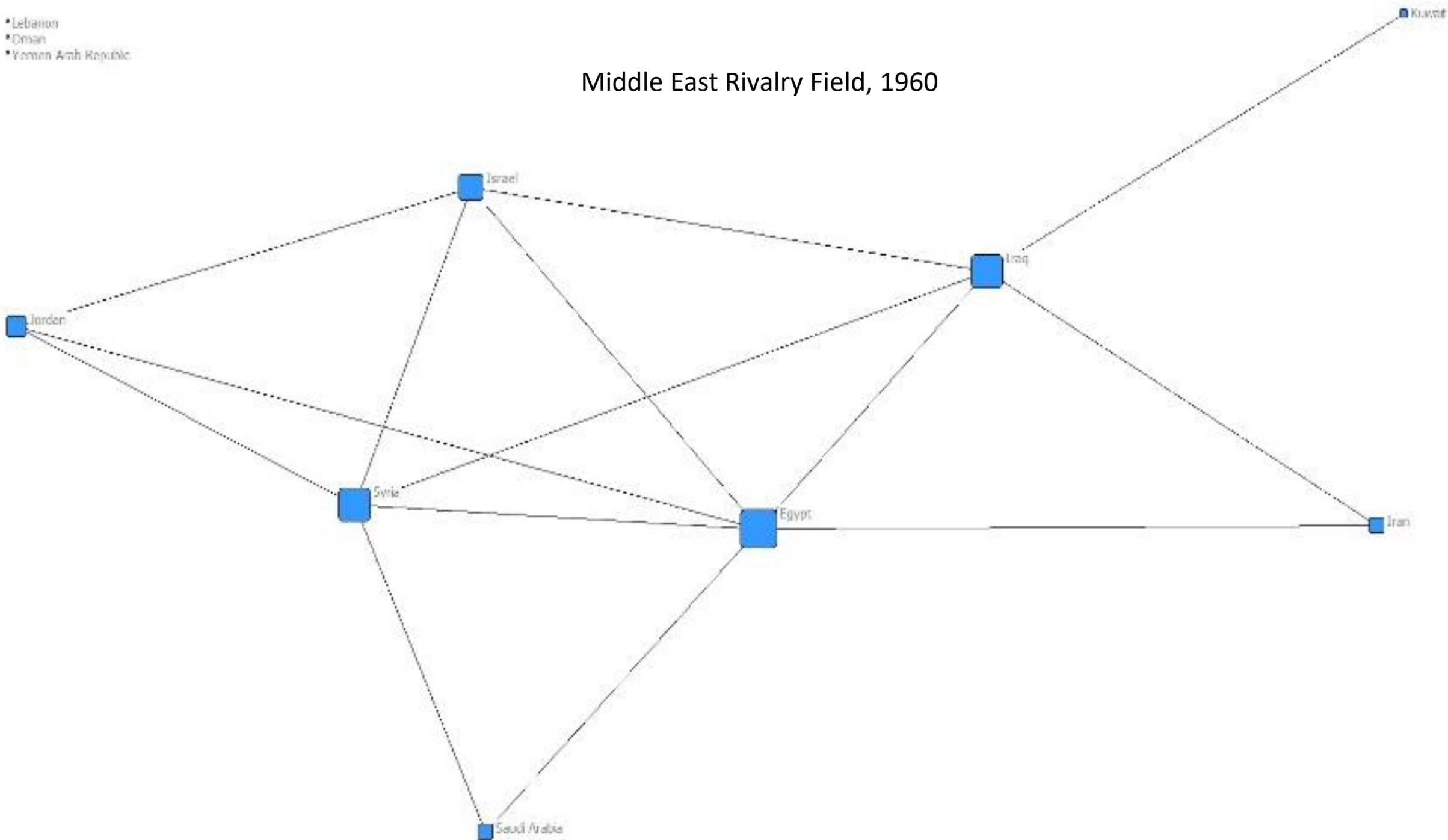


Percent of Middle East States Involved in Regional Rivalries, 1951-2015.



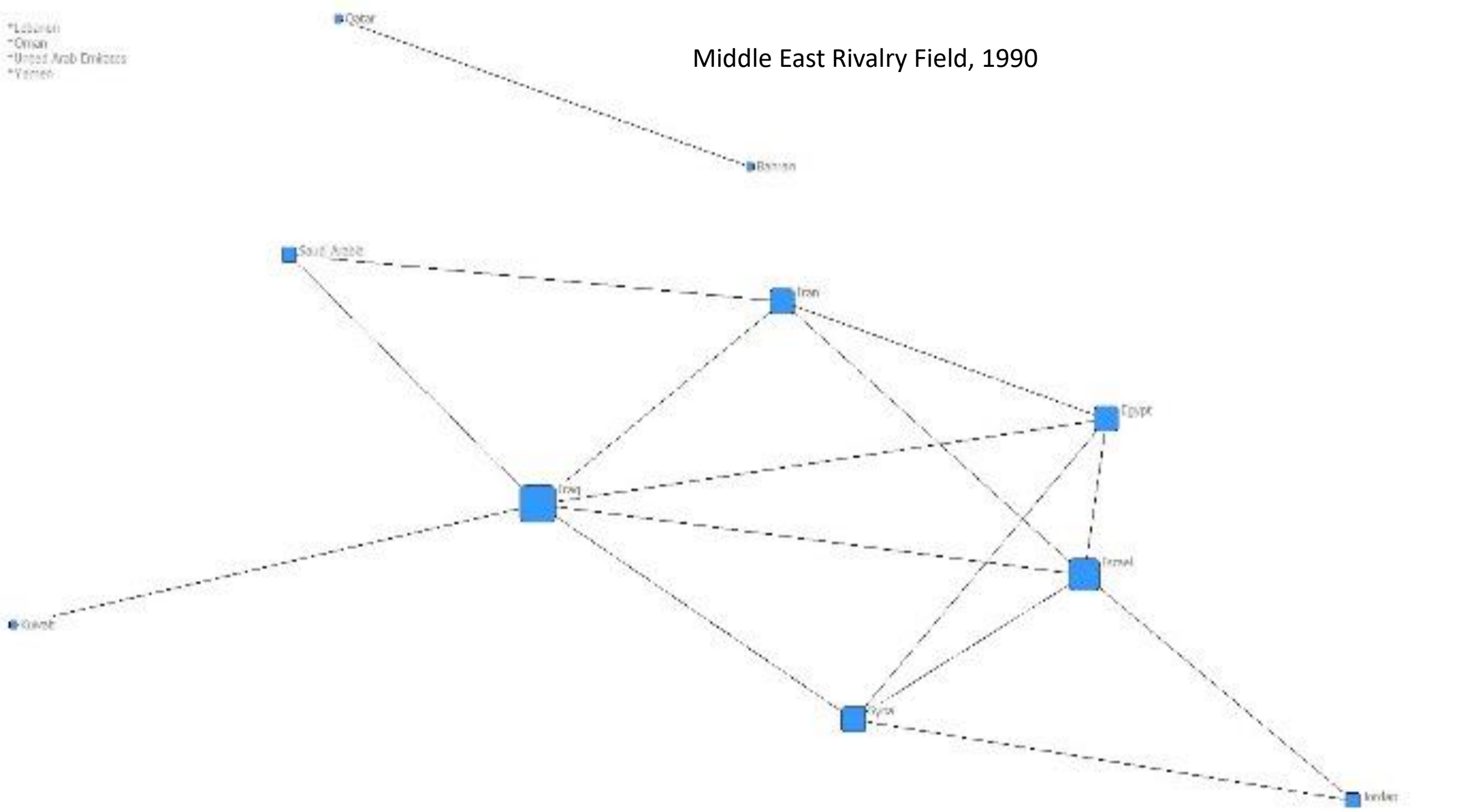
- Lebanon
- Oman
- Yemen Arab Republic

### Middle East Rivalry Field, 1960



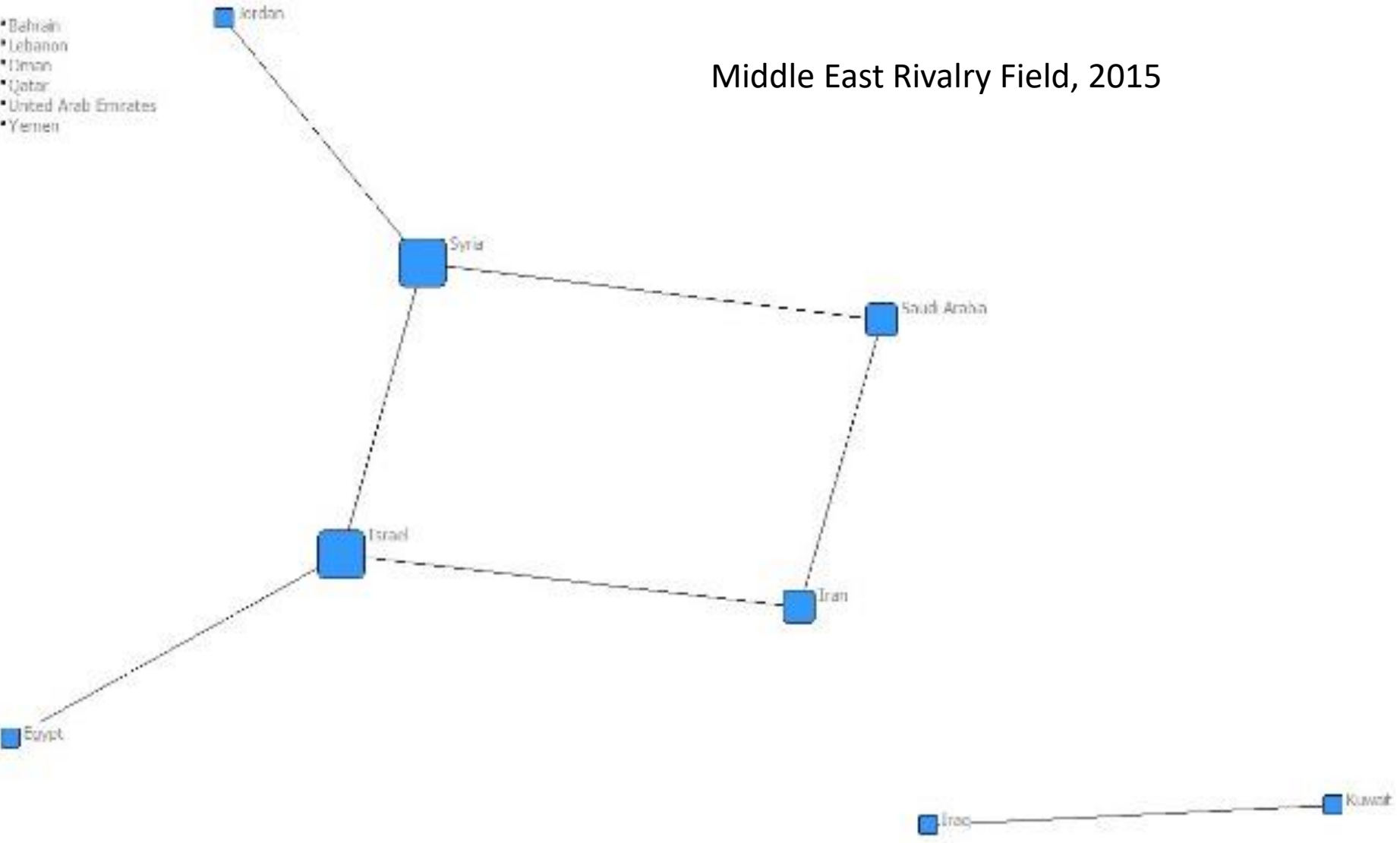
# Middle East Rivalry Field, 1990

- \*Lebanon
- \*Oman
- United Arab Emirates
- \*Yemen

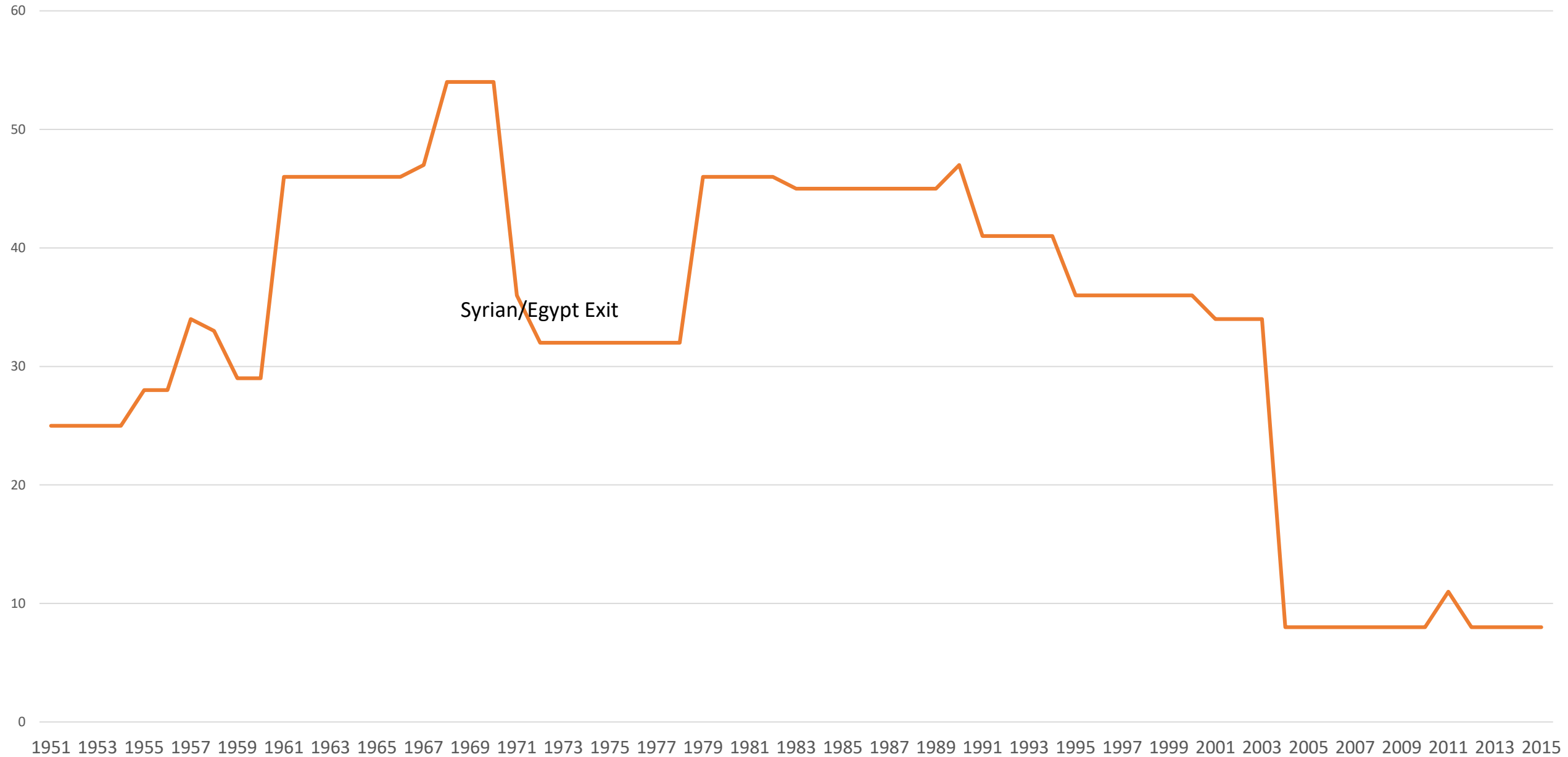


# Middle East Rivalry Field, 2015

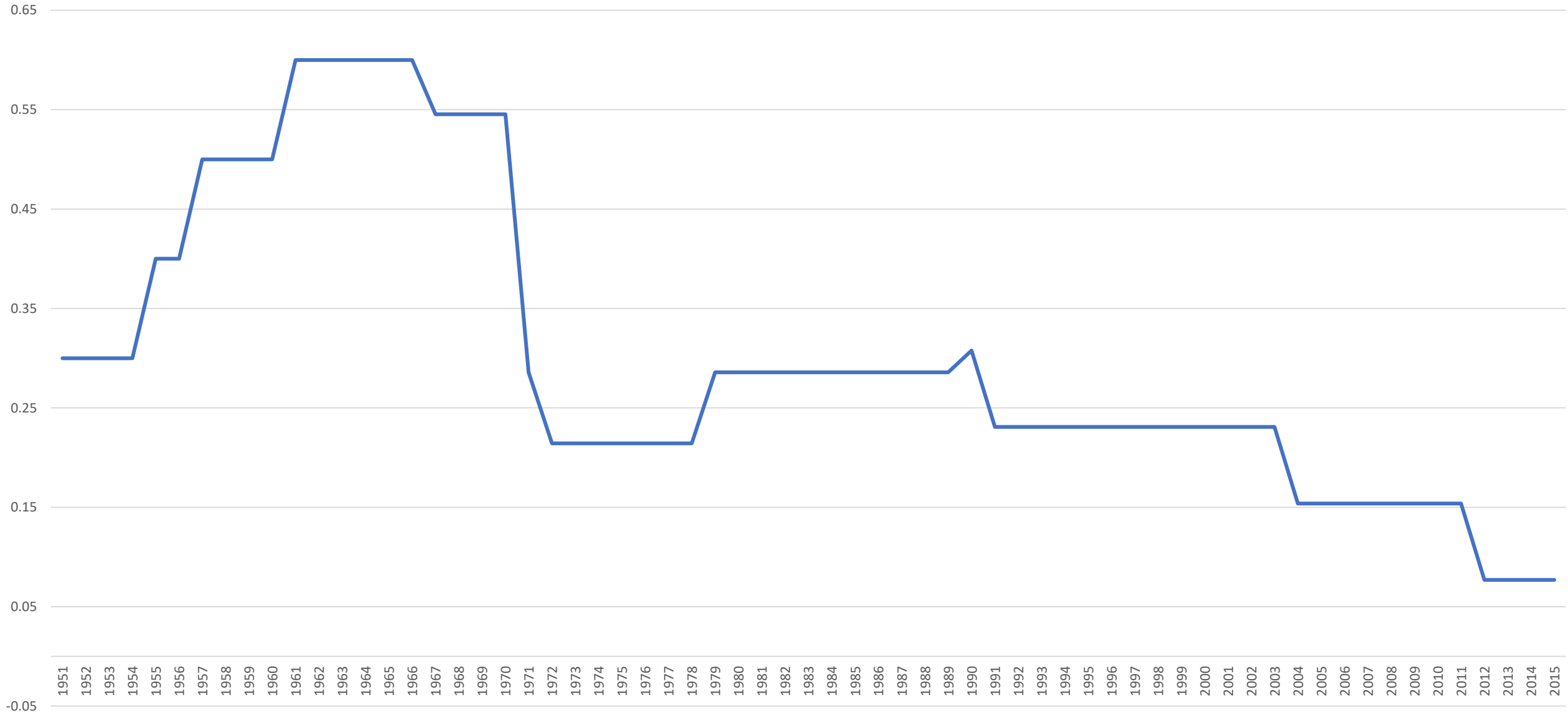
- Bahrain
- Lebanon
- Oman
- Qatar
- United Arab Emirates
- Yemen



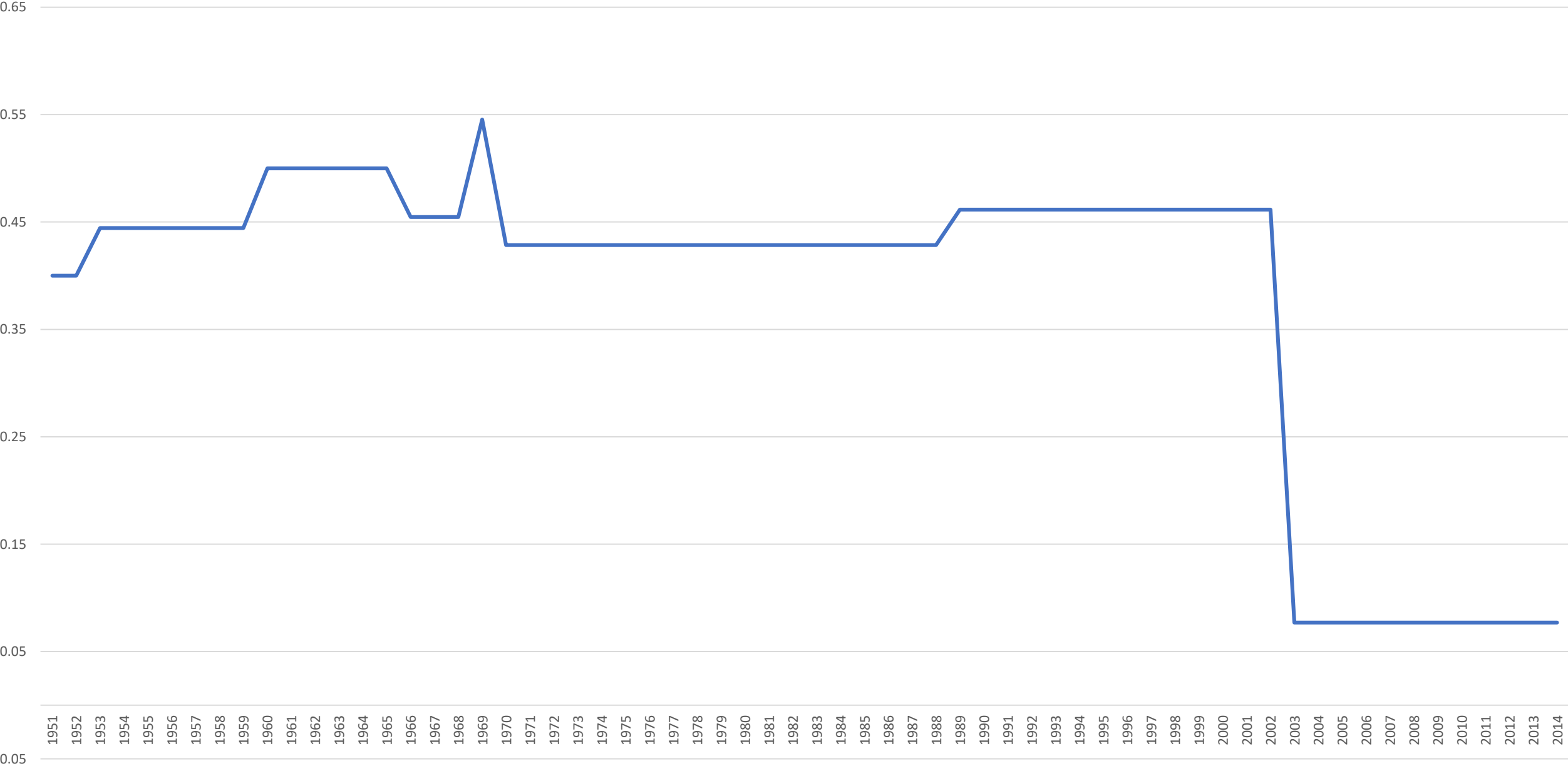
# Middle East Rivalry Density Field, 1951-2015: Three Periods.



# Egyptian Involvement in Regional Rivalries, as Percent of All Possible Rivalries, 1951-2015.

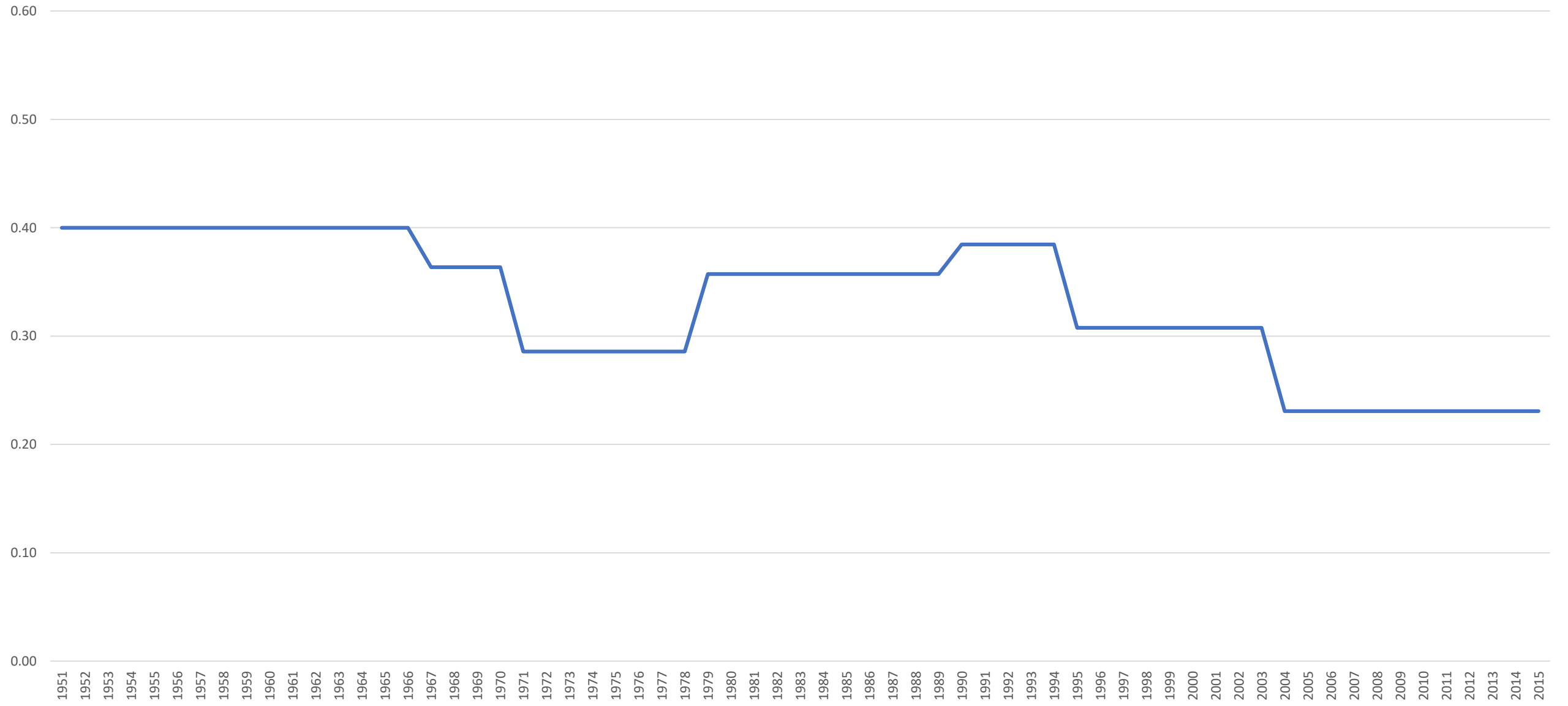


# Iraqi Involvement in Regional Rivalries as Percentage of All Possible Rivalries, 1951-2015.

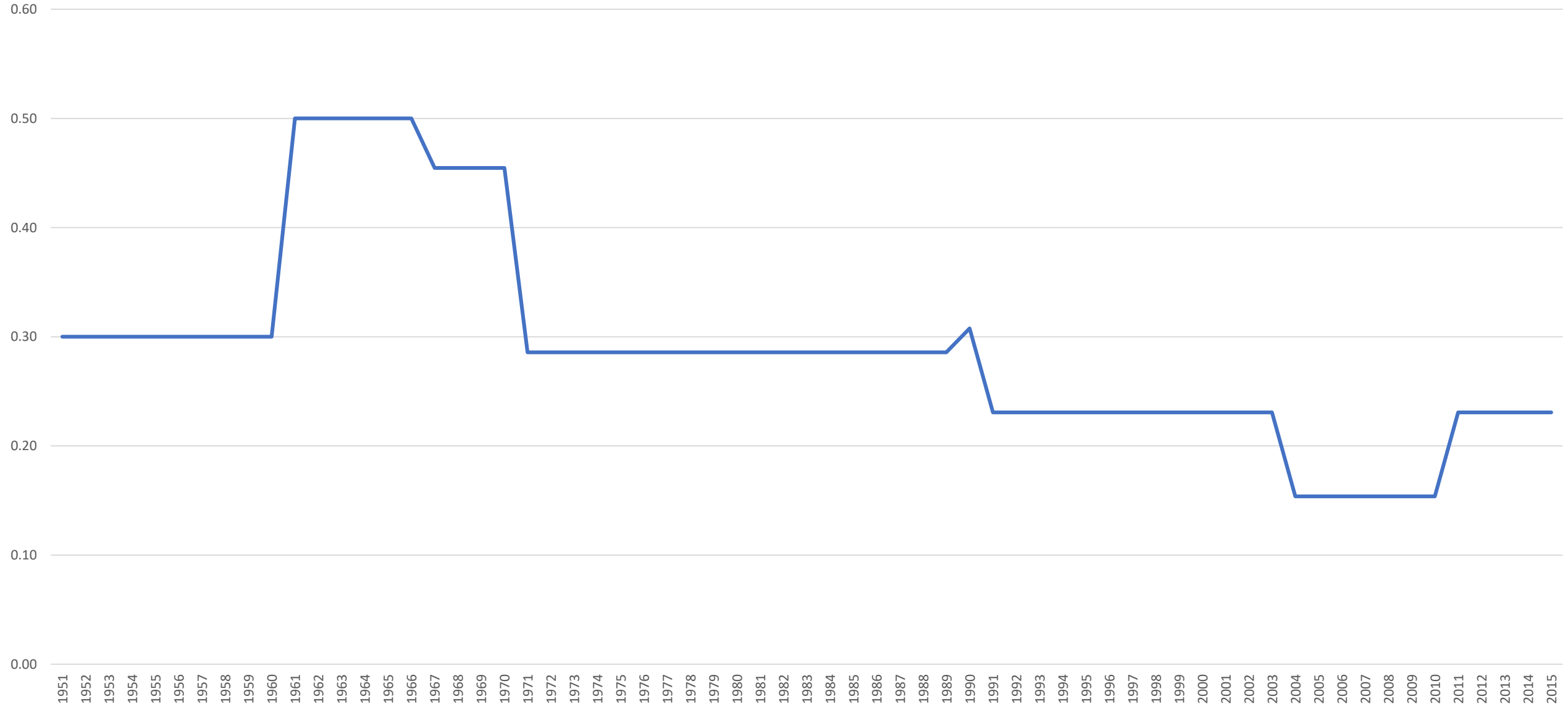




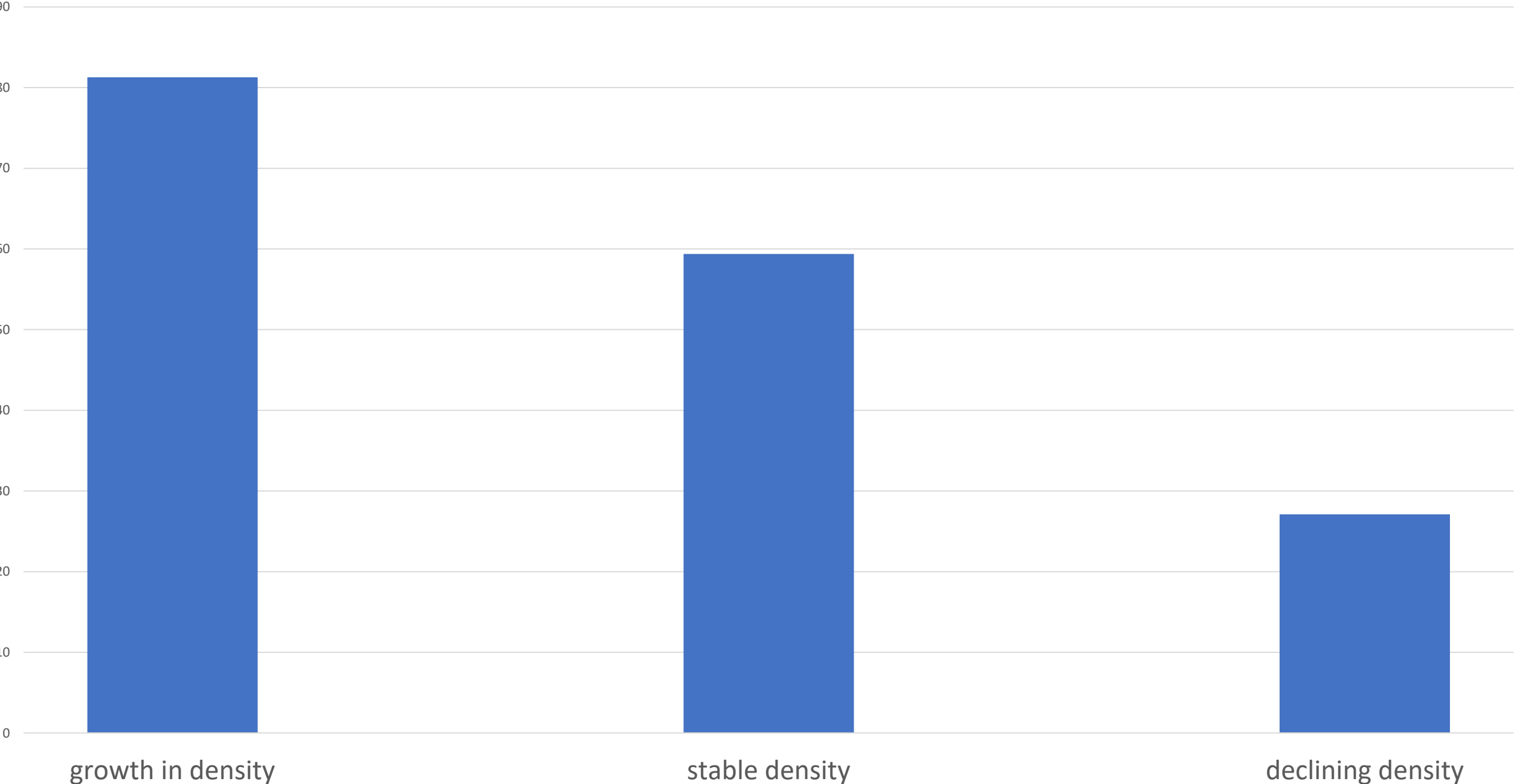
# Israeli Involvement in Regional Rivalries, as Percent of all Possible Rivalries, 1951-2015.



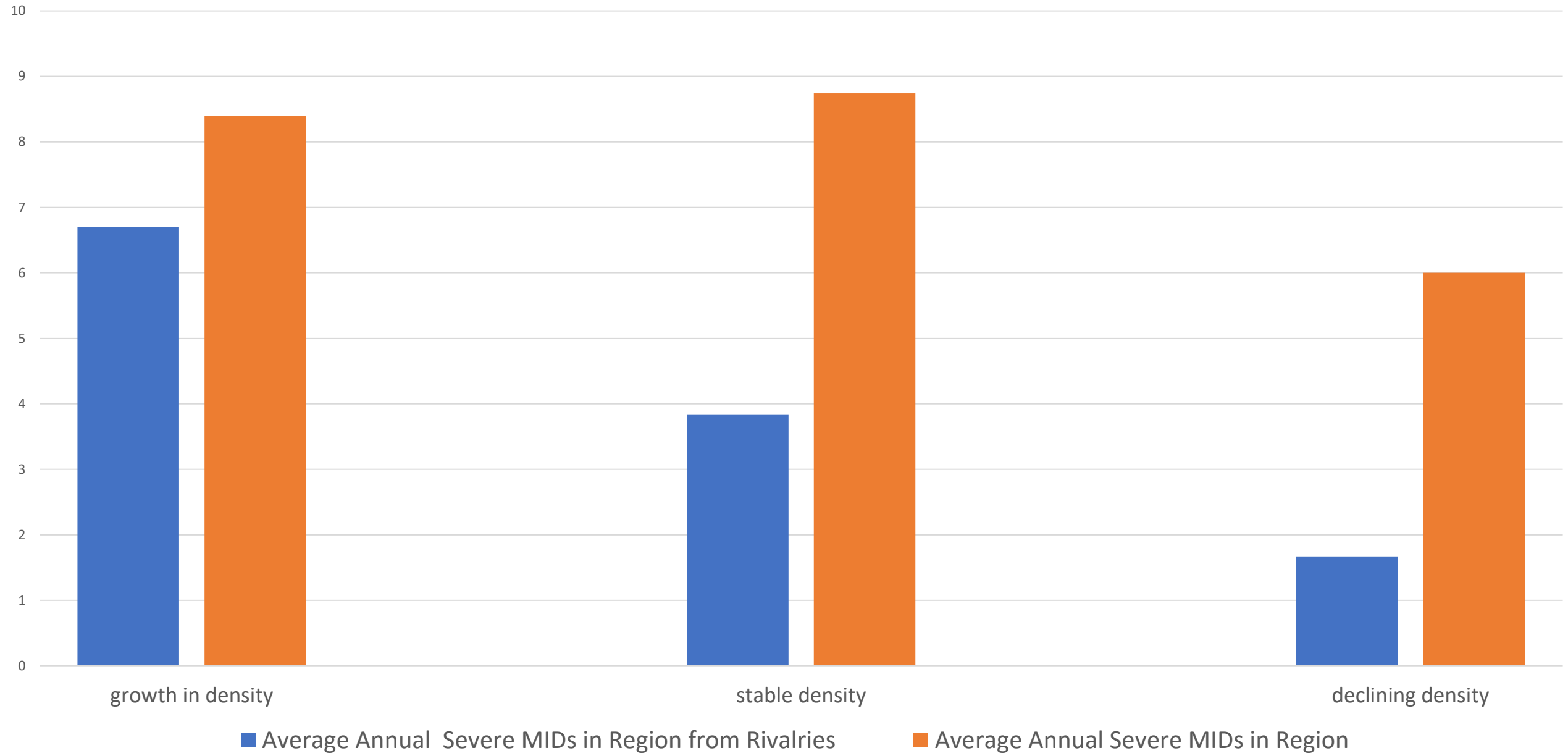
# Syrian Involvement in Middle East Rivalries, as Percent of All Possible Rivalries, 1951-2015.



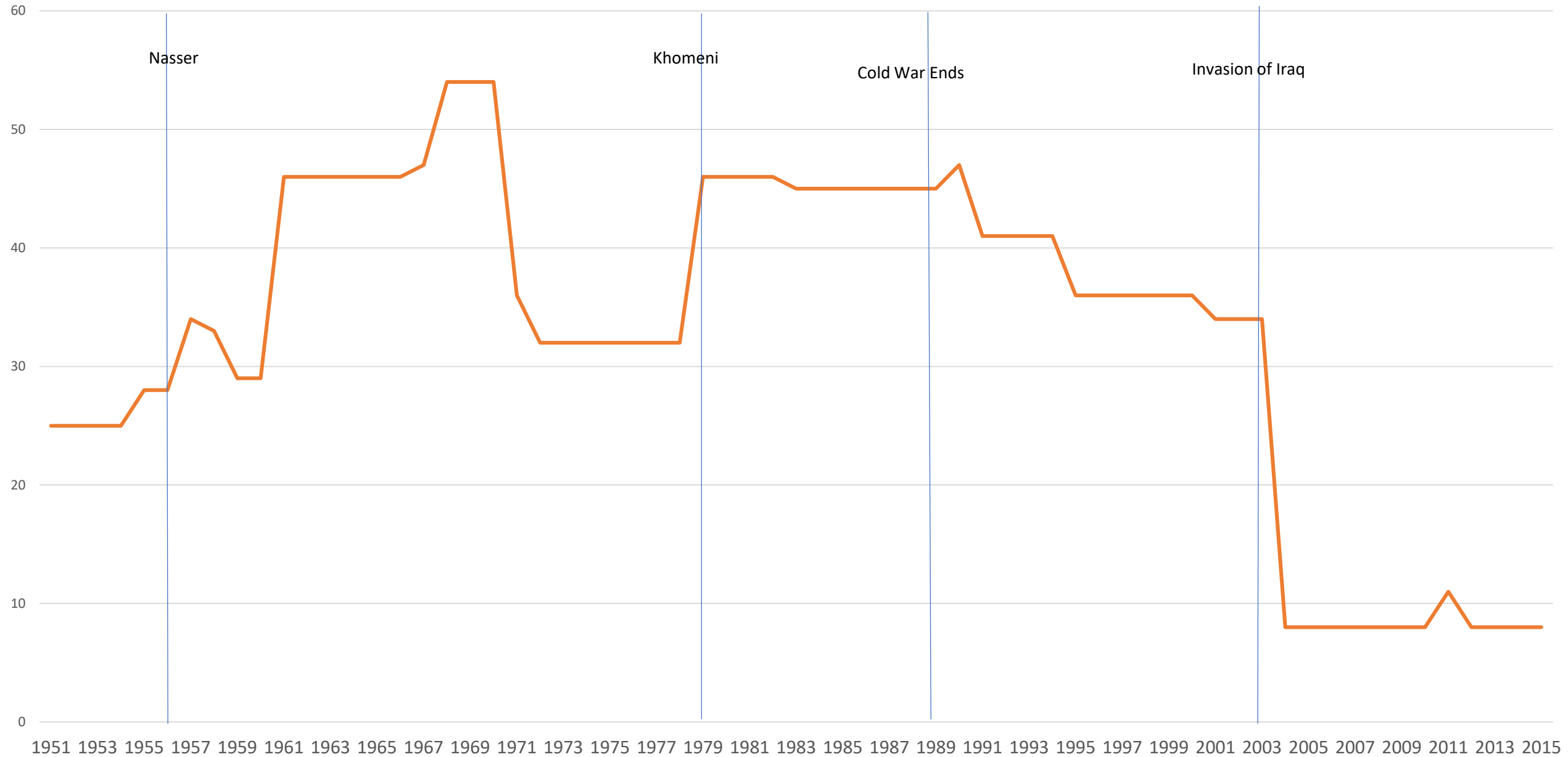
Percent of Regional MIDs from Rivalries, by Rivalry Field Type, 1951-2010.



# Average Annual Frequency of Regional Severe MIDs, and Severe MIDs from Rivalries, by Rivalry Field Type, 1951-2010.



# Middle East Rivalry Density Field and Selected Regional Shocks, 1951-2015.



# Caveats and Observations

- Focus on **inter-state** regional conflict: missing are conflicts with non-state actors, external involvements with civil wars, conceptualizing non-state-state rivalries;
- **Comparative regional analysis** suggests conditions under which rivalry fields may be mediated or enhanced by other regional factors: intrusion of major powers; globalization processes; the pernicious effects of territorial disputes; the diffusion of civil war effects across the region, etc.
- Much more needs to be done with the **concept and application of “shocks”**:
  - Types
  - Duration of impact
  - Offsetting shocks (Camp David versus Iranian revolution)
  - When shocks cease to be shocks
  - The impact of shocks versus shock waves (high volume of shocks)
  - Linkage between rivalry fields and shocks through diffusion/contagion literature
  - Exploration of shocks through a more explicit comparative analysis across regions?