REALIZING YOUTH POTENTIAL IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES, OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

edited by
Lorenzo Kamel and Asli Selin Okyay

New-Med
research network

Edizioni Nuova Cultura

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List of Abbreviations

BCM	Billion cubic metres
EDL	Electricité du Liban
EU	European Union
EV	Electrical vehicle
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GDP	Gross domestic product
GMF	German Marshall Fund of the United States
GW	Gigawatts
HDI	Human Development Index
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRWR	Internal renewable water resources
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham
km^2	Square kilometre
kWh	Kilowatt hours
m^2	Square metre
m^3	Cubic metre
MBS	Mohammed bin Salman
MCM	Million cubic metres
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MW	Megawatt
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PA	Palestinian Authority
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PV	Photovoltaic

RO	Reverse Osmosis
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TIMSS	Trends in Mathematics and Science Study
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
US	United States

Foreword

Nicolò Russo Perez

Established in 2014, New-Med is a research network of Mediterranean experts and policy analysts with a special interest in the complex social, political, cultural and security-related dynamics that are unfolding in the Mediterranean region. The network has been developed by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in Rome, in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Secretariat in Vienna, the Compagnia di San Paolo foundation, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF).

A priority of the network is to promote a non-Eurocentric vision of the region, featuring as much as possible views from the South and other areas of the Mediterranean. The network also seeks to provide a platform where emerging researchers can put forward new perspectives on regional cooperation. By undertaking research and outreach activities, this "track II" initiative aims to foster scholarly reflection on the changing scenarios in and around the Mediterranean and provide key inputs to the political dialogue taking place in international fora, including in the context of the OSCE Mediterranean Dialogue. Since its inception, the New-Med Research Network has organized several international conferences on both shores of the Mediterranean and published more than thirty research papers on various themes tied to Euro-Mediterranean relations.

New-Med was therefore conceived from the very beginning as an open, inclusive platform for dialogue on a variety of Euro-Mediterranean issues. New-Med aims to leverage the expertise of practitioners, researchers and academics from the Mediterranean region to promote a truly "two-way

dialogue" on Mediterranean cooperation beneficial to a plurality of actors, particularly featuring perspectives "from the South". And it is in the countries of the Southern shores of the Mediterranean basin that youth are playing – and will increasingly play – a key role in addressing the complex economic, social and political challenges unfolding in the region.

It can be claimed that youth are the key stakeholders across the Mediterranean region in that most of the challenges they are facing today – improving political stability, providing energy security and sustainable management of natural resources, tackling unemployment, to name just a few – will inevitably affect their future. Most importantly, if one looks at the demographic structure of the societies across the Southern shores of the Mediterranean, youth are in the majority. As both key stakeholders and the majority population the young generation have an extraordinary role to play: they will be at the forefront in addressing the dynamics of the region.

In May 2018, the partners of New-Med organized an international conference entitled "Youth Potential in the Mediterranean. Unlocking Opportunities, Overcoming Challenges". The conference, hosted at the Italian Foreign Ministry, was structured in four sessions, each one tackling macro-issues related to the MENA region and including topics such as conflict dynamics and stability; energy trends; civic activism; economic implications and unemployment. Eight young professionals from the MENA region (following a rigorous selection process, where applicants were invited to submit a policy paper to critically address the impact of youth and youth-led initiatives on these various shared challenges and to draft policy recommendations) were invited to present their ideas and perspectives on these topics.

The conference was an opportunity to showcase the impressive analytical and professional qualities of the young participants in addressing the key challenges of the prosperity, stability and security of the MENA region that are also pivotal to Italy's foreign policy. With the development of prosperous societies in the region in mind, one of the top priorities that emerged in the conference is the need to focus on how to reconcile democracy, prosperity and security in the face of disruptive technological innovation, inequality and the crisis of political Islam.

The interaction between technological, economic, and social changes and political developments was indeed one of the *leitmotivs* of the confer-

ence. Further efforts are needed to frame all these issues in a common political scenario, and to reflect on whether short-term or long-term strategies are more effective in addressing the issues facing the MENA region. Indeed, technological innovation will be a crucial driver for prospective social and economic changes.

While youth may currently be largely politically disengaged and fail to face the challenges ahead, they should take advantage of the new opportunities afforded by rapid technological developments such as artificial intelligence and by the increasing demand, on both sides of the Mediterranean, for experts and highly educated personnel in fast-developing industries. As the various contributions included in this volume confirm, young people should be encouraged to take the lead in these processes and to further commit to shaping a better future, for themselves and for all the societies of the Mediterranean community.

Introduction

Lorenzo Kamel and Asli Selin Okyay

Security concerns have returned to dominate contemporary debates on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This edited volume seeks to go beyond a narrow focus on hard security issues, particularly pronounced among Western audiences, to encourage local perspectives on some of the most pressing socio-economic and political challenges impacting on societies in the region, "youth" first and foremost.

Young people between the ages of 15 and 29 are the single largest and fastest expanding demographic group in the MENA. High unemployment rates, lack of affordable housing, a mismatch between educational attainment and job prospects and unequal opportunities for migration and mobility are among the most pressing challenges hampering the self-development of youth in the Mediterranean and broader MENA region. Women are particularly exposed to many of these challenges. At the same time, youth are actively demanding increased freedoms and opportunities and engaging in innovative forms of civic activism, often at great personal risk. Youth in the MENA have on a number of occasions challenged state and elite dominance of traditional sources of information, thereby contributing to a more open, inclusive and diversified media environment while exploring new tools and resources to magnify their voices and concerns.

While many studies have focused on the category of "youth" in the Arab world, it is rare to hear how young people themselves view and interpret developments unfolding in their societies. Understanding the hopes, challenges and aspirations affecting new generations in the region will be key to developing shared and inclusive modes of cooperation and to help in shaping a more stable and sustainable future. Yet international pow-

er dynamics and the positioning of MENA states within the international neo-liberal order, international actors' involvement in the management of the region's natural resources and the role played by external powers in exacerbating conflicts and empowering authoritarian regimes cannot be overlooked when examining the past, present and future of the region. At the same time, there is a growing risk of losing sight of the underlining causes of the 2010 Arab uprisings and moving back to old paradigms that prioritize stability and economic gain over the goal of sustainable development, inclusive growth and political representation.

With these considerations in mind, and with the aim of giving voice to youth themselves, the New-Med Research Network asked eight outstanding young scholars to write a contribution on the major socio-economic and political challenges impacting on states and societies in the region and the future prospects of youth in particular. Each chapter critically addresses how youth in the region are affected by these challenges, while identifying concrete examples of youth-led initiatives that seek to address and overcome them.

Chapter 1, written by Bilal Sukkar, focuses on the Syrian uprising of 2011 and contends that the uprising acquired a "youth" identity that contrasted with the Assad regime's authoritarian and exclusive characteristics. "Youth" in this context was not indicative of an age category to which this social movement was restricted, but of a sense of social, political and economic marginalization that the uprising's democratic aspirations sought to address. The erosion of state presence in rebellious spaces, Sukkar argues, allowed grass-roots activist movements and an embryonic civil society to attempt to provide an alternative to 'Assad's Syria'. The resurgent Syrian regime's eradication of such spaces demonstrates the obstacles to political inclusiveness and sustainable development that such authoritarian regimes pose in the region. Bottom-up democratizing movements, the author concludes, must thus be protected from authoritarian hegemony and must be supported and empowered as actors of progressive change in Syria and in the broader region.

In Chapter 2, Ahmed Sukker turns to the Palestinian context and more specifically to youth political representation. Sukker investigates the links between youth empowerment and the professionalization of security apparatus in the context of the Palestinian reconciliation process. According to the author, while increasingly disinterested in conventional party poli-

tics, youth continues to be politically engaged, mainly through protesting. While distancing themselves from modes of politicization and factional interests that characterize the highly polarized scene of Palestinian politics, young people place at the centre of their political activism issues that directly affect the lives of local populations, including themselves, such as access to water and electricity and decent jobs. Accordingly, Sukker argues that periods of youth activism in the Gaza Strip can (and should) provide inspiration for a workable reconciliation process that prioritizes service provision and good governance over the factional interests that have dominated Palestinian domestic politics for more than two decades.

Saudi Arabia is the focus of Chapter 3, in which Huda Alsahi contextualizes the recent series of reforms aimed at promoting women's empowerment in the country, starting with the royal decree that granted women the right to drive from June 2018. Critically approaching the concept of empowerment, Alsahi assesses the latest reforms, embedding them into the broader scope of economic, social and political configurations in the Kingdom. More specifically, she examines the peculiarities of the promotion of women's empowerment "from above" within the Saudi context. In doing so, Alsahi demonstrates that the concept of women's empowerment, which was formerly associated with bottom-up feminist activism, has come to be laden with meanings attributed to it by state institutions. The author reveals how this redefined concept is today being applied today, as evidenced through the reforms outlined.

Tasnim Abderrahim, the author of Chapter 4, provides a thorough analysis of youth political inclusion in local governance in Tunisia. While acknowledging that Tunisia has achieved laudable progress on the political front, Abderrahim notes that young Tunisians are not benefiting from the country's often-hailed democratic achievements: young people continue to take to the streets to voice their dissatisfaction with hardening economic conditions and the slow pace of reform. At the same time, their engagement in more structured forms of public space such as associations and political parties remains limited, largely because of mounting disenchantment with the transitional process and the political leadership. Abderrahim contends that this makes it critical for Tunisia to seek ways that encourage youth civic and political participation, especially as the country moves towards promoting local democracy through implementing decentralization.

The subsequent chapter focuses on one of the major problems in the region, with significant implications for the local populations, among them, the youth: water scarcity. The author of Chapter 5, Abed Al Kareem Yehya, explores the Lebanese context and provides evidence to support the argument for considering investment in novel solutions, such as solar energy farming, which could be a water-friendly alternative to irrigated agriculture and a source of income for rural farmers. He argues that, for current and future generations, solar farming may be an opportunity to provide water, energy and food security in Lebanon. Furthermore, Yehya notes that beyond the specific case of Lebanon this recommendation could be an inspiration for a broader set of MENA states to formulate policies and adopt development practices capable of achieving integrated and comprehensive trade-offs in the areas of energy, water and food security.

Environmental challenges and climate change are also at the centre of the analysis provided by Manar Sarie and Ahmad Abdulla in Chapter 6. These authors focus on energy and water resource challenges in the MENA, shedding light on the technical, economic and political opportunities and challenges that the region faces in respect of climate change. Using a combination of scenario analysis and multi-criteria decision-making, they illustrate a range of possible futures for the region, with specific interest in the potential collapse of fragile ecosystems due to climatic changes and the stress induced by human activity.

The seventh and final chapter, authored by Semuhi Sinanoğlu, adopts a macro lens and brings together the different strands highlighted in previous chapters, investigating how to effectively foster "youth inclusion" in the MENA region. Sinanoğlu cautions that a double crisis looms on the horizon of the region: rising youth unemployment, an increase in youth population demographics and the rise of the 4th Industrial Revolution. He contends that the region needs tailor-made, context-specific programmes that take into account marginalized youth and situate young people at the core of the decision-making processes. He also notes that foreign direct investment and public-private partnerships should be facilitated and promoted under the umbrella of a grand national vision, embraced, pursued and planned in a multi-stakeholder setting.

While being diverse in terms of their thematic choices, geographical focus and levels of analysis, the voices of youth from the MENA region expressed in this edited volume demonstrate that the socio-economic,

political and environmental challenges the region faces today and will face tomorrow need to be addressed by approaches that go beyond conventional formulas. Crosscutting all chapters is the emphasis on the need to go beyond seeing the target groups of policies – whether youth, women, the unemployed, students, farmers or local communities – merely as end-users, and the constituencies of politics merely as vote depots. Hence, the contributions emphasize the importance of bottom-up, inclusive, and pluralistic approaches to politics and policy-making. Young scholars from the MENA who shared their voices with us in this volume highlight the need for policies that are human-centric and not merely state-centric, and for political movements that are not designed to reproduce "politics as usual" but that respond to the changing problems and aspirations of societies with their younger and older cohorts. The contributions by the MENA youth also show that they have immense potential and a major role to play in devising inclusive, creative and sustainable solutions to the current and future challenges of the region.

1.

"Youth" of Syria: An Antithesis to an Authoritarian System of Power

Bilal Sukkar

When the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings succeeded in toppling their long-standing authoritarian heads of state, many dismissed the possibility of the "Arab Spring" wave reaching the shores of Syria. Beneath Bashar al-Assad's image of a young president who was close to the people and who upheld the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist cause of the Arab street, there was a deep understanding of the authoritatively repressive capacity held by the regime's security apparatus in preventing such social unrest. Yet, in 2011, it happened. Mass public anger resulted from the Syrian regime's detainment of teenagers who, inspired by the Arab Spring, wrote anti-regime graffiti on a school wall in Dara'a, sparking a "revolutionary moment" that spread across the country.[1] Protestors chanting "the Syrian people will not be humiliated" demonstrated a drive to no longer tolerate the regime's unaccountable repressive practices that had painted its four decades in power. Chants of protestors also carried an element of economic justice; Bashar al-Assad's inheritance of Syria's presidency was followed with an accelerated structural socio-economic shift with the liberalization of the economy and the erosion of state subsidies. Such economic policies crucially impacted Syria's lower social strata including agricultural communities and urban subalterns – sites that were most prominent in Syria's uprising but, more importantly, sites that were previous strongholds of the quasi-socialist ruling Ba'ath party. Non-trans-

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[1] Fawaz A. Gerges (ed.), *The New Middle East: Protest and Revolution in The Arab World*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 2.

parent neoliberal economic policies exclusively and corruptibly pocketed resulting revenues with the Assad clan and its associates. Moreover, after false hopes of political reform with the arrival of a young President, space for political dissidence and accountability became increasingly restricted. With the Arab Spring unfolding in the background, this context of socio-economic and political marginalization was a significant factor in explaining the mass joining of protests that called for change.

The Syrian uprising emerged with an identity that clearly contrasted and distinguished itself from the regime's authoritarian characteristics. Early protests in Syria cut across class, sect and generation, and were mobilized around three main values: "freedom" (from restrictive and repressive policies that prevent political participation and mobilization), "dignity" (that is undermined by the security apparatus's unaccountable oppression and abuse of local populations) and "justice" (for accountability on such unjust practices and for the corrupt accumulation of wealth in the hands of crony capitalists). The uprising's "youthfulness" was manifested in forms of grassroots mobilization and organization that was unprecedented in Syria's contemporary political culture. The term "revolution of the youth" was rhetorically stressed to contrast the state's corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy, its stagnant regime and monarchic-dictatorial rule, with the social movement's demands for change. After years of failed promises of top-down reform, change was being pushed from the bottom-up and mainly driven by the country's socioeconomically marginalized peripheries.

However, seven years later, the rebellion's "youthfulness" has largely rolled back. The uprising descended into a devastating civil war that side-lined those civil activists and nonviolent "youth" movements, and witnessed the rise of oppressive ideological currents as well as the intervention of interest-seeking external actors. Amidst an unleashed cycle of violence and a humanitarian catastrophe, "stability" has emerged as the prevailing paradigm in addressing the situation in Syria, leaving behind youth aspirations for democratic change. This has facilitated the resurgence of the totalitarian Syrian regime and re-legitimized its position within the international community, probably even among sections of the Syrian people. The latest developments in Damascus's peripheral Eastern Ghouta accurately sum up the scene, where – aside from the inhumane mass killing – what has been wiped out by the regime's military offensive

was an embryonic civil society and grassroots governance structures that offered an alternative to "Assad's Syria".

This chapter will highlight the potential that emerged initially with organized activist movements and later with civil society (which are associated with the "youthfulness" of the Syrian revolution) in areas where regime presence ceased to exist. The aim of conveying such potential is to depict authoritarian regimes' political, economic and cultural hegemony as the major obstacle for progressive change towards political inclusivity and sustainable development. The chapter argues that so long as authoritarian regimes continue to hold power in the region, and manipulatively convince the international community of their necessity to remain in power, spaces in which "youth" can exercise their potential for social, political and economic transformation will be blocked.

1.1 Deconstructing the concept of "youth"

Attitudes in development policy towards "youth" have been largely shaped by the context of global events, as demonstrated by the shift in discourse from youth presented as agents of change in 2011 to stability-threatening subjects in the current securitized epoch. The press release of the UN Security Council's first "youth" resolution 2250 (adopted in 2015) begins with: "Recognizing the threat to stability and development posed by the rise of radicalization among young people […]".[2] Posing youth as threats, the resolution requests member states, which include authoritarian regimes, to devise inclusive and reformist youth policies.[3]

However, the concept of "youth" as an age category holding any political, social or economic coherence has been increasingly critiqued and has paved the way for more refined conceptualizations. For when conceiving of "youth" as a demographic socio-political category, it becomes detached from issues and complexities that also pertain to other age groups un-

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[2] United Nations, *Security Council, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2250 (2015), Urges Member States to Increase Representation of Youth in Decision-Making at All Levels* (SC/12149), 9 December 2015, https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm.

[3] UN Security Council Resolution 2250, 9 December 2015, https://undocs.org/S/RES/2250(2015).

der shared class, gender, ideological and other forms of social groupings.[4] Youth as a social unit (young people) is to be distinguished from, as Asef Bayat explains, "youth" as a "series of dispositions, ways of being, feeling and carrying oneself (e.g., a greater tendency for experimentation, adventurism, idealism, autonomy, mobility and securing their future) that are associated with the sociological fact of 'being young'".[5] Within the Syrian context, such a conceptualization leads us to understand the uprising's "youthfulness" in relation to its contentious subject, in relation to the regime's authoritarian system and culture of rule. "Youth" can thus be understood as a tendency that is antithetical to authoritarianism. "Stalled" in transition to adulthood, prevented from the economic and political means to move to independence due to failed state policies, "youth" is better defined in relation to their marginalization, exclusion and alienation rather than merely by their age.[6] According to Silvia Colombo, "youth as a narrative has become the uniting factor and engine behind a number of diverse actors, including adults, who have stood up against the exclusionary practices of authoritarian Arab regimes".[7]

The foundation of the Syrian regime's legitimacy rests on a bargain of offering "stability" and "security" to the population in return for obedience and absence of dissent, rather than on responsible governance and economic performance. Thus, in the context of the uprising, the regime's framing of its alternative in terms of chaos and fundamentalist religious rule was necessary to reassert its legitimacy. That is where the contradiction arises in requesting and expecting youth-inclusive reformist policies, commonly advocated among development policy circles, from inherently exclusive systems of rule such as the Syrian regime. It isolates youth agency from broader structural constraints manifested in authoritarian systems of rule that inherently hinder inclusive participation. As Sukarieh and Tannock explain,

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[4] Laurent Bonnefoy, "Unpacking 'Youths' and the Arab Spring Uprisings", in *NOREF Expert Analysis*, April 2014, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/179525/5736cc7f3a2c6b-11f1e313ab6a74e383.pdf.

[5] Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics. How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, 2nd ed., Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013, p. 109.

[6] Silvia Colombo, "Youth Activism, Government Policies and the Role of the EU", in Silvia Colombo (ed.), "Youth Activism in the South and East Mediterranean Countries since the Arab Uprisings: Challenges and Policy Options", in *IEMed/EuroMeSCo Joint Policy Studies*, No. 2 (February 2016), p. 9, http://www.iai.it/en/node/6023.

[7] Ibid., 9-10.

> For so long as the focus is on youth, responses to the global protests can be more easily contained and limited to narrowly reformist measures [...] that do little to challenge fundamental inequalities of wealth and power around the world, and indeed [...] can even work to maintain and extend elite agendas.[8]

1.2 Marginalization of a "youth"-driven political alternative

Decades of one-party Ba'athist rule during which political life was largely suppressed prevented youth dispositions from being exercised in the political domain. The regime's crackdown on the "Damascus Spring" civil society shortly after President Assad junior's succession, which supposedly came with promised political reforms, marked a continued epoch of political oppression. The regime's repression in 2003 of the "Darayya Youth" for their civic activism of cleaning streets, distributing anti-corruption pamphlets and demonstrating against the US invasion of Iraq demonstrates its restrictions on public political expressions that are independent from the state.[9] Instead of fostering an environment where freedoms and accountability can be exercised, the regime expanded its clientelist networks within society through the co-optation of – supposedly – independent political blocs including labour unions, peasant unions and youth structures such as the Ba'ath Revolutionary Youth Union.

The nation-wide sites of protest and public activism that emerged with the 2011 uprising presented an opportunity to break with that political order, with wide participation not only by young people but also by adults, and underground political movements. The uprising allowed for the rise of grass-root forms of organization, such as the Local Coordination Committees, and horizontally structured activist groups that networked and organized protests across the country.[10] Non-violent movements spear-

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[8] Mayssoun Sukarieh and Stuart Tannock, *Youth Rising? The Politics of Youth in the Global Economy*, London and New York, Routledge, 2014, p. 108.

[9] Mohja Kahf, "Water Bottles & Roses. Choosing Non-Violence in Daraya", in *Mashallah News*, 21 November 2011, https://www.mashallahnews.com/?p=5938.

[10] Robin Yassin-Kassab and Leila Al-Shami, *Burning Country. Syrians in Revolution and War*, London, Pluto Press, 2016.

headed by young people such as the Syrian Nonviolent Movement, Nabd (Pulse) Assembly of Civil Democratic Youth and the Syrian People Knows Their Way were at the forefront of exhibiting unprecedented forms of activism and civil disobedience. These movements' new, non-sectarian, participatory political culture based on human rights and accountability symbolized the revolution's identity. Artistic productions and creative protest banners such as those of Kafranbel were tools that the town's residents used to innovatively challenge state narratives.[11] These modes of thinking were not a result of state-induced policies but emerged as an antithesis to state repression, and they allowed existing thoughts and initiatives to thrive. Such civil disobedience was able to challenge the regime's claim to legitimacy by embracing pluralistic, democratic and emancipatory values. Thus, in common narrations of Syria's post-uprising politics, "youth" became almost synonymous with "civil society" and "non-violent activism".

According to the Syrian Revolutionary Youth, a leftist collective of activists in Damascus and Homs advancing a vision of social justice, "The revolution is largely spontaneous. It is not a revolution of political groups, a traditional opposition, or specific ideological groups. We use the word 'youth' to express this."[12] This group had six out of seven detained members killed under torture while other members were forced to leave the country.[13] Despite the regime's propagation (and exaggeration) of foreign conspiracies and terrorism to justify its repression, its main adversary was an opening of an uncontrollable space for dissent, in which the flow of ideas and movements were revealing its intricate vulnerabilities. Thus, a systematic campaign of arrests, torture, assassination, expulsion and forced migration, ensued against key protest and opposition leaders, youth and adult alike. Similarly motivated by suppressing these emerging sites/movements of contestation/dissent, in an alleged demonstration of reforms a few months into the protests in 2011, the regime, through a general amnesty, released Islamist ideologues – who later formed armed opposition militias –, while keeping many political prisoners and

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[11] Leila Nachawati, "Kafranbel: A Paradigm of Creative Storytelling (Part 1/2)", in *openDemocracy*, 30 September 2014, https://www.opendemocracy.net/node/86324.

[12] "Syrian Youth Believed in Freedom, and Took the World by Force", in *SyriaUntold*, 3 July 2013, http://syriauntold.com/?p=3887.

[13] Budour Hassan, "Damascus' Stifled Voice from the Left", in *openDemocracy*, 31 December 2014, http://www.opendemocracy.net/node/89196.

protestors in detention.[14] Such tactics played a major role in weakening novel youth networks that were dominant at the uprising's early stages. They eventually facilitated fundamentalist jihadist groups, such as Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS (surfaced after years of being organized as underground networks), foreign-backed political groupings such as the Syrian National Coalition, and numerous foreign-funded opposition militias to dominate the alternative terrain to the regime.

1.3 Civil society: Thriving in the absence of regime hegemony

Even when the regime's escalation of violence transformed the uprising into civil war, youth side-lined by the conflict were able to regroup into grassroots civil initiatives in areas outside regime control. Filling the void left by the government's absence, civil society organizations and Local Councils engaged in administrative, humanitarian, developmental and human rights advocacy activities. A joint study by Badael Project and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung found that out of 52 sampled civil society groups and Local Councils, 74 per cent of civil society group members aged between 16 and 30 years, while Local Councils had a roughly equal split between young revolutionary activists and elder community leaders.[15] Such grassroots collectives enabled younger generations as well as the elderly to form and shape decisions that directly concerned aspects of their community's daily life. Their horizontal and pluralistic structures clearly contrasted the regime-affiliated, top-down bureaucratic civil society and administrative organizations.[16]

Significantly, new forms of grassroots organizations free from regime authoritarianism were being tested. Following Noam Chomsky, the no longer justified authoritarian structures of the regime drove their dismantlement and paved the way for the experimentation with new democratic

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[14] Reinoud Leenders, "Repression Is Not 'a Stupid Thing': Regime Responses to the Syrian Uprising and Insurgency", in Michael Kerr and Craig Larkin (eds.), *The Alawis of Syria. War, Faith and Politics in the Levant*, London, Hurst, 2015, p. 245-274.

[15] Rana Khalaf, Oula Ramadan and Friederike Stolleis, *Activism in Difficult Times: Civil Society Groups in Syria; 2011-2014*, Beirut, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014, p. 23, http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/beirut/11162.pdf.

[16] Ibid., p. 5.

social structures.[17] The idea of Local Councils was introduced in 2012 by anarchist Omar Aziz (then in his sixties), the blueprints of which were first tested in Damascus' countryside.[18] Working in the absence of regime presence in certain areas provided spaces and opportunities for young men and women – alongside adults – to participate in emancipating political life and to generate new democratic values for their societies (at least initially, before the hegemony of armed militias). The most notable example of such alternative governance was in Damascus' countryside town of Darayya, where an independent revolutionary newspaper (*Enab Baladi*, "Grapes of My Country") grew, artistic murals of resistance on demolished buildings helped maintain revolutionary principles and an elected Local Council was able to administer all domains of social-political life in the interest of the community, (uniquely) also including the military domain.[19]

Civil society in non-regime areas emerged in a difficult terrain in which it not only had to face the challenges of the regime's devastation of such areas, but it also had to thwart off the rising tyranny of many armed opposition groups. Empowered with foreign support of arms and money, instead of building its local legitimacy on the revolution's values, several armed groups re-instilled the same coercive and oppressive methods of governance employed by the regime. Yet these authoritarian tendencies were met with local resistance, as "youth" were able to preserve and defend the emancipatory values that grew on communities. Similar to Darayya, the strong community in the town of Atarib in northern Syria was able to resist and prevent the encroachment of extremist groups ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra into the town. As Haid Haid, from Atarib, explains, "Strong local communities that are empowered to create their own alternatives and solutions will have the incentive to fight for them".[20] In western Aleppo, pressure from the lo-

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[17] Noam Chomsky, *On Anarchism*, London, Penguin Books, 2014, p. 31-32.

[18] Aziz was later detained by the regime, where he died due to the deterioration of his health in terrible prison conditions. Leila Al Shami, "Syria: The Life and Work of Anarchist Omar Aziz, and His Impact on Self-Organization in the Syrian Revolution", in *Tahrir-ICN*, 23 August 2013, https://wp.me/p2QE8E-jR.

[19] Darayya was subjected to horrendous bombardment that put it down to rubble. It was among the first towns to forcibly surrender to the regime after years of siege and starvation, with its remaining residents forcibly displaced from their homes. Barrett Limoges, "Meet the Banksy of Syria", in *Middle East Eye*, 31 August 2016, https://www.middleeasteye.net/node/56231.

[20] Haid Haid, "Local Community Resistance to Extremist Groups in Syria. Lessons from

cal community and support from civil society organizations in the diaspora helped release the director of the education directorate in the area after an armed group earlier abducted him.[21] Despite the controversy around Local Councils' representation and independence in opposition-held areas, these civilian-administered structures still stood as institutions that prevented the monopolization of power by armed groups and that had to be taken into account. Held elections for the Local Council in Douma, Eastern Ghouta, in 2017 (before being taken by the regime later in 2018) was challenged by the powerful militia Jaysh al-Islam's attempts to influence the results to its favour.[22] Yet the mere fact that Jaysh al-Islam devoted time and resources to influence the election's outcome demonstrates the weight and relevance that such a civilian-constructed administrative body carries in running the town's affairs, and the constraints it can place on the armed groups' exercise of power.

It is not that these emerging youth movements and administrative structures had inherent progressive characteristics that facilitated the rise of a new political culture. Rather, their reactionary resisting nature to the Syrian regime required them to differentiate themselves from the regime's authoritarian characteristics. Thus, sites freed from regime political and cultural hegemony provided the opportunity to exercise democratic political imaginations, to shape new participatory and inclusive social contracts. This is the sort of social change that the youth-led opposition strived to achieve, the change that has been devastated by the regime's resurgence and the rise of counterrevolutionary movements within the opposition.

Conclusion

The Syrian regime's systematic process of "social exclusion" prior to the 2011 uprising was largely ignored, as focus was mainly cast on the dynamics of the regime's (apparent) resilience. Its strategic decision early in 2011

Atarib", in *Chatham House Research Papers*, June 2017, p. 5, https://www.chathamhouse.org/node/29889.

[21] Hurras et al., *Joint Statement on the Abduction of "Teacher Mohammed Mustafa"*, 9 November 2017, https://www.stj-sy.com/en/view/309.

[22] Samer Al-Ahmad, "Aintikhabat mahaliyun Duma… tajaliyat alaihtidam alfsayly" (Douma's Council Elections… Manifestation of Sectarian Strife), in *GerounNet*, 20 October 2017, https://geiroon.net/?p=98766.

to rebuff calls for meaningful political reform and to face "the public street" with brutality further demonstrates the lengths it is prepared to reach in order to preserve its exclusive rule. However, it remains possible that the regime might be able to militarily defeat the insurgency and re-integrate itself as part of the international community's structure (with superficial integration of co-opted opposition elements). The anticipated reconstruction process might very well be accompanied with top-down policy recommendations that will include inclusive policies on "youth". There are no signs which suggest essential systemic changes will take place that address the root causes of the uprising in the first place. Despite such reverses, pro-democracy actors have not completely disappeared. Many Syrian civil society organizations continue to assert their presence and demand their involvement within the political process, while Syrian activists in the diaspora attempt to re-mobilize and find a role for themselves.

This chapter stresses on the potentialities of social movements at critical junctures in which young men and women, as well as adults, carve their own spaces for public and political participation. This is not to claim that anti-authoritarian social movements are inherently progressive and, if successful in dismantling authoritarian structures, will inevitably lead to democratic change. Rather, the chapter shows how "freedom" from authoritarianism's hegemonic political culture and physical repression can create spaces in which political pluralism, good governance (accountability), local participation and social responsibility can potentially take place. It also shows that such freedom from authoritarian hegemony can foster an environment for progressive forces to rise and shape future identities. In other words, liberation from authoritarianism would open a path to which progress and development could be taken, and in which youth can experiment their political imagination for change. As Bayat argues, forms of youth engagement with development-focused non-governmental organizations (NGOs) interested in reforming existing structures are to be distinguished from youth-participated social movements which are capable of transforming and readjusting structures.[23] Thus, this chapter casts doubt on the ability of the region's governments to deliver such top-down reforms, commonly advocated by traditional "youth" policy recommendations.

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[23] Asef Bayat, *Revolution without Revolutionaries. Making Sense of the Arab Spring*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2017, p. 25.

The regime's counter-revolutionary campaign exploited a securitized international environment fixated on a "war on terror" narrative that allowed it to depict all its opponents – progressive or otherwise – as "terrorists", thus presenting itself as a "lesser evil".[24] It framed the unrest within its borders as a local and global security matter, and thus re-legitimized its authoritarian system in the eyes of the international community. The conflict's acquisition of a regional and international dimension, caught up in a web of geopolitical interests, thus inevitably tied resolution efforts to a security framework. This naturally had the impact of displacing revolutionary youth (among young and old generations) from their position as political actors in a social movement context, to "peacemakers" in a conflict context involving a recourse to "stability" rather than "change". Currently, youth – represented in civil society organizations – find themselves in advisory capacities being merely consulted to "tidy a mess" they once believed could posit the country on a positive trajectory of progress, development and freedoms. Indeed, the resurgent Syrian regime is gradually re-seizing the briefly attained agency of a "rebellious/youth" generation. By bringing back rebellious communities to the "state's cradle" through coercive means, the regime is reasserting the structural constraints that generated the grievances and aspirations which caused the uprising in the first place. As such, youth have been prevented from a genuine opportunity to carry out the role of agents of social, political and economic change.

Policy recommendations

Based on the analysis presented, the following policies are recommended for Syria and the wider region:

Policy debates:

- Refrain from conceptualizing "youth" as a narrow age category and situate their socioeconomic status within other categories such as class, gender, ideology, ethnicity and other socioeconomic groupings.

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[24] Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders (eds.), *Middle East Authoritarianisms. Governance, Contestation, and Regime Resilience in Syria and Iran*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013.

Youth programming:

- Empower "youth" dispositions by supporting bottom-up initiatives challenging structural constraints rather than, or at least as complementary to, top-down reformist policies.
- Complement existing "youth" cultural exchange programming with facilitation of transnational organizations for "youth" coordination on activism and mobilization experiences (not necessarily focused on young people).
- Encourage and facilitate cross-country cooperation among university student unions particularly with countries ruled by authoritarian regimes.
- Support cross-generational mobilizing initiatives particularly among the diaspora, and make them led by concerned actors themselves.[25]

Donor countries:

- Preserve, support and build the capacity of grassroots civil society organizations, particularly in (as opposed to stepping away from) conflict areas.
- Allow partnership projects with civil society organizations in conflict areas to be led by partners in order to foster their experimentation process, with adequate consultation made available.
- Support emerging media initiatives that disseminate information on civil society initiatives which counter the "security" narrative.

UN missions assigned with conflict resolution:

- Move away from considering civil society as "peace-makers" but as rather political actors that must be directly involved as participants in political negotiations and processes, rather than mere advisors. Within the context of Syria, this includes involving civil society in the three parallel political tracks of Geneva, Astana and Sochi as observers able to hold negotiating parties accountable.
- Push the involvement of Local Councils (many of which were elected) – which were displaced along with their rebellious communi-

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[25] Such as the UK Common Purpose Diaspora Leadership programming: http://commonpurpose.org/leadership-programmes/diaspora-dialogues.

ties – as part of governance structures for Syria's future in order to build on democratic achievements made over the past years.

- Reflect perspectives of "youth" in political negotiations and processes not through fulfilling an age criteria or quota, but as part of wider memberships of civil society and political movements.

2.

The PA's Security Role and Youth Political Representation as Pathways for a Workable Palestinian National Reconciliation Deal

Ahmed G.S. Sukker

The October 2017 Palestinian national reconciliation agreement outlined in Cairo between the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah) has come to no avail. Although initially reaping results, including Hamas concessions on border control and taxation, negotiations quickly broke down. The failure to achieve a breakthrough presents multiple hazards: the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip continues to worsen, Palestinian aspirations for national liberation have been further undermined, and repressive single-party politics in Palestine remains.

Reconciliation attempts between Hamas and Fatah have focused on control of the Gaza Strip and their competing visions for national liberation. After more than a decade in control of Gaza, Hamas is still unable to provide basic services such as water and electricity, create employment opportunities, deliver much needed developmental projects or to fulfil its promises for national liberation. Instead, the party sustains its power through repressive security measures, while forging a stabilization path with Israel via third-party mediators. For its part, Fatah hopes to regain control of Gaza to proceed in its negotiations with Israel and fulfil its obligations outlined in previous bilateral agreements. Hence, the reconciliation process envisioned by both sides is driven more by their own political self-interest and lacks recognition of changes in the political realities of Gaza or in its inhabitants' political preferences.

I argue in this chapter that a reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah is only possible on the basis that both sides accept a power-sharing apparatus in the Gaza Strip. To be successful, this must recognize the aspirations of Gaza's residents, particularly the young people who constitute up to 30 per cent of the population,[1] and showed the largest participation rates in protests.[2] I will begin with an overview of the latest Cairo reconciliation. Then I will focus on two issues that in my opinion pose the most serious challenge to reconciliation: the security role of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and political misrepresentation. First, I argue that a modification of the PA's security role lays the ground for the integration of security forces and public-sector institutions in general. An agreement on this matter will also help building trust between Hamas and Fatah in the long run. Second, I argue that the reconciliation process should also provide a framework for opening up the political system and incorporating voices of the marginalized population, particularly the youth who have been protesting against misgovernment and were in the lead of "the Great March of Return" earlier this year. The two protest events underscores rising dissatisfaction in the part of the youth – and Gaza's civilian population in general – with the dominance of one-party politics in Palestine. Putting an end to one-party politics, indeed, can serve to stabilize the population and pave the way for consolidating democracy, accountability and good governance in Palestine.

2.1 THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

On 12 October 2017, Hamas and Fatah reached a reconciliation agreement in Cairo to bring the Gaza Strip back under the administration of the PA.[3] As was the case in previous negotiations, the 12 October agreement

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[1] Youth defined as the age group of 15-29. See Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), *The International Youth Day*,12 August 2018, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx-?lang=en&ItemID=3215.

[2] Up until 14 May 2018, over 65 per cent of deaths in Gaza's border protest fell under the age group of youth. See "The 109 Martyrs of 'the Great March of Return': More Than Their Half Fell in the Millions March" (in Arabic), in *Mashreq News*, 14 May 2018, http://mshreqnews.net/post/106468.

[3] Declan Walsh and David M. Halbfinger, "Unity Deal Offers Hope for Palestinians and a Respite for Gaza", in *The New York Times*, 12 October 2017, https://nyti.ms/2z2BCnx.

envisioned reconciliation as a series of practical steps: (1) complete PA control of governing responsibilities by 1 December 2017; (2) the legal/administrative committee to find a solution for Hamas employees by 1 February 2018, with the new government to start paying their salaries once it is in charge of its financial and administrative powers, including taxation; (3) PA security forces to take over full responsibility for controlling Gaza's border crossings; (4) leaders of security branches in the West Bank to look for mechanisms to rebuild the security apparatus in the Gaza Strip in consultation with "relevant parties" in Gaza; (5) a meeting to be held in Cairo in the first week of December 2017 to assess progress; and (6) a meeting to be held on 14 November 2017 to discuss other reconciliation items mentioned in the Cairo reconciliation accord of 2011.[4] Hamas ceded security control and taxation tasks at the Gaza Strip's border crossings to the PA as part of the deal in November 2017.[5] However, no progress has been made towards integrating bureaucracies or the incorporation of Hamas employees onto the PA's payroll. Negotiations have since halted and the deal is now frozen.

The main obstacle to the PA's reestablishment has been the controversy over Hamas's public-sector employees. In response to its defeat in the summer of 2007, Fatah ordered employees of the civil and security sectors to abstain from going to their workplaces in exchange for keeping them on the payroll. This aimed to cripple Hamas's ability to provide services to Gaza's population and to burden it with the financial liabilities of re-staffing vacancies in the public sector. In response, Hamas appointed 40,000 to 50,000 of the movement's members, supporters and non-Fatah affiliates to vacancies in the public sector, cementing its control over the Gaza Strip.

The issue of these employees remains a significant obstacle to reconciliation through the PA, with Hamas insisting that its appointees be integrated into any joint public sector structure. This is the case for four reasons. First, Hamas hopes to maintain a secure livelihood for its supporters as compensation for their contributions to the movement while

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[4] Agreement between the Fatah and Hamas Movements to End Palestinian Division, Cairo, 12 October 2017, https://undocs.org/S/2017/899.

[5] Nidal Al-Mughrabi, "Hamas Cedes Gaza Border Crossings to Palestinian Authority Control", in *Reuters*, 1 November 2017, https://reut.rs/2zWGzP9.

in power. Second, the party does not want to anger a core fraction of its support base among Palestinians in Gaza. Third, Hamas does not wish to be excluded completely from power, for which maintaining its influence within the PA civil and security bureaucracies is key. Fourth, even though Hamas has moderated its stance,[6] it still rejects the PA's security apparatus' role of preventing violence against Israel.[7] Fatah, in turn, refuses to grant any employment rights to those appointed by Hamas, which it sees as a product of Hamas' illegitimate decision to take power in the Gaza Strip.[8] Similarly, Fatah is wary of these employees' willingness to abide by the PA's policy preferences and commitments to Israel and donor states, particularly in the field of security and policing. Finally, Fatah proclaims that it is technically difficult to integrate Hamas employees into the already overcrowded bureaucracy of the PA.[9]

2.2 DISPUTE OVER THE PA'S SECURITY ROLE

Central to the contest between Fatah and Hamas over the PA is its role in security. A settlement of this issue can facilitate rebuilding the security sector in Gaza and public sector in general according to a power-sharing arrangement. The role of the PA's security apparatus was initially specified in the 1995 Oslo II accords[10] and was enhanced in later agreements. Besides ascribing conventional police tasks to the new-

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[6] Hamas introduced a new charter in 2017, in which it declared its acceptance of a Palestinian state along the borders of 1967. This practically places the movement on the same page with its rival Fatah concerning the relationship with Israel and the Oslo framework. See Patrick Wintour, "Hamas Presents New Charter Accepting a Palestine Based on 1967 Borders", in *The Guardian*, 1 May 2017, https://gu.com/p/6cdh2.

[7] Hamas repeatedly criticized and denounced the PA's security cooperation with Israel in the West Bank; and therefore, it fiercely objects completely a resumption of a similar role in the Gaza Strip.

[8] Adnan Abu Amer, "Three Issues That Could Derail the Fatah-Hamas Deal", in *Al Jazeera*, 21 October 2017, http://aje.io/ewwe3.

[9] Adam Rasgon, "Cracks Are Starting to Show in the Landmark Palestinian Reconciliation Agreement", in *Business Insider*, 29 November 2017, https://www.businessinsider.com/cracks-showing-hamas-fatah-palestinian-reconciliation-agreement-2017-11.

[10] Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II), Washington, 28 September 1995, https://undocs.org/S/1997/357.

ly formed PA, Article XV tasked it with responsibility for preventing hostile acts against Israel.[11] Accordingly, the PA launched heavy crackdowns on Hamas' members in the mid and late 1990s due to the latter's rejection of the Oslo framework. In response, Hamas denounced Oslo as "a security belt"[12] for Israel and criticized the PA's security apparatus for collaboration.

The outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada and the Israeli disengagement plan that followed has greatly undermined the PA's security role. The intifada broke out amid the stumbling of the Oslo process.[13] The period of unrest that ensued provided a substantial chance for Hamas to thrive. Within the first few months of the intifada, Israel began targeting the PA's security forces, accusing them of directly sponsoring and tolerating attacks.[14] This created a security vacuum within the Palestinian territories that was later filled up by armed militias of different Palestinian factions.[15] Despite efforts to reinstall the authority of the PA's security forces, principally through the "roadmap" peace plan of 2003,[16] Hamas showed no signs of compromise. In 2005, Hamas declared the Israeli disengagement plan and subsequent unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip a victory for the Palestinian armed resistance.[17] Hamas also used the occasion to consolidate its support base among the population. The following January, Hamas won 76 of the 132 seats in the second legislative council elections, allowing the movement

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[11] The chapter dictates that the PA is responsible for the prevention of hostile acts against Israel by all necessary measures.

[12] Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide*, 2nd ed., London, Pluto Press, 2010, p. 109.

[13] Jeremy Pressman, "The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict", in *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Fall 2003), p. 114-141, https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/220/448.

[14] Alaa Tartir, "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces 1993-2013", in *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (December 2015), Art. 46, http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.gi.

[15] Ibid.

[16] The Quartet, *A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Washington, 30 April 2003, https://2001-2009.state.gov-/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/20062.htm.

[17] Jefferson Morley, "Israeli Withdrawal from Gaza Explained", in *The Washington Post*, 10 August 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/10/AR2005081000713.html.

to form a cabinet.[18] Meanwhile, the leader of Fatah, Mahmoud Abbas, remained as president with extensive executive powers. The resulting division between the rival political visions of Fatah and Hamas put the structure of the PA and its institutions in jeopardy, further undermining the prospect of reinstating its security role.

With Fatah refusing to cooperate, and the Quartet imposing strict conditions for funding the PA under its control,[19] Hamas sought other options to assert its legitimacy and deliver on its governing obligations, establishing the Executive Force from members of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the movement's military wing, to carry out the Ministry of Interior's policing tasks. This took place in a period in which the Gaza Strip endured a state of lawlessness due to weakened PA police forces and the proliferation of armed militias belonging to different resistance factions and family clans.[20] Shortly afterwards, the rivalry between Fatah security apparatus and the Executive Force led to direct clashes. The situation further escalated following rumours of a proposed American plan to aid Mohammed Dahlan – the Gaza-based head of various PA security forces – to crackdown on Hamas, leading to the movement launching large-scale attacks on the PA's security apparatus.[21] By June 2007, Hamas had defeated and dismantled the PA's security apparatus and Fatah armed militias, reinforcing its power in the Gaza Strip.

The lack of consensus over the role and authority of the PA's security apparatus remains one of the biggest obstacles to national reconciliation. An agreement on this issue would open the door on other issues. In the course of all previous reconciliation negotiations, Hamas has re-

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[18] Scott Wilson, "Hamas Sweeps Palestinian Elections, Complicating Peace Efforts in Mideast", in *The Washington Post*, 27 January 2006, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/26/AR2006012600372.html.

[19] The Quartet – formed of the United Nations, Britain, Russia and the United States – outlined three conditions for resuming financial support to the PA: opposition to violence, acceptance of existing agreements and recognition of Israel. See Shlomo Brom and Yoram Schweitzer, "The Palestinian Unity Government", in *INSS Insights*, No. 559 (11 June 2014), http://www.inss.org.il/?p=61485.

[20] Greg Myre, "Palestinians Struggle with Renewed Lawlessness in Gaza", in *The New York Times*, 7 September 2005, https://nyti.ms/2NfZj7d.

[21] Ramzy Baroud, "Gaza: The Curse of Mohammed Dahlan", in *Al Jazeera*, 30 July 2017, http://aje.io/xemn8.

jected calls for disarming its military wing,[22] and insisted on sharing power, while maintaining its military assets. It also continues to reject the PA's role in violence prevention, which its sees as primarily aimed against itself. Fatah, on the other hand, has grown wary of being dominated by Hamas's strong military wing, as it aspires to be able to fulfil its security responsibilities according to former agreements. Therefore, it prefers a situation in which it is not vulnerable to Hamas' superior military influence.

The gap between the two sides appears to be too deep, and the latest reconciliation agreement failed to provide practical guidelines to narrow it. However, I argue that there is room for the reconfiguration of the PA's security role given the changing relationship between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Further, the professionalization of the security forces and ensuring their neutrality can bridge the gap in trust and minimize the risk of future conflict between Hamas and Fatah.

2.3 Grounds for modification of the PA's security role and professionalization of security forces

Israel's attempts to end Hamas's control of the Gaza Strip through military force have been unsuccessful. Three large-scale assaults on Gaza by the Israeli military resulted in severe destruction to civilian infrastructure and caused thousands of deaths on the Palestinian side, but did little to undermine Hamas's military capabilities. Instead, a new relationship between Hamas and Israel has emerged based on mutual deterrence[23] and *de facto* recognition. This has essentially replaced previous security arrangements based on agreements between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, with Hamas proving itself capable of securing Gaza's borders and containing smaller Palestinian resistance factions. Furthermore, aware of its responsibility as a government and its growing political capital, Hamas

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[22] "Hamas Rejects Disarmament As Reconciliation Deadline Looms", in *The New Arab*, 27 November 2017, https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/11/27/hamas-rejects-disarmament-as-reconciliation-deadline-looms.

[23] Yoram Schweitzer, Benedetta Berti and Shlomo Brom, "The Erosion of the Israel-Hamas Ceasefire in Gaza", in *INSS Insights*, No. 537 (6 April 2014), http://www.inss.org.il/?p=???.

introduced a new charter which has effectively recognized the political framework of Oslo, and moderated its stance towards Israel. In the summer of 2017, Hamas also forged a deal with Egypt to cooperate against jihadist groups in the Sinai, improving a previously difficult relationship with its most important Arab neighbour.[24]

This progress allows for the prospect of further cooperation on security issues with Israel, Egypt and possibly the PA. The only obstacle appears to be the terms in which this cooperation is couched. As mentioned earlier, for Fatah and the PA cooperation with Israel is based on mutually beneficial security agreements. In contrast, Hamas defines its security arrangements with Israel on the basis of realpolitik calculations. But regardless of definitions, both practices achieve similar results – prevention of hostilities and preserving stability. Therefore, the integration of Hamas' security forces and the incorporation of its current security arrangements into those of the PA appears increasingly possible. However, the integration process should be delivered through a larger reform plan for the security sector in the Gaza Strip aimed at transforming the security apparatus into a professional institution, independent from the influence of either Hamas or Fatah. This shall help transform the security sector from a field of contestation into a force for stability.

2.4 Changing preferences of the youth

Studies and opinion polls focusing on the youth in Palestine in the wake of the Arab Spring found widespread political disillusionment. Polls from 2011 suggested that 35 per cent of the youth (18-24) in Gaza would not vote if a general election were to be held.[25] Other polls suggested that the majority of Palestinian youth (over 55 per cent) in Gaza disagreed that organizing demonstrations was a good way to pressure the political elites to make changes, while over 75 per cent classified the state of freedom

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[24] Farid Farid, "Hamas Engagement With Egypt Fails Reconcile Palestinian Rivals", in *The National*, 15 September 2017, https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/hamas-engagement-with-egypt-fails-reconcile-palestinian-rivals-1.628615.

[25] Mona Christophersen, Jacob Høigilt and Åge A. Tiltnes, "Palestinian Youth and the Arab Spring", in *NOREF Reports*, September 2012, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/140730/562d62ccb49d92227b6865a8b2d11e1a.pdf.

of expression in Gaza as poor or very poor.[26] A third study pointed out a steady depoliticization among the youth due to growing frustration over the complexity of their situation.[27] All three studies indicate that Palestinian youth are gradually withdrawing from politics due to lack of organization, political naivety, and fear. Additionally, Hamas' monopolization of the political struggle against Israel – mainly through military means – has pushed the youth, and the masses in general, away from engaging in anti-occupation struggle.

Recent growing trends in youth political activism in the Gaza Strip, however, contradicts this assessment. Palestinian youth are not withdrawing from politics, rather their attitude towards politics is evolving. In the wake of the Arab Spring, young activists in the Gaza Strip attempted to ignite a similar protest movement aiming to pressure Hamas and Fatah to reconcile.[28] The movement failed to capitalize on high degrees of popular support after being curtailed by Hamas' security forces, which perceived it as a threat to its rule. It was similarly undermined by PLO's political factions, who sought to contain the movement instead of providing much needed support. However, the movement marked a shift in the preference on the part of the youth to focus on non-partisan social and economic issues instead of engaging in the party politics that dominates Palestinian politics. In August 2015, protesters took to the streets in all cities and camps of the Gaza Strip protesting electricity cuts.[29] Similarly, in January 2017, protests broke out demanding services such as electricity and water, as well as jobs and good governance.[30]

The "Great March of Return" marks a second indicator of this shift. On 30 March 2018, a network of Palestinian activists in the Gaza Strip

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[26] Jacob Høigilt, Akram Atallah and Hani el-Dada, "Palestinian Youth Activism: New Actors, New Possibilities?", in *NOREF Reports*, June 2013, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/165694/b0c26f885911e090b61db9089ed8040a.pdf.

[27] Ayed Ahmad, "Palestinian Youth: Between Patriarchy and Politics", in *The Atkin Paper Series*, July 2013, https://icsr.info/2013/09/18/palestinian-youth-between-patriarchy-and-politics.

[28] Harriet Sherwood, "Young Palestinians Call for Protests on 15 March", in *The Guardian*, 24 February 2011, https://gu.com/p/2nbdn.

[29] Mohammed Omer, "Gaza Power Outages Spark Protests", in *Middle East Eye*, 5 August 2015, https://www.middleeasteye.net/node/45672.

[30] "Gaza Electricity Crisis: Hamas Breaks Up Protest", in *BBC News*, 13 January 2017, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-38604904.

launched "the Great March of Return". The march was planned as a sequel of protests on Gaza-Israel borders.[31] The purpose of the protest was to demand the right to return to the lands from which Palestinians were forcibly displaced during the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948 that also marked the creation of Israel. Israel in its part confronted young, peaceful protesters with brute force. The death toll exceeded a hundred and injuries tolled ten thousands.[32] The initiative and intensity shown in recent events at the borders suggests that the youth have already decided to challenge the mainstream Palestinian parties' handling of the struggle against Israel. The protests were triggered by the relocation of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Although quickly endorsed by Hamas, Fatah and other Palestinian factions,[33] the protests were initiated by activists unaffiliated with any Palestinian faction. Palestinians marched *en masse* to the borders for weeks and voiced their demands for actual return to their homeland unrepelled by Israeli brutality.[34] Besides showing defiance against Israel, the "Great March of Return" can also therefore be understood as a rejection of the status quo separation between the Gaza Strip and the rest of the Palestinian lands. It signals a rejection of the current regional efforts to resolve the conflict at the expense of Palestinians' basic rights,[35] and highlights a rejection of the marginalization of the general Palestinian public in the anti-occupation struggle by the domination of one-party politics in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The protests against misgovernment and the "Great March of Return" must be seen together. Both highlight the rising appetite and determination on the part of the youth and the marginalized Palestinian masses to reengage in politics. If it is to succeed, a national reconciliation must go

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[31] "Thousands of Palestinians Launch Great March of Return in Gaza", in *Wafa*, 30 March 2018, http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=Vxyyuoa97092130542aVxyyuo.

[32] Bethan McKernan, "'Jerusalem Day' Protests: Three Palestinians Die As Violence on Gaza-Israel Border Resumes", in *The Independent*, 8 June 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/jerusalem-day-protests-latest-gaza-israel-palestinians-a8390041.html.

[33] Muhammad Shehada, "The Full Story Behind the 'March of Return'", in *Ynet News*, 30 March 2018, https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5210084,00.html.

[34] Alia Chughtai, "Palestinians' Great March of Return: The Human Cost", in *Al Jazeera*, 16 May 2018, http://aje.io/92mzd.

[35] Anders Persson, "What Will Trump's 'Ultimate Deal' Mean for Palestinians?", in *Al Jazeera*, 28 March 2018, http://aje.io/x3sql.

beyond the narrow interests of Hamas and Fatah, and include those most negatively affected by the Palestinian division: the Palestinian youth in the Gaza Strip as well as in the West Bank. The national reconciliation, therefore, should present mechanisms and tools to recognize, empower and represent the aspirations of the youth in both domestic governance and national liberation.

2.5 THE WAY FORWARD

Reconciliation negotiations between Hamas and Fatah will likely be resumed at some point in the near future. But without either's intention to work out a power-sharing arrangement, the negotiations' fate would not be more promising than all those of the past. Neither reinstalling the PA's governing apparatus to its pre-Hamas state nor accepting continued Hamas domination seems plausible. Reconciliation negotiations and any ensuing reconciliation process should take into account changing political realities in Gaza. Gaza under Hamas forged a new relationship with Israel – and similarly with Egypt – that renders previous security arrangements obsolete. Therefore, rebuilding the security sector in the Gaza Strip requires revisiting past Fatah-Israel security agreements according to Gaza's relationship to Israel today.

An agreement on the security issue can facilitate the rebuilding of the public sector in general, paving the way for an integration process of the PA's former employees with those appointed by Hamas. This process should be carried out through a large-scale reform plan to professionalize the security sector and public institutions in general. By building functional public institutions, the risk of future inter-party conflict will be reduced. The EU can play a major role in such an endeavour as it possesses the planning, financial and technical capacities required, especially giving that it fits into the EU's general developmental approach in the region.

This chapter also posed the need for putting an end to single-party politics and the issue of political misrepresentation in Palestine. The Palestinian youth have been protesting on several occasions against misgovernment and the mishandling of the national liberation project by different Palestinian political factions. The two occasions – protests against Hamas' misgovernment and border protests – should be looked at as con-

solidated efforts through which youth have voiced their frustration and rejection of party politics in Palestine. Giving that the youth and Gaza's civilian population in general have bore the brunt of a cruel siege and multiple Israeli military offensives, the reconciliation should also provide a framework for integrating their voices when deciding on significant policy issues concerning both domestic governance and national liberation. All in all, the main purpose of national reconciliation should be avoiding past failures, accepting power-sharing through building representative professional public institutions, and bringing an end to the unfolding humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. Only this can guarantee a long-term stability.

3.

Contesting Top-down Led Women's Empowerment: The Case of Saudi Arabia

Huda Alsahi

The topic of women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia has gained much international attention in the last years, as women have been at the centre of reforms taking place in the country. Consequently, this chapter intends to contextualize the recent series of reforms aimed at promoting women's empowerment in the Kingdom starting with the royal decree that was issued on 26 September 2017, which granted women the right to drive from June 2018 onwards, followed by the decision to allow them to enter sports stadiums for the first time, in addition to King Salman's edict instructing the Interior Ministry to draft legislation to criminalize sexual harassment.

Initially, these reforms were hailed as a great victory for women and won praise from across Saudi Arabia and the international community alike. This was the case also because these advancements feed into Saudi Arabia's narrative of reform under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), who has announced plans to introduce tourism, social activities, and entertainment to the Kingdom. Central to these reforms is the Crown Prince's project for Saudi Arabia outlined in his Vision 2030, an ambitious plan of economic and social reforms announced in 2016 as the Kingdom prepares for a post-oil era.[1]

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[1] "Profile: Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman", in *Al Jazeera*, 14 December 2017, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/06/profile-saudi-crown-prince-mohammed-bin-salman-170621130040539.html.

At the domestic level, the decision of reversing the driving ban was justified as an economic necessity, while failing to mention the efforts of hundreds of female activists who have campaigned for over three decades for the ban to be lifted. This was the case as giving credit to the efforts of female activists could have risked suggesting that the government was giving into social pressure, and hence, could have potentially encouraged further dissent.

Acknowledging that many women will no doubt benefit from these advancements, this chapter will critically assess recent empowerment efforts by embedding them into the broader scope of economic, social and political configurations in Saudi Arabia. Thus, I will be mainly concerned with examining the peculiarities of the promotion of women's empowerment "from above" within the Saudi context. This will be done through shedding some light on how the concept of women's empowerment that was once associated with feminist activism has come to be laden with meanings attributed to it by state institutions, and how this redefined concept is being applied today.

3.1 ASSESSING RECENT WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT REFORMS

Saudi Arabia stands as a monarchy with no democratically elected representatives or an effective system of checks and balances, where the King is both the head of state and the head of government. The political system is characterized by traditional representation and consultation mechanisms that intersects with the country's religious code and tribal customs,[2] and influences the ways in which gender roles are assigned in society.

This leaves us with a civil society that is curtailed by a legal system that does not leave much space for NGOs to operate outside state control. In fact, the Saudi government has constantly delayed publishing a long-promised civil society law, and has made registering civil society associations very difficult. Even if it finally issued the law in December 2015, the law does not allow the establishment of organizations working on legal, political or human rights grounds and denies licenses to organizations whose activities disturb the public system or breach national

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[2] Chatham House, "The Political Outlook for Saudi Arabia", in *Chatham House Reports*, May 2011, p. 4, https://www.chathamhouse.org/node/6247.

unity.[3] Accordingly, most of the NGOs that are registered with, and approved by the government tend to be charity-oriented and co-opted by the state through comprehensive patronage networks. While there are few women-led NGOs, these for the most part do not engage in the issue of women's political and legal rights, due to the difficulty of operating as independent organizations that address such issues freely.

In spite of this, Saudi women activists have campaigned for years for their rights at a grassroots level and engaged in collective efforts that sought changing and transforming the patriarchal gendered relations that affect their daily lives. They have been fighting for the right to drive starting from the 1990s, culminating into the #Women2Drive movement, which rose up in the aftermath of the Arab Spring in 2011. The movement encouraged the media-savvy, young, and educated generation to mobilize online and utilize social media as an alternative locus of association and activism for challenging the driving ban and the status quo, which turned it into a significant civil society activity taking place at an informal level.

In addition to this movement, another important example of women's activism is the recent campaign against the male guardianship system that started in mid-2016. The campaign explicitly challenges the currently imposed set of social and legal restrictions, which legally subjects every Saudi woman, regardless of her age, to the authority of a male relative – normally a father or a husband, who is effectively her legal guardian.

The government response towards these mobilizing efforts ranged from oppression and vilification to depoliticization, as evidenced by arresting women who were caught driving, and discursively portraying the issue as a societal one that has little to do with state policies and that ultimately falls beyond the realm of the government.

Nevertheless, fast-forwarding to September 2017, the recent gender-related reforms in Saudi Arabia, exemplified by the decision to lift the driving ban and what followed it, were domestically attributed to Vision 2030; a comprehensive economic reform package and a neoliberal blueprint that was announced in April 2016. The package aims reducing dependency on oil through privatizing all sectors and key state-owned utilities. Other major measures include listing around 5 per cent of the

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[3] Leah Schulz, "Vision 2030 Fails to See Progress on Civil Society", in *ADHRB Blog*, 13 January 2017, https://wp.me/p2BLw0-31j.

shares of state-owned oil company Aramco, raising non-oil revenues, cutting subsidies, attracting foreign direct investment, and launching of an ambitious 500 billion US dollar independent economic zone straddling Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt, among hundreds of other initiatives.[4]

The plan also declared that the government would commit to developing women's talents, investing in their productive capabilities and enabling them to strengthen their future, while seeking to raise the female labour force participation from 16.2 per cent[5] to 30 per cent by 2030. Therefore, removing former obstacles such as the ban on women driving was a decision that made sense economically, as it can potentially boost female participation in the workforce by encouraging women to seek employment opportunities. Lifting the ban is also bound to increase women's consumption that might lead to economic growth, and create additional economic opportunities for them as driving instructors, administrators, and potentially also as traffic police.

However, these efforts were not all received without any criticism. Some sceptics pointed out that while these efforts might be paraded as women's empowerment, the reasons behind them are far more pragmatic in nature, and they should be better understood as an attempt to make the Saudi leadership yet another modernizing autocrat in the region.[6] This was the case especially since women continue to face a variety of barriers — both formal and informal — to participate in public life including the Kingdom's persistent male guardianship system, which obliges every woman to obtain permission from a male guardian to travel outside the Kingdom, study abroad, get married, or even to exit prison. Others insisted that the move towards empowering women has always "won dictators applause, especially in the west, where women's rights have become an axis against which to measure nations and evaluate regimes".[7]

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[4] Matthew M. Reed, "Saudi Vision 2030: Winners and Losers", in *Sada*, 2 August 2016, http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/64227.

[5] International Labour Organization (ILO), *Labor force, female (% of total labor force)*, last updated November 2017, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=SA.

[6] Hana Al-Khamri, "Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS): The Young Face of Neoliberal Totalitarianism", *in Hana Al-Khamri Blog*, 13 November 2017, http://hanaalkhamri.blogspot.it/2017/11/mohammed-bin-salman-mbs-young-face-of.html.

[7] Madawi al-Rasheed, "Women Are Still Not in the Driving Seat in Saudi Arabia", in *The Guardian*, 27 September 2017, https://gu.com/p/7a389.

3.2 Contesting women's empowerment

The notion of women's empowerment remains one of the most loosely used terms in the fields of policymaking, international development and corporate agencies. Unsurprisingly, it means different things to different involved parties.

For instance, Sen advances for an understanding of empowerment based on altering relations of power that systematically hinder women's autonomy and adversely affect their well-being.[8] In a similar line, Batliwala argues that women's empowerment necessitates challenging patriarchal relations, which in turn requires that women first "recognize the ideology that legitimizes male domination and understand how it perpetuates their oppression".[9] The World Bank adopts a different logic of empowerment as it defines it as "the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes".[10]

Following that, Sardenberg draws a clear distinction between the two main approaches in conceptualizing women's empowerment.[11] The first, which she identifies as the "liberal empowerment" approach, regards women's empowerment as an instrument for development priorities, be it establishing democracy or encouraging women's employment. Hence, she considers liberal empowerment as a neutral process that de-politicizes the process of empowerment by taking power out of the equation, making it possible to have empowerment without conflicts.

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[8] Gita Sen, "Women's Empowerment and Human Rights: The Challenge to Policy", in Francis Graham-Smith (ed.), *Population, the Complex Reality. A Report of the Population Summit of the World's Scientific Academies*, London, Fulcrum Publishing, Royal Society, 1994, p. 108.

[9] Srilatha Batliwala, "The Meaning of Women's Empowerment: New Concepts from Action", in Gita Sen, Adrienne Germain and Lincoln C. Chen (eds.), *Population Policies Reconsidered. Health, Empowerment and Rights*, Boston, Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, 1994, p. 131.

[10] See the World Bank PovertyNet website: *Empowerment*, http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTEMPOWERMENT/0,,contentMDK:20245753~isCURL:Y~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:486411,00.html.

[11] Cecília M.B. Sardenberg, "Liberal vs. Liberating Empowerment: A Latin American Feminist Perspective on Conceptualising Women's Empowerment", in *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 39, No. 6 (December 2008), p. 18-27, http://dx.doi.org/10.19088/1968-2016.115.

It is worth remembering that while liberal empowerment has its origins in liberalism and liberal feminism's claim for equality, it is not only associated with a political theory centred on notions of individual rights and equal opportunity, but also linked with neoclassical economics. It is the application of these economic theories in neoliberalism that has produced views and policies regarding the demands of the market for privatization, free market, withdrawal of government from the provision of social welfare and all of its consequences resulting in deep inequalities, feminization of labour, precariousness, and broader economic trends that systematically marginalize women which have been so heavily criticized by several feminists across the globe.[12]

In contrast, power relations are the central issue in the other approach that she identifies as "liberating empowerment". Women's empowerment is considered both on intrinsic grounds,[13] as the process by which women attain autonomy and self-determination, and as an instrument for the eradication of patriarchy; a means and an end in itself. Thus, the major objective of this approach is to question, destabilize and, eventually, transform the gender order of patriarchal domination.

Such an approach is consistent with a focus on women's organizing and on their collective action, while not disregarding the importance of the empowerment of women at a personal level. So, challenging and potentially transforming the existing gendered relations of power involves not only empowerment but also resistance, where more often than not, this resistance runs directly counter to state repression and exclusion. To be empowered one must have been disempowered as women have as a group, and that empowerment cannot be bestowed by a third party, although it is possible for others to act as facilitators in this process.

Consequently, the recent gender-related reforms in Saudi Arabia which have been grounded in a narrative of economic necessity correspond to what Sardenberg has coined as "liberal empowerment": the government

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[12] Shirin M. Rai, *Gender and the Political Economy of Development. From Nationalism to Globalization*, Malden, Polity Press, 2002.

[13] Naila Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment", in *Development and Change*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (July 1999), p. 435-464, https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~kmacd/IDSC10/Readings/research%20design/empowerment.pdf.

has been adopting aspects of neoliberalism and integrating them with existing authoritarian practices and developmentalist policies, while framing the reforms as a gift that is given from above, instead of being located in deeply contested processes of structural change in gendered power relations.

This is evidenced by the recent crackdown on and arrests of prominent Saudi women's rights activists on the 15 May 2018. It is also substantiated by reports showing that amid the issuance of the royal decree for women's driving, prominent activists received calls from the state warning them against publicly commenting about the decision positively or negatively, in order to avoid having to give any credit to their activism, and prevent a broader public debate and reactions (especially among women) from emerging. Preceding that, only a week before the decree was issued, three prominent Islamist women were taken in for questioning and required to sign a pledge that they would not comment negatively on the decree. While these women were at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, what they had in common was that they were significant and influential voices beyond the state.[14]

Additionally, the male guardianship system remains largely in place, hindering, and in some cases nullifying the efficacy of these reforms. It continues to pose a significant challenge to women's ability to make important decisions for themselves, as well as to travel, to pursue career and academic opportunities abroad, or to get married without the consent of their male guardians. Moreover, Saudi women cannot marry a non-Saudi without getting the consent of the Interior Ministry, not to mention their inability to pass their nationality to their children, who are born to a Saudi mother and a non-Saudi father and will need a visa and/or resident permit to enter and reside in the country.[15] Guardianship also makes it incredibly difficult for victims of violence to seek protection or to obtain legal redress for abuse. Therefore, the difficulty of transferring guardianship away from abusive relatives can condemn women to a life of violence.[16] Finally, in relation to women's labour rights, while women are

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[14] Nora Doaiji, "Saudi Women's Online Activism: One Year of the 'I Am My Own Guardian' Campaign", in *AGSIW Reports*, 19 October 2017, https://wp.me/p9W40X-4qo.

[15] Madawi al-Rasheed, "Women Are Still Not in the Driving Seat in Saudi Arabia", cit.

[16] Human Rights Watch, *Boxed In. Women and Saudi Arabia's Male Guardianship System*, July 2016, https://www.hrw.org/node/291781.

permitted to work, they are restricted from working in certain fields and are prohibited from working in hazardous jobs or industries, as set out in a list issued by the Ministry of Labour. They are also obliged to work separately from any male employees (i.e. in partitioned offices) and to have separate facilities.[17]

Hence, it seems that what we have been witnessing so far is some form of top-down, diluted empowerment that contains little by way of resemblance to what feminist activists intended empowerment to mean. These reforms do not aim at, let alone actually changing the underlying structures of power that underscore the observed situation of exclusion and disempowerment in the first place, whilst portraying women merely as subjects of market liberalization and governmental decrees, instead of agents of change. Additionally, the current empowerment efforts attempt to discursively construct a public domain denuded of power and histories of oppression. Questions of patriarchy as collective, systematic processes and institutions of rule that are gendered have difficulty being heard out when neoliberal development narratives disallow the salience of such collective experience.

The social and political dimensions of empowerment then become reduced. They are no longer based on the exchange of experiences and the collective reflections upon them for change. Needless to say that to deal with this kind of top-down empowerment one needs to unveil the contradictions at the heart of the state's interventions in this arena: for all the talk about empowerment, there are few governmental institutions which would be actually willing to support women collective organization and mobilization in a participatory and inclusive manner.

3.3 Viewing the recent empowerment reforms as enabling factors

It is important to realize that empowerment is a dynamic process. Separating the process into components (such as enabling factors, agency and

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17 Sara Khoja, "Employment & Labour Law in Saudi Arabia", in *Lexology*, 20 June 2016, https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=6ba28ace-2bcf-49a7-9cba-98b08a8f-f5a6.

outcomes) may be useful in identifying policy interventions to support empowerment, and for evaluating the impact of such interventions.[18]

While recent empowerment reforms in Saudi Arabia are steps in the right direction, they remain partial and incomplete, due to the limited scope of civil and associational life, strict gender-segregation rules, patriarchal gender roles and their dominance in nearly all dimensions of public life, as well as the continued existence of the male guardianship system, which is inconsistent with the empowerment premise. Thus, the reforms might be better considered as enabling factors that set the pre-conditions under which women can exercise agency and the outcomes of the empowering processes, but not instances of empowerment in themselves. Accordingly, our recommendations to the government of Saudi Arabia go as follows:

- Dismantle the male guardianship system for adult women, guaranteeing that women are considered to have reached full legal capacity at 18 years of age.
- Prohibit any form of discrimination against women in practice, policy or legislation.
- Support a new family law code that ensures men and women to have equal rights in all matters relating to marriage and family relations. Reforms in this realm should include establishing 18 as the minimum age of marriage, ensuring all adults to have the right to freely enter into marriage, granting equal rights with respect to the nationality of their children, and the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and its dissolution.
- Abolish gender-segregation in the workplace, as it requires extra resources and creates disincentives to hiring women.
- Open the opportunities for women to work in all sectors and industries.
- Support the establishment of independent non-governmental organization (NGOs) at the national and local levels that concern women's political, social and economic rights.

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[18] Anju Malhotra and Sidney Ruth Schuler, "Women's Empowerment As a Variable in International Development", in Narayan Deepa (ed.), *Measuring Empowerment. Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, Washington, World Bank, 2005, p. 71-88, http://hdl.handle.net/10986/7441.

Saudi Arabia should capitalize on the different opportunities that they have to facilitate women's empowerment from below. Thus, these recommendations reflect the understanding which sees the only key to structurally transform the daily lives of women on the ground in reaffirming the liberating dimensions of empowerment, and providing the enabling context that will allow women to exercise agency in key domains of public life that involve possibilities of social transformation.

Moreover, Saudi authorities should foster empowering independent civil society organizations at the grassroots level through allowing them to assume the role of change-makers, and not merely that of gap-fillers. Doing so would facilitate the formation of women's alliances that can act as a counterweight to the conservative elements entrenched in society that have a dominant voice. It would also normalize public expression of views that would feed into a broader and more diversified public debate, especially because meaningful and sustainable reforms will require changes not only to formal laws and institutions, but also to informal institutions and ways of thinking.

Additionally, as the non-oil sector becomes the main driver of the Saudi economy, the retention of women in leading sectors requires a harmonized approach to work and work-life balance policies that open the door for Saudi women to work in all sectors and industries. Such measures should be complemented with steps towards abolishing the strict gender-segregation rules in the workplace and public sphere, allowing women to participate meaningfully in the Saudi economy and society.

4.

Democracy in the Making: Youth and Local Governance in Tunisia

Tasnim Abderrahim

The slogans that were chanted during the Tunisian revolution demanded dignity, employment, and freedom. While the country has since made laudable progress in ensuring freedoms, dignity and employment remain hazy ambitions. A stark contradiction underpins Tunisia's revolt between significant youth engagement in the revolutionary process and its impact on youth. What further compounds the problem is that youth demands seem to have been overshadowed by urgent concerns about security and stability.

Young Tunisians are not feeling the benefits of the country's often-hailed democratic achievements. On the contrary, disenchantment with the transitional process and the political leadership is on the rise. Surveys reveal that trust in government has gone from 62 per cent in 2011, to 40 per cent in 2013, and to 35 per cent in 2016. Young people have even less trust in government: in 2016, only 23 per cent of people aged between 18 and 34 said they have some or a lot of trust in government, while the per cent age rises to 40 among those over 35.[1] Amidst worsening economic conditions, young people's aspirations for building an alternative model for socio-economic development that overcomes their hitherto marginalization have faded away. And in the process, the youth have withdrawn from the public sphere.

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[1] Michael Robbins, "Tunisia Five Years after the Revolution. Findings from the Arab Barometer", in *Arab Barometer Country Wave IV Reports*, 15 May 2016, p. 8, http://www.arab-barometer.org/wp-content/uploads/Tunisia_Public_Opinion_Survey_2016_Democracy.pdf.

These symptoms do not bode well for a nascent democracy moving towards implementing a new governance model to promote local democracy. Democratic participatory governance cannot be achieved if the country's youth are not actively engaged in this process from the outset. The unfolding decentralization process offers a unique opportunity to unlock opportunities for youth engagement in local governance.

Against this background, this chapter tackles with the question of insufficient degrees of participation by the Tunisian youth in local governance in a broader political context of post-revolution democratization. This will be done by discussing key challenges to their active involvement while also highlighting youth-led initiatives to foster such engagement. To gain an insight into youth perceptions of participation in local governance, five semi-structured interviews were conducted with Tunisian young people (aged between 22 and 34) who are active or used to be active with a non-governmental organization or a political party. The first section discusses the importance of promoting youth participation in local governance. The second section lays out key hurdles that impede a strong youth engagement in local affairs. The following part presents concrete initiatives that show how young Tunisians have launched initiatives to promote open and inclusive governance and foster their participation in the development of their communities. Finally, the chapter offers some concrete policy recommendations to the Tunisian national government and to local authorities to foster youth inclusion in local governance.

4.1 Why promote youth participation in local governance?

A heavily centralized system of governance has traditionally existed in Tunisia, an approach that has been driven by the strong belief in the importance of strong central control to ensure national unity. Following the ouster of Ben Ali, it became evident that this system has produced enormous regional inequalities be it in terms of infrastructure, information networks, or the concentration of economic activities, which explains the beginning of all uprisings in the country's hinterland. Under centralized governance, the regions (deconcentrated administrations headed by an appointed governor) and municipal councils (elected decentralized coun-

cils) had limited powers and resources: decisions were mainly communicated from central administrations to lower tiers of government in a top-down approach, in complete neglect for local needs and demands. The significant negative consequences of this model of governance triggered the need for a new model that breaks with marginalization and exclusion of local concerns, especially of disadvantaged communities.

The new Tunisian constitution of 2014 reflects the need to "achieve social justice, sustainable development, and balance between regions" (Article 12) and stipulates that the state should commit to reinforce decentralization and "apply it throughout the country" (Article 14). Remarkably, the Constitution devoted Chapter 7 to expand on the role of local authorities which will henceforth have their own legal status as well as administrative and fiscal independence (Article 132). While under the previous arrangement, municipalities were the only decentralized level, the new Constitution outlines three decentralized levels: municipality, region, and district, all of which will cover the entire territory.[2] The Constitution further provides other provisions to enhance the principles of good governance, including an emphasis on transparency, accountability, and a participatory approach that seeks the involvement of different groups in local governance. To this end, two keys legislative texts were adopted: the modified electoral law in January 2017[3] and the code on local authorities in April 2018 that defines all organizational and financial matters related to local government and ensures the transition from the current to the new decentralized structure. Ensuring a gradual transition is necessary to ensure that powers are transferred to local authorities according to the development of their financial and human capacities.

Thus, this ongoing decentralization process in post-revolutionary Tunisia presents an opportunity to start bridging the widening gap between governmental institutions and the younger population. Decentralization is not the panacea for striking regional inequalities or widespread corruption, but as a model of governance, it can have valuable benefits in terms of enhanc-

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[2] For more information on the new structure, see Tasnim Abderrahim, "Beyond Slogans: Challenges to Local Empowerment in Transitioning Tunisia", in *ECDPM Discussion Papers*, No. 219 (November 2017), http://ecdpm.org/?p=29266.

[3] This law amends and completes the electoral law that was adopted in May 2014 and it will henceforth govern referenda and different elections, including presidential, parliamentary, regional, and municipal.

ing accountability, innovation, citizen participation, stability, and local development. Under a decentralized system of governance, local officials can be more easily held accountable before the local population, since it becomes easier to trace the results of projects on a smaller scale.[4] Such accountability can be enhanced by the active involvement of the media and local NGOs that can establish mechanisms to monitor the work of local governments.[5] Besides, spatial proximity and familiarity with local administration offers easier access to decision makers.[6] A decentralized model also enhances efficiency and problem solving. Because of being familiar with the context they operate in, local government officials have more leeway to produce and implement solutions that are innovative, appropriate, and efficient.

Decentralization offers scope to take initiatives that boost local development in a participatory fashion, which also allows matching citizen expectations with the available resources.[7] In this context, the local population could be more likely to comply with, accept, and contribute to local development plans that were conceived and planned in close consultation with citizens.[8] Taking into account the perspectives of youth would ensure that solutions are tailored so as to respond to their real concerns; this subsequently ensures their buy-in of reform processes at the local and national levels.[9] Decentralized models of governance foster legitimacy of both local and national governments as they offer better opportunities for inclusion and participation of youth in decision-making and reform processes and thus bring people and state closer. The existence of platforms for state-society dialogue is crucial for promoting inclusive political processes that bring

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[4] Keith Miller, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Local Government Decentralization", in Patricia Persaud (ed.), *Decentralization and Local Government in the Caribbean*, Washington, National Democratic Institute (NDI), 2004, p. 35-48, https://www.ndi.org/files/decentralization-and-local-government-caribbean.pdf.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), "Decentralization and Curbing Corruption in Local Government. Impact on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises", in *CIPE Series of White Papers to Promote Transparency and Combat Corruption in Egypt*, July 2010, https://www.cipe.org/legacy/publication-docs/EN-Decentralization.pdf.

[7] Keith Miller, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Local Government Decentralization", cit.

[8] CIPE, "Decentralization and Curbing Corruption in Local Government", cit.

[9] Youth Affairs Council of South Australia (YACSA), *Better Together. A Practical Guide to Effective Engagement with Young People*, Adelaide, YACSA, February 2016, http://www.yacsa.com.au/documents/item/318.

to the discussion table the most vulnerable and even potential spoilers of reform and in the process foster the resilience of both state and society.[10]

Moreover, decentralization positively contributes to local capacity building. It basically puts the local potential into use, because enhancing local management would require tapping into local talents that are better positioned to understand the local context and come up with innovative ideas.[11] Consulting young people would also boost their confidence and allow them to express themselves more freely. Engaging in civic activism has been found to boost young people's personal development: "When you receive candidates for a job, people with experience in the civil society stand out as better equipped for the professional life".[12]

Through their engagement, young people become more familiar with the workings of local government and start to feel less alienated from the political process. In principle, decentralization allows better allocation and distribution of resources because fiscal decentralization could reverse the hitherto dominant practice of extracting resources from the regions and concentrating them at the centre.[13] A more balanced distribution of public resources between the central and peripheral areas could respond to one of the key concerns of young people in the Tunisian hinterland who often mention that they have been forgotten by the state.

Above all, "participation is a fundamental democratic right" that should be preserved and enhanced.[14] Youth public engagement is also critical in paving the way for establishing democratic practices in the country and erasing the imprints of the dictatorship. Regarding this, if managed correctly so as to foster youth inclusion, the decentralization process could be an entry point to rekindle young people's trust in government, explore their potential, enhance their contribution to local development, and ensure that they are not alienated from the political sphere.

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[10] Robert Muggah et al., *Governance for Peace. Securing the Social Contract*, New York, United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), January 2012, http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/crisis-prevention-and-recovery/governance_for_peacesecuringthesocialcontract.html.

[11] Keith Miller, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Local Government Decentralization", cit.

[12] Skype interview with Imen Cherif, a Tunisian researcher and activist, 23 February 2018.

[13] Keith Miller, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Local Government Decentralization", cit.

[14] Noha Bakr, *Youth Political Participation Landscape in North Africa*, Presentation at the AGA 2017 Regional Youth Consultation, Tunis, 27-29 September 2017.

4.2 Challenges to an active youth engagement in local governance

Following the ouster of Ben Ali, young people actively contributed to different phases of the country's transitional process be it through using social media to spread footages of protests across the country, staging protests, engaging in citizen journalism, or voter education. However, seven years later, the initial enthusiasm has faded, and youth's engagement in the transitional process remains low. A survey by the Afrobarometer for 2014/2015 shows that while 75 per cent of respondents expressed interest in public affairs, less than 25 per cent of respondents said they often discussed politics.[15] The same survey reveals that while almost 90 per cent of young Tunisians believed they should choose leaders through elections, less than 50 per cent mentioned that they did vote in the 2014 elections.[16] This reveals that there is a striking discrepancy between avowed interest in politics and support for democracy as a model of governance on the one hand and actual involvement and engagement in the democratic process on the other hand. This is further evidenced by low levels of participation in rather institutional and structured elements of the public sphere: while 30 per cent of Tunisia's population is aged between 15 and 29 years, only 3 per cent of young men and women are members of an association and a mere 1 per cent are active in political parties.[17]

Despite these low levels of participation in associations and political parties, young people continue to be active and visible in demonstrations and sit-ins, as evidenced by the latest youth movement *Fesh Nestannew* (What Are We Waiting For) which was led by a group of young Tunisians including university graduates who continue to struggle with unemployment. This activism reveals that young Tunisians continue to protest and challenge social and economic policies by engaging in rather fluid and

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[15] Mandela Institute for Development Studies (MINDS), *2016 Youth Participation in Elections in Africa. An Eight-Country Study*, Johannesburg, MINDS, December 2016, http://minds-africa.org/Downloads/MINDS%202016%20Youth%20Program%20Research%20Publication.pdf.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Youth Engagement in Public Life in Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia*, Paris, OECD, September 2017, p. 14, http://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/Youth-Engagement-brochure-%20Sept17-web.pdf.

unstructured forms of activism, but in general they have withdrawn from the more structured and institutional components of the public sphere such as political parties and civil society organizations. This partial withdrawal could be explained by a myriad of factors, including the legacy of the previous regime, disillusionment with the political leadership, and worsening economic conditions since the revolution.

Seeking to protect the monolithic authoritarian system, previous regimes in Tunisia stifled any attempt of youth involvement in public affairs. Before the revolution, "you could only see young people filling stadiums, that was where they used to channel their energy".[18] The revolution created new spaces for self-expression, such as associative life, political parties, and new forms of artistic expression like graffiti art,[19] that did not exist under the previous status quo. Yet, there was not enough awareness to derive the utmost benefit from this critical change, neither on the side of the young people nor that of the successive governments. What Tunisia has witnessed since 2011 is a growing chasm between young Tunisians and the political leadership. A sense of "political fatigue" and disillusionment with the political class are often reported by the youth in Tunisia. Many young people who had been active in political parties perceive that they were only courted for their votes or used in demonstrations, and then excluded from decision-making.[20] Besides, the political discourse that prevailed in the years following the revolution only served to further alienate young people: differences between Islamism and secularism hardly concern young Tunisians who do not want to be involved in marginal conflicts.[21] What rather concerns young Tunisians is addressing unemployment, improving the economy, enhancing security, reforming the education system, improving the infrastructure, and bringing services closer to people especially in disadvantaged areas; these issues were however pushed on the back burner.

Furthermore, it is perceived that political parties are motivated by their political calculations rather than by serving the interests of the public. For instance, some interviewees have noted that the postponement of the municipal elections more than once was *inter alia* driven by the

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[18] Skype interview with Raed Ben Maaouia, Tunisian activist, 22 February 2018.

[19] Marco Scarpinato, "Public Space As a Place for Debate", in *Domus*, 27 May 2013, https://www.domusweb.it/en/art/2013/05/23/umran.html.

[20] Noha Bakr, *Youth Political Participation Landscape in North Africa*, cit.

[21] Multiple interviewees reported this.

unreadiness of political parties for the electoral challenge, as they have no concrete projects to offer to the electorate and fear losses in the elections.[22] This disconnect between what the youth expect from politicians and what the latter do deliver has created a "crisis of confidence" between the two sides.[23] The media further played a role in forging a negative perception of politicians in Tunisia. Fighting for ratings, most political shows focused on creating political spectacles to generate some buzz to the detriment of treating "real" questions.[24] Likewise, the media is not devoting enough attention to the issue of decentralization and local governance, despite the urgency and significance of this question. A beacon of light in this media landscape comes from local radio stations that provide more coverage and discussions around local issues.[25]

Against this background, young Tunisians now report that they prefer working with associations rather than with political parties.[26] NGOs are generally perceived to provide more freedom and space for growth and personal development: "in a political party, you have to abide by and defend the decisions from the leadership even if you were not convinced with these decisions".[27] Losing trust in political parties could be dangerous for a bourgeoning democracy though; it could eventually lead to a return to square one, to a single-party system. While associations have the power to present proposals to the legislature, being in office can put young people in the centre of decision-making. As emphasised by several interviewees, it will be crucial to see young people in office either as members of political parties or as independents. Yet, in cases where young people wanted to run for office in independent lists, "many found they did not have the networks or resources to compete with seasoned politicians".[28] This makes it mandatory to bridge the gap between youth and political parties.

On top of all this, the youth now demonstrate a certain degree of pessi-

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[22] Multiple interviewees reported this.

[23] Skype interview with Raed Ben Maaouia, cit.

[24] Skype interview with a Tunisian activist, 20 February 2018.

[25] Skype interview with Imen Cherif, cit.

[26] Haitham Soleimani, "Tunisia: Civil Society and Youth" (in Arabic), in *The New Arab*, 14 June 2016, https://www.alaraby.co.uk/supplementyouth/03e73484-49fe-4353-88f0-6aae53e826bd.

[27] Skype interview with Raed Ben Maaouia, cit.

[28] Noha Bakr, *Youth Political Participation Landscape in North Africa*, cit.

mism due to prevailing unemployment especially among young graduates, lack of access to economic opportunities, and increasing costs of life. Amid this, numerous protests, sit-ins, demonstrations, and social media campaigns were organized to raise questions to the government about the country's natural resources; "*winou el petrol*" [where is the petrol] is only one example. The government's handling of such activities has generally been inadequate. Several interviewees noted that the government did not seem to take questions raised by young people seriously, and did not try to engage in a serious discussion with them. This lack of engagement by the state authorities can only fuel frustration and reinforce "rumours or false information circulating on Facebook because there is no alternative narrative from the government".[29] These different considerations leave little desire among young people for engaging in public affairs through NGOs or political parties which could offer a platform for dialogue with the government.

4.3 DISMANTLING BARRIERS TO YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Despite various constraints to an active youth engagement in the public sphere as presented above, many other facets of the Tunisian transition offer reasons for optimism. First, despite shortcomings, a number of measures towards enhancing good governance and addressing corruption were taken, which could trigger a broader and more active youth engagement in local affairs in the long-term. In 2014, the government has for instance issued a circular defining principles that municipalities need to abide by while preparing Communal Investment Plans such as the need to adopt a participative approach, ensuring transparency, and investing in developing the competencies of human resources in compliance with the move towards decentralization. Moreover, the government launched another programme to train facilitators who would facilitate debate between citizens and local councils.[30] In 2016, the government launched

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[29] Skype interview with Raed Ben Maaouia, cit.

[30] Yassine Bellamine, "Plans d'investissements communaux et participation citoyenne: le role crucial du facilitateur", in *Nawaat*, 30 May 2015, https://nawaat.org/portail/2015/05/30/plans-dinvestissements-communaux-et-participation-citoyenne-le-role-crucial-du-facilitateur.

a National Strategy on Good Governance and Fighting Corruption, and an Action Plan for implementing the strategy in 2017-2018 was further adopted. However, the work of the National Authority for the Fight against Corruption remains curtailed for lacking the needed financial and human resources. In general, efforts towards enhancing good governance and fighting corruption will continue to face obstacles of resistance from concerned groups as well as technical challenges. It is hoped however that the launched measures could constitute a point of departure towards achieving good governance in the long-term.

Second, since 2011, young Tunisians have explored new tools and resources not only to voice their concerns but also to promote development and build an open and inclusive system of governance. Technological tools that were used to trigger change in the Arab world are now mobilized to enhance good governance. To cite but one example, in 2015, a young Tunisian launched a mobile application, Plan125, to facilitate interaction between citizens and the local authorities.[31] Through this app, citizens can submit pleas to their governors through taking a photo of dysfunctions observed in the street, such as uncollected garbage or streetlights lit during the day. Local governors in turn can create an account using this application to receive the submitted pleas and post what the local authorities did to address them.[32]

In the southern city of Gabes, a group of young people founded in 2011 the Association of Gabes Action that seeks to promote the role of young people in local governance and sustainable development in the region. The association has since focused on strengthening the skills of youth in the region, preparing them to engage more effectively with local councils. To this end, issues like participatory budgeting, management of local communities, and conflict resolution were emphasised.[33]

While appointed special delegations heading municipalities encountered numerous challenges in managing local affairs since 2011, several initiatives towards participatory local governance have blossomed. Many

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[31] See Paln 125 official website: http://www.plan125.com.

[32] Inès Bel Aiba, "Incivisme, services publics défaillants: des tunisiens se mobilisent", in *HuffPost Maghreb*, 10 September 2015, http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2015/09/10/incivisme-tunisiens-mobil_n_8115084.html.

[33] JamaityTV, *Association Gabes Action, pour le prix Gouvernance locale* (Video), 10 March 2017, https://youtu.be/r-JvSr4xhj8.

municipalities, for instance, have experimented with the mechanism of participatory budgeting. Media reports and anecdotal evidence demonstrate that young people actively stepped in to help organize events and facilitate discussions.[34]

These different promising examples, and many others, have generated favourable circumstances for moving towards a participatory system of governance. While such a governance model is yet to be fully established, "there is a minimum that we have established in Tunisia and that we would need to invest in" as stated by one of our interviewees.[35] New legislations are expected to encourage youth engagement in public affairs. The new electoral law sets the minimum voting age and eligibility to run for office in local elections at 18. In addition to that, the law also made it mandatory to have a candidate not older than 35 years among the first three names in a candidate list. These provisions were nonetheless criticized to be implicitly favouring big political parties, as smaller parties and independent lists endured difficulties in meeting this condition. On the other hand, others believe that such provisions will "push everybody to engage more effectively with young people in the future".[36]

It remains critical to reach out to young people and explain the significance of the ongoing decentralization process, the expected role of local councils, and how this could impact their daily lives and participation in politics. Associations and political parties are expected to mobilize more efforts in raising awareness about this process, "not only to young people, but also to the wider population, to butchers and small shop owners who will be paying taxes".[37]

Despite pervasive disillusionment among young Tunisians, some progress was achieved in terms of youth engagement in local affairs. Different concerned parties will now need to build on this and mobilize more efforts to restore young people's trust in local authorities and more broadly in the country's transitional process.

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[34] CoMun, Œil sur le budget: budget participatif en Tunisie 2015 (Video), 18 November 2015, https://youtu.be/yYWt2SjVsSc.
[35] Skype interview with Imen Cherif, cit.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Skype interview with Raed Ben Maaouia, cit.

Conclusions and way forward

The general landscape of youth participation in local governance in Tunisia presents an ambivalent record, oscillating between disappointment with the country's progress on the one hand, and an earnest desire to contribute to the country's development on the other. Despite fading enthusiasm, young people continue to innovate and to assume leadership in promoting local development.

The country now stands at a critical juncture as it moves towards implementing democracy at the local level. This is a key moment to rebuild the relationship of the youth with the government, its institutions, and the political leadership. The youth are required to seize this opportunity, to engage with local governance, and take ownership of this process. At the same time, the government and political parties should do more to reach out to young people, change their discourse, and tackle real issues that concern the younger population. What is needed from the government is to adopt a solid communication approach that does not shy away from tackling challenging questions, as this is necessary to boost its credibility. Similarly, political parties should demonstrate that the voices of young people matter, not only their votes. These are critical steps to break with long decades of youth exclusion from the public sphere.

The local councils that will be formed following municipal elections held in May 2018 will have the responsibility to demonstrate the benefits of this new system of governance to the local population to encourage more participation in subsequent elections. This will be crucial to forge a positive perception of local governance and inspire trust in local authorities among young people. Thus, the national government and the local councils should strive to find innovative ways to engage with the youth. This should go through developing new methods to consult young people either through in-person contact (such as through focus groups) or through digital tools to survey young people's opinions on specific issues. What is also needed is to endorse the role of local media in covering issues in the regions and following the role of local councils.

It will be equally important to actively engage with educational institutions present in the municipal areas be it primary, secondary or higher education institutes. This could be done, for instance, through organizing

visits by members of the local councils to these institutions to discuss with the students the role of the local councils and how they function. The national government should reform courses on civic education usually taught from the primary till secondary education and adopt learning-by-doing approach. More should be done to tap into the local potential through inviting volunteers to help in activities organized by the municipalities or setting internship schemes with municipalities, especially for university students. This would equip students with practical experience while filling, at least temporarily, shortages in human resources in some municipalities.

5.

Escaping Water Stress in the MENA Region

Abed Al Kareem Yehya

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is "one of the world's most rapidly transforming regions" – politically, economically, demographically and environmentally.[1] Climate change, water scarcity, population growth and other related trends will influence the future development of this region. Notably, water has become a topic of increasing importance because most of these economies are located in one of the world's most water-stressed regions. The reallocation of some water resources in Lebanon for cooling solar energy farms used for electricity production will evidently consume less water quantities compared to irrigated agriculture. The efficient use of water in solar farms rather than in irrigated agriculture may be an opportunity to offer concrete and constructive policy recommendations directed at relevant stakeholders – locally, nationally, or even regionally.

This study focuses on Lebanon. Given the country's high Human Development Index score, opportunities, solutions, and substitutes for current water practices to maintain water security and reinforce food and energy security in Lebanon could be available. Looking specifically to the case of Lebanon's Bek'aa Valley, this study first elucidates the current context of water scarcity and poverty levels, then considers the adoption of solar energy farming as a source of income for farmers and as a water-us-

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[1] Musa McKee et al., "Demographic and Economic Material Factors in the MENA Region", in *MENARA Working Papers*, No. 3 (October 2017), p. 2, http://www.menaraproject.eu/?p=1040.

er-friendly alternative to irrigated agriculture.[2] Solar energy farming may offer a feasible substitute to irrigated agriculture that simultaneously reduces groundwater abstraction. The challenges and bottlenecks of such an alternative, as well as the potentially negative consequences of this shift for food security, are then discussed. Consideration of solar energy farming in Lebanon offers a useful illustration of a youth-led opportunity to bolster water, food, and energy security and provide the government with the water security solutions that it seeks.

5.1 Background

Water is one of the most valuable resources on the planet. It is a crucial resource for socio-economic development and prosperity. At the same time, the needs of the environment at large must be considered as well. Most parts of the MENA region present a semi-arid or arid climate leading to low precipitation and high rainfall variability coupled with high evaporation and evapotranspiration rates.

Due to lower runoff of rainfall into rivers, lakes, streams (surface water: see Figure 1) and groundwater, the MENA region is characterized by a limited availability of renewable freshwater (see Figure 2) where many countries having less than 500 m^3/capita/year of renewable water resources.[3] However, the increasing scarcity of renewable water resources is not the only distinctive characteristic of the region with respect to its natural resources: weak governance and poor management, increasing depletion of groundwater, and the continuous deterioration of water quality have become equally worrying features during the past decades.[4]

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[2] Dieter Prinz, "From Irrigated Agriculture to Solar Energy Farming in the Azraq Basin in Jordan", in *GIZ-ACCWaM Policy Briefs*, 2016, p. 2, http://riccar.org/node/116.

[3] François Molle and Alvar Closas, "Groundwater Governance: A Synthesis", in *IWMI Project Reports*, No. 6 (December 2016), p. 8, http://gw-mena.iwmi.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/04/Rep.6-Groundwater-Governance-SYNTHESIS.pdf; Waleed Khalil Al-Zubari, *Regional Diagnostic Report: Arab States Region*, Groundwater Governance, 24 March 2014, p. 2, http://www.groundwatergovernance.org/fileadmin/user_upload/groundwatergovernance/docs/regional_diagnostic_reports/GWG_Arab_Region_RegionalDiagnosis_Report.pdf.

[4] Waleed Khalil Al-Zubari, "Status of Water in the Arab Region", in Kamel Amer et al. (eds.), *The Water, Energy, and Food Security Nexus in the Arab Region*, Cham, Springer, 2017, p. 2.

Water availability and access to clean water for domestic, industrial and agricultural use are among the most pressing challenges threatening the MENA region. They present a tangible threat that could negatively impact socio-economic development efforts, compounded by rapid population growth.[5]

Figure 1 – Surface water stress in 2010
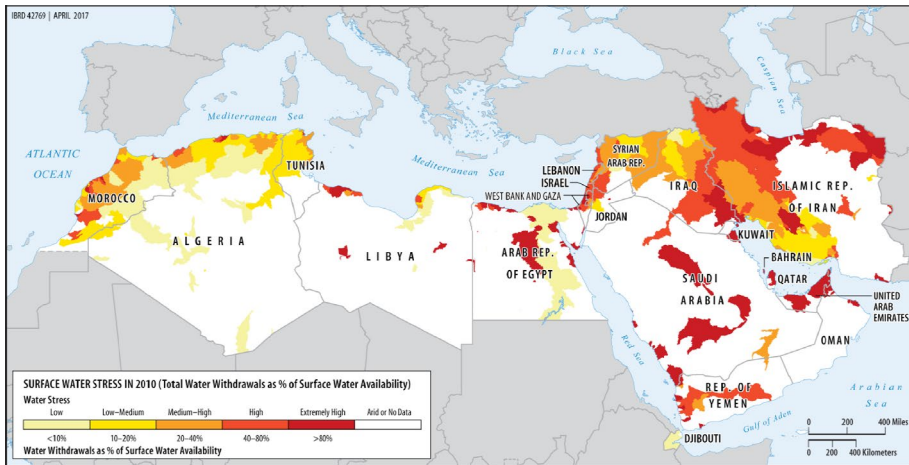
Source: World Bank, *Beyond Scarcity. Water Security in the Middle East and North Africa*, MENA Development Report, Washington, World Bank, 2018, p. 27, http://hdl.handle.net/10986/27659.

Figure 2 – Renewable water resources in 2009
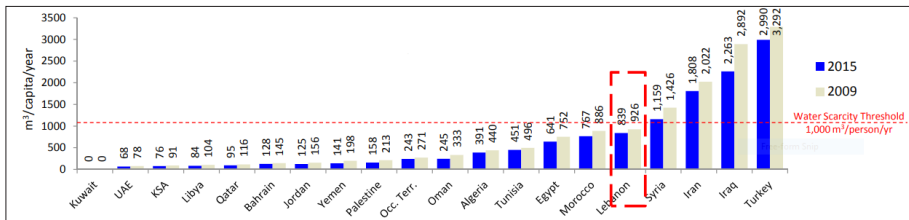
Source: Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water, *National Water Sector Strategy 2010-2020*, 2010, p. 6, http://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC166572.

The total population of the MENA region has increased fivefold since the 1950s, from just under 110 million in 1950 to 569 million in 2017. By the end of the century, "there will be more people in the MENA region than in China, whose population is expected to continue to shrink to just over 1

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[5] Ibid.

billion; and more than in Europe, the population of which is expected to recede by approximately 10 per cent by 2100".[6]

Population growth will be accompanied by an extensive increase in water demand "driven mainly by rapid urbanization and the implementation of agricultural policies aimed at achieving national food security" in many countries. To meet escalating demands, most countries "have focused their efforts mainly on water supply management and augmentation".[7]

Governments in the MENA region have invested heavily in major infrastructure such as storage capacity for surface water, development of groundwater extraction system, installation of desalination plants, and expansion in wastewater treatment and reuse to secure supplies and to provide water supply and irrigation services for current demand.[8] Meanwhile in Lebanon, the "over-abstraction of groundwater by a multitude of small farmers constitutes an extreme challenge to the sustainability of agriculture".[9] There are 267 public wells, which are operated by the Water Establishments and are used within the public supply network.[10] In comparison, there are 42,824 privately owned wells, of which around 51 per cent are illegally drilled.[11] Current ongoing studies estimate that Lebanon has drilled 80,000 wells by 2018 which implies having 8 wells/km^2.[12]

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[6] Musa McKee et al., "Demographic and Economic Material Factors in the MENA Region", cit., p. 5.

[7] Waleed Khalil Al-Zubari, "Status of Water in the Arab Region", cit., p. 2.

[8] Ibid.

[9] François Molle and Alvar Closas, "Groundwater Governance: A Synthesis", cit., p. 8.

[10] Nadim Farajalla, Patricia Haydamous and Rana El Hajj, "Water, Energy, Food Nexus: An Outlook on Public Institutions in Lebanon", in *IFI Working Paper Series*, No. 35 (August 2016), p. 5, http://hdl.handle.net/10938/21136. Water Establishments are foundations dedicated to the protection and the development of all natural water resources in Lebanon: See more in the website of the Establishment of the Water of Beirut and Mount Lebanon: *About Us: Organization of the Water Sector*, last updated 25 November 2013, http://www.ebml.gov.lb/english/Organization-of-the-Water-Sector.

[11] Nadim Farajalla, Patricia Haydamous and Rana El Hajj, "Water, Energy, Food Nexus: An Outlook on Public Institutions in Lebanon", cit., p. 5. See also Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water, *National Water Sector Strategy 2010-2020*, cit.

[12] Roland Riachi, "Water Policies and Politics in Lebanon: Where is Groundwater?", in *IWMI Project Reports*, No. 9 (December 2016), p. 5, http://gw-mena.iwmi.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/04/Rep.9-Groundwater-Governance-in-Lebanon_final.pdf.

5.2 The water-energy-food nexus (WEF)

The water-energy-food nexus has

> emerged as a widely discussed concept in development policy cir-
> cles in recent years. The core of the nexus concept is that the pro-
> duction, consumption, and distribution of water, energy, and food
> are inextricably linked, and that decisions in one sector typically
> impact other sectors, often adversely.[13]

The MENA region, "which is mostly rich in conventional energy resourc-
es such as oil and gas, is one of the most water scarce and food import
dependent regions in the world".[14] In the case of irrigated agriculture in
Lebanon, nearly 50 per cent of irrigated lands are surface irrigated which
consumes vast amount of water, with the remaining 50 per cent divided
among the so-called water-saving methods (30 per cent sprinklers and
20 per cent drip irrigation).[15] Implications of such methods of irrigation
are a tradeoff between water consumption for food production, as the wa-
ter intensive methods are mostly used for food production, still Lebanon
imports 80 per cent of its food.[16] However, given this example from Leb-
anon, water-energy-food nexus is clearly needed to support an argument
of escaping water-stress.

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[13] Martin Keulertz et al., "The Water-Energy-Food Nexus in Arid Regions. The Politics
of Problemsheds", in Ken Conca and Erika Weinthal (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Water
Politics and Policy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 167, https://agrilifecdn.tamu.
edu/wefnexus/files/2015/01/Kuerletz-et-al-The-WEF-Nexus-in-Arid-Regions_OHO-
9780199335084-e-28.pdf.

[14] Rana El Hajj et al., "Enhancing Regional Cooperation in the Middle East and North Af-
rica through the Water-Energy-Food Security Nexus", in *Planetary Security Initiative Policy
Briefs*, April 2017, p. 2, https://www.planetarysecurityinitiative.org/index.php/node/766.

[15] Nadim Farajalla, Patricia Haydamous and Rana El Hajj, "Water, Energy, Food Nexus: An
Outlook on Public Institutions in Lebanon", cit., p. 5; Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture, Food
and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development,
Résultats globaux du module de base du recensement de l'agriculture 2010, 2012, http://www.
agriculture.gov.lb/Arabic/DataAndAgriStatistics/OverallAgriStatistics/Pages/default.aspx.

[16] Nadim Farajalla, Patricia Haydamous and Rana El Hajj, "Water, Energy, Food Nexus:
An Outlook on Public Institutions in Lebanon", cit., p. 5; Rana El Hajj et al., "Enhancing Re-
gional Cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa through the Water-Energy-Food
Security Nexus", cit.

5.3 Water issues in Lebanon: Irrigated agriculture and water stress

Agriculture is by far the largest fresh water user at global level. Irrigation of agricultural lands accounted for 70 per cent of the water used worldwide. In several developing countries, irrigation represents up to 95 per cent of all water uses, and plays a major role in food production and food security.[17] Lebanon's Bek'aa Valley "covers 17,000 ha at the upstream end of the Orontes River basin, and receives average annual rainfall of 150mm (total volume: 25 MCM/y)."[18] The exported commercial varieties of grapes (superior table grape) and soft fruits, increasingly cultivated in expanding orchard plantations, use groundwater for irrigation.[19] Changes in land and water use in the Bek'aa valley have been captured through studies of the variation in summer agricultural vegetative cover over the last decade agricultural land cover visible in summertime; it has expanded by more than 20 per cent on average since 2000.[20] The water required for these lands emanates from the groundwater of the Orontes Basin.[21] It is not possible to know how the instant quality and capacity of that basin is being utilized for extraction. Figure 3 shows a study by the International Water Management Institute featuring the change in water levels between 1970 and 2010; all scenarios predict the decrease of water table by 2030.[22] Moreover, figure 4 shows the current water availability in Lebanon decreases from 8.6 BCM/year to 2.7 BCM/year due to water loss.

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[17] Lenntech website: *Irrigation Water*, https://www.lenntech.com/applications/irrigation/irrigation-water.htm.

[18] Caroline King and Hadi Jaafar, "Rapid Assessment of the Water-Energy-Food-Climate Nexus in Six Selected Basins of North Africa and West Asia Undergoing Transitions and Scarcity Threats", in Martin Keulertz and Eckart Woertz (eds.), *The Water-Energy-Food Nexus in the Middle East and North Africa*, London and New York, Routledge, 2016, p. 47.
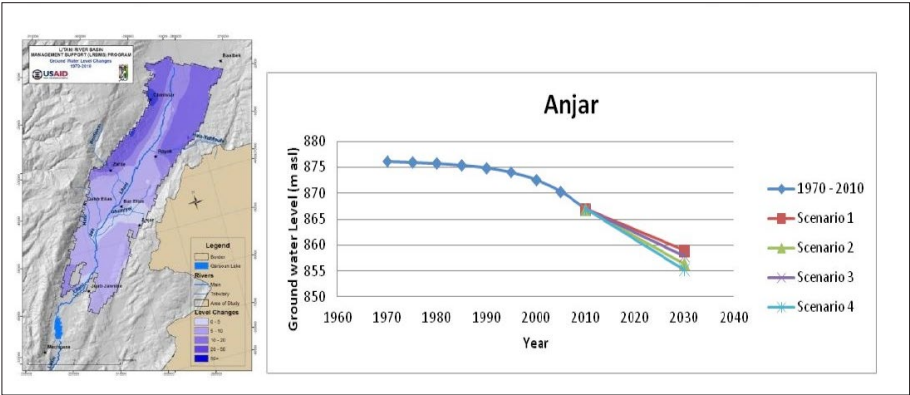
[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] François Molle et al., "Groundwater Governance in Lebanon. The Case of Central Beqaa", in *IWMI Policy White Papers*, March 2017, http://publications.iwmi.org/pdf/H048393.pdf.

Figure 3 – Change in water level between 1970 and 2010 (Upper Bek'aa)

Source: François Molle et al., "Groundwater Governance in Lebanon. The Case of Central Be-qaa", cit., p. 13.

Figure 4 – Current water balance for Lebanon for an average year (BCM/year)
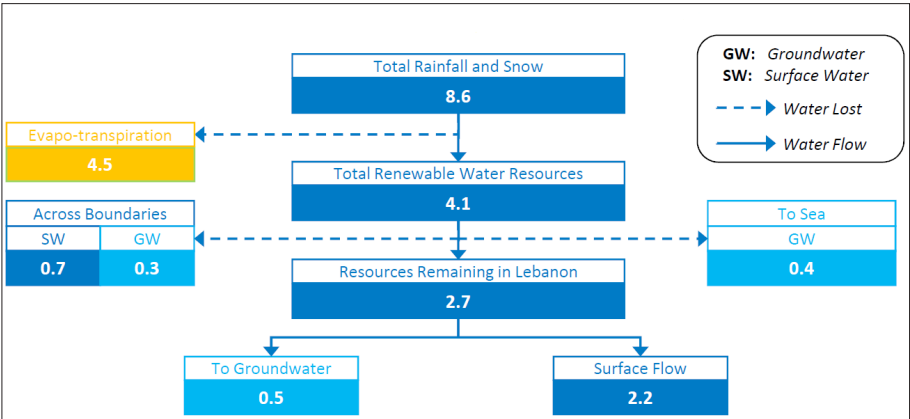
*Source*: Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water, *National Water Sector Strategy 2010-2020*, cit., p. 6.

5.4 Is agriculture the right path for the Bek'aa?

The Bek'aa Valley has traditionally served as the breadbasket for Lebanon based on its natural climate and fertility, with strong agricultural production and contribution to the economy. This position has weakened in recent decades due to several factors.

A relative decline of the Lebanese agricultural products position was recorded in the local and export markets. Agricultural lands suffer from small and fragmented holdings, high cost of land, urban sprawl, and land use competition, contributing to the reduction of the agricultural area.[23]

Demographically, we notice the "steady loss" of youth workforce and aging population in rural areas: "urban dwellers are about 87.2 per cent of the total population in 2011, with a net migration rate from rural to urban areas of 83.82 migrants / 1,000 population according to 2014 estimate".[24] Vulnerable groups (especially youth and women) exist; these groups are especially prone to poverty except some who still grow marijuana illegally. Approximately 50 per cent of farmers practice agriculture as a second income. Few farmers belong to cooperatives (4 per cent), while input selling companies control the majority of farmers, and 75 per cent have no access to social security or other safety nets.

Figure 5 – Agricultural water productivity, by country and economy (US dollar/m³), 2012
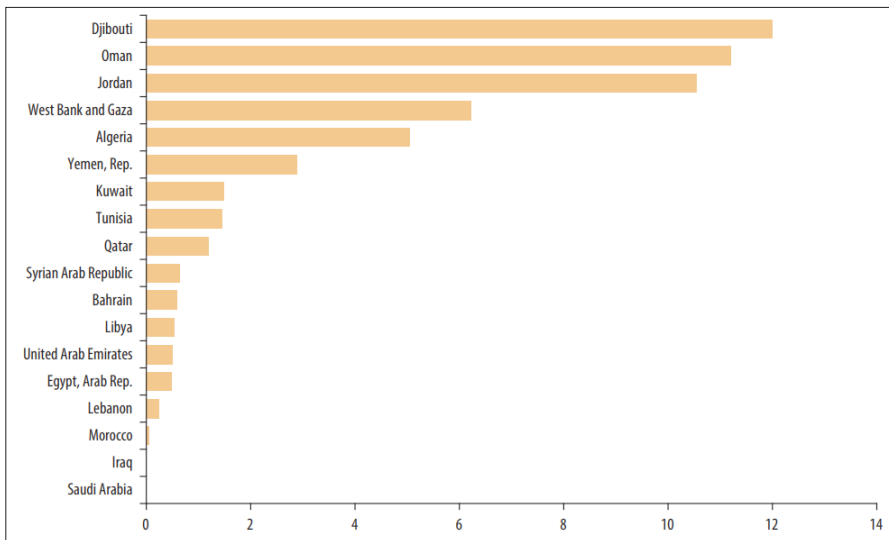
Source: World Bank, *Beyond Scarcity*, cit., p. 53.

[23] Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture, *Ministry of Agriculture Strategy 2015-2019*, November 2014, p. 23, http://www.databank.com.lb/docs/Ministry%20of%20Agriculture%20Strategy%202015%2D19%2Epdf.

[24] Ibid., p. 14.

Despite all the strengths and opportunities that the fertile Bek'aa Valley offers, irrigated agriculture clearly faces a number of problems and challenges such as limited water availability and small-scale arable area resulting in a low return, high cost of production, and low competitiveness of the Lebanese agricultural products.[25] Furthermore, given low returns on staples such as potatoes and wheat, the question arises to what extent-irrigated agriculture is a viable development path. Furthermore, the World Bank report (Figure 5) shows how agricultural water productivity over the MENA region is performing and proves Lebanon with low productivity rate (0.4 US dollar/m^3).

5.5 Can solar energy farming be a feasible substitute to irrigated agriculture?

With an "increasing demand for electricity, induced by population growth that is partly due to the large influx of refugees in recent years, Electricité du Liban (EDL) continues to fall short of meeting demand with an average supply of 15h per day".[26] The deficit was estimated to be 33 per cent in 2014; private diesel generators currently cover it.[27] Lebanon needs energy for the development of industries, clean driving, income generating, and energy for cities. The country's current energy generation from traditional energy sources falls well short of domestic demand. Could solar energy farming offer a solution to both reduce water use, and increase energy production?

In general, solar energy farming may provide a sustainable alternative to irrigated agriculture experiencing water shortage in (semi-)arid areas.[28] Technically speaking, solar systems "have encountered a big revolution in the past years": the global installed capacity increased from 40 GW in 2010

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[25] Ibid., p. 23.

[26] Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", in *IFI Working Paper Series*, No. 43 (August 2017), p. 5, https://website.aub.edu.lb/ifi/publications/Documents/working_papers/20170808_solar_pvs.pdf.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Dieter Prinz, "From Irrigated Agriculture to Solar Energy Farming in the Azraq Basin in Jordan", cit., p. 6.

to 227 GW in 2015,[29] and their costs have reduced by more than half in the past years reaching as low as 1,200 US dollar/kW in India. Moreover,

> the MENA region provides an advantage for employing solar PV to supply the peak load given the natural overlap of power demand for cooling and the solar power supply when the sun is out. The complementary nature of renewable energy sources is another advantage which can be considered.[30]

By adopting solar energy farming, farmers can stay on their land, maintaining the installations and enjoying a secure income.[31] However, a technical solution must be paired with appropriate regulations and enforcement. The Jordanian experience with solar energy farms showed that "reducing the further lowering of the groundwater table of the local [Azraq] aquifer can be achieved only if the 'energy farmers' really reduce their area under irrigated agriculture; and the water left in the ground is not extracted by somebody else".[32] This required strict regulations and their enforcement by authorities.

Lebanon's Bek'aa Valley is an appropriate environment for solar farming. The region benefits from around 300 sunny days a year, 8 to 9 hours of sunshine a day,[33] and solar insolation between 2 and 8 kWh/m^2/day.[34]

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[29] Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", cit., p. 18. Dolf Gielen et al., *Letting in the Light. How Solar Photovoltaics Will Revolutionise the Electricity System*, Abu Dhabi, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), June 2016, http://www.irena.org/publications/2016/Jun/Letting-in-the-Light-How-solar-photovoltaics-will-revolutionise-the-electricity-system.

[30] Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", cit., p. 20. Ayu Abdullah et al., *Renewable Energy Prospects: United Arab Emirates*, Abu Dhabi, IRENA, April 2015, http://www.irena.org/publications/2015/Apr/Renewable-Energy-Prospects-United-Arab-Emirates.

[31] Dieter Prinz, "From Irrigated Agriculture to Solar Energy Farming in the Azraq Basin in Jordan", cit., p. 6.

[32] Ibid. See also Shukri Halaby and Louy Qoaider, "Solar Energy Farming in the Azraq Basin of Jordan", in *GIZ-ACCWaM Papers*, October 2015, http://riccar.org/node/139.

[33] Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", cit., p. 9. See also United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) CEDRO Project, *Solar Photovoltaic: Electricity for Your House!*, 2013, http://www.cedro-undp.org/Publications/National%20Studies/36.

[34] Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", cit., p. 9. See also Fadi Comair, "Renewable Energy Profile for Lebanon", in Michael Mason and Amit Mor (eds.), *Renewable Energy in the Middle East. Enhancing Security through Regional Cooperation*, Dordrecht, Springer, p. 55-70.

Solar energy presents a clean alternative to blackouts or diesel genera-
tors used for pumping ground water, given that most electricity rationing
occurs during the day.[35] Moreover, solar energy farming, if implemented,
would be an income generating activity. Energy for the development of
industries, cities, and infrastructure, will be available. In addition to the
solar irradiance levels, the relative lack of dust and sand and the moder-
ate temperatures make Lebanon favourable for solar photovoltaic (PV)
farms and ensure maximum efficiency.[36]

Figure 6 shows the areas in Lebanon "with the best technical and eco-
nomic viability, and the least environmental and social drawbacks" to im-
plement solar farms.[37]

> The total suitable area is around 148 km^2 of Lebanon's total area
> (10,452 km^2), with 61 km^2 having the highest irradiation levels (2,265
> kWh/m^2). This total area excludes areas exposed to hazards such as
> landslides, fires, earthquakes and floods. Additionally, agricultural
> land, forestry, historical sites, wetland and water bodies, slopes of
> more than 10 degrees, non-south facing slopes, and land areas of less
> than 10,000 m^2 (to be able to cater at least 1 MW), were all omitted.[38]

Areas are clearly concentrated within the Bek'aa Valley.

Producing solar energy in Lebanon could lead to investment in other
jobs in factories, services, technology, and other renewable energy initi-
atives.

> Lebanon's HDI value for 2015 is 0.763 – which put the country in the
> high human development category – positioning it at 76 out of 188
> countries and territories. Between 2005 and 2015, Lebanon's HDI
> value increased from 0.733 to 0.763, an increase of 4.1 per cent.[39]

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[35] Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", cit., p. 9.

[36] Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", cit., p. 9. See also
Lebanese Center for Energy Conservation (LCEC), *The National Renewable Energy Action
Plan for the Republic of Lebanon, 2016-2020*, November 2016. https://data2.unhcr.org/
en/documents/details/64714.

[37] Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", cit., p. 17.

[38] Ibid.

[39] William Robert Avis, "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Lebanon", in
K4D Helpdesk Reports, 16 August 2017, p. 6, https://reliefweb.int/node/2229739.

Figure 6 – Filtered potential land areas for solar PV farms in Lebanon
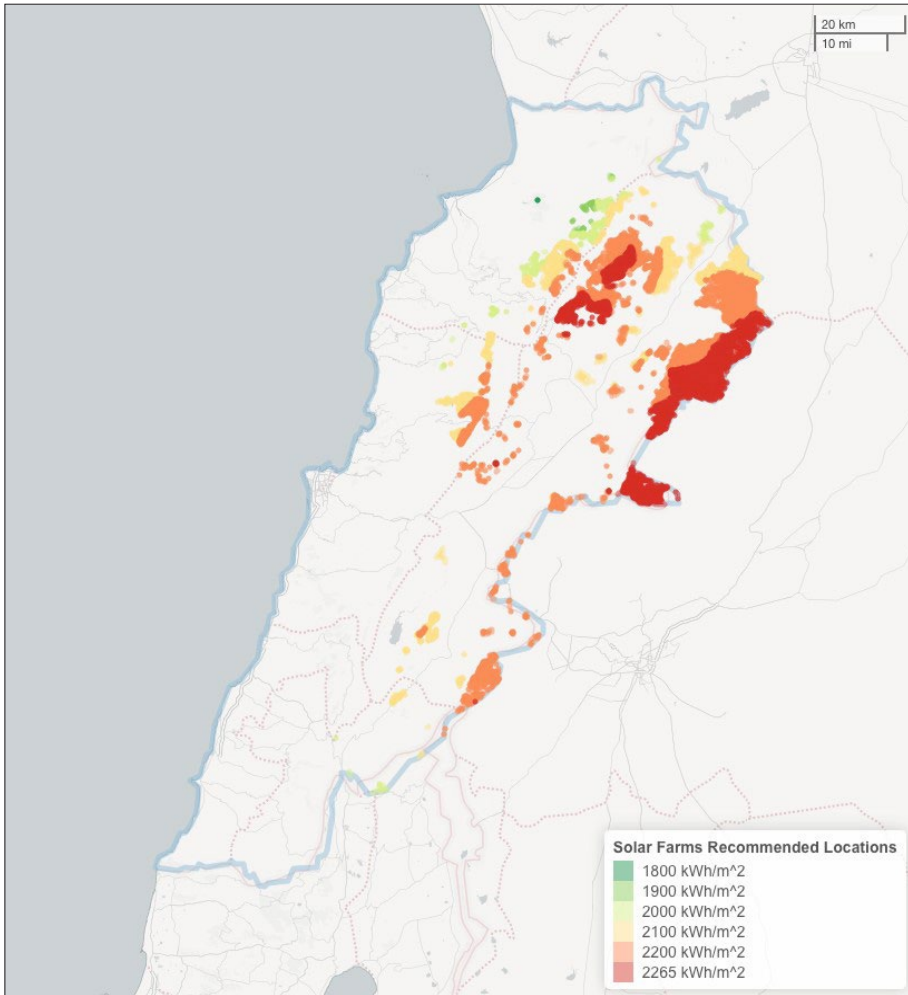
Source: Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", cit., p. 17.

5.6 What about food security?

Poverty alleviation and food security are major policy concerns in the MENA region. Facing water stress, our chapter advocates large expansion of solar farms in Lebanon to reduce low-income-generating agriculture practices. The question remains: If we now grow energy instead of food, is it possible to be food secure? In fact, Lebanon is a net food importing

country where 20 per cent of the total demand for food is produced locally and the rest is imported.[40]

In an area like Bek'aa valley food security is directly related to farmers' wellbeing as many farmers will reject this policy recommendation since it is considered a traditional practice they used to survive with and it would take more time and money for the new solar system to get started.

For a business as usual scenario, we may look into a mutually exclusive relation between solar energy and agriculture. If the farmers intend to stay practicing agriculture, solar energy pumps could be the solution (examples from India).[41] For a large-scale investment, the sundrop system gives a quite good mutually exclusive water saving and food secure solution.[42] This system uses the sun's energy to turn seawater into freshwater for irrigation and turns solar energy into electricity to power greenhouses to heat and cool crops. The food security question remains contingent to the appropriate implementation of such systems.

Separately, it is also important to highlight urban agriculture that holds an opportunity, which should be studied for food security plans in Lebanon.

5.7 Bottlenecks: Political stability and governance

Strong political support is required to fulfil commitments in terms of water-energy security targets. This support includes regulatory frameworks and financial schemes, which are relatively adequate in Lebanon now.[43]

> However, political continuity is not usually sustained between governmental or parliamentary terms, where a new minister can decide to discard his or her predecessor's work and plans, particularly if he or she belonged to an opposing political party. Moreover,

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[40] Nadim Farajalla, Patricia Haydamous and Rana El Hajj, "Water, Energy, Food Nexus: An Outlook on Public Institutions in Lebanon", cit., p. 4.

[41] Mia Signs, "Here Comes the Sun: Solar Technology for Agriculture", in *WLE Articles*, 23 April 2018, https://wle.cgiar.org/node/13022.

[42] For more information, see the Sundrop Farms official website: http://www.sundropfarms.com.

[43] Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", cit., p. 21.

the lack of transparency in governance and particularly in bidding processes in all the sectors managed by the Lebanese authorities, such as the telecommunication and waste management sectors, is a barrier to the trustworthy involvement of the local or international private sector in partnerships with the public sector. Additionally, political stability is required for a safe investment environment, not only for the private sector, but also for international fund[ing] support. For instance, the political stalemate in the country in recent years has delayed the agreements of loans from the World Bank reaching €1 billion and led to losing other loans from France. Therefore, international financial support, similar to that given to neighboring Jordan or Egypt, may be at risk due to unexpected political deadlock.[44]

Another challenge is "the regional chaos surrounding Lebanon, particularly near the eastern borders with Syria".[45] Figure 5 shows that the area of land with the highest irradiation level, although barren and technically sound, is very close to the Syrian border where ISIS was recently defeated.[46] This constitutes "a practical barrier and a high-level security threat to the implementation of solar PV projects in these locations".[47]

Conclusions and policy recommendations

Passing through the water-energy-food nexus, we examined how the nexus approach is relevant as solar energy farming was argued as a feasible substitute to irrigated agriculture that simultaneously reduces groundwater abstraction. The potential negative consequences for food security were also briefly presented. This chapter traced the water, energy, and food production through an integrated assessment.

Water scarcity – given that 60 per cent of the region's population is

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid. See also Bethan McKernan, "Lebanon Declares 'Victory' Over ISIS But Angers US by Letting Militants Flee to Syria", in *The Independent*, 31 August 2017, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-lebanon-isis-evacuation-criticised-stranded-deir-ezzor-iraq-a7923036.html.

[47] Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", cit., p. 21.

concentrated in places affected by high or very high surface water stress[48] – has served as a common exogenous driver for actors in MENA region to shift toward feasible alternatives such as Jordan's success stories in PV farms. "In each case, however, the political economy of different levels of governance explains the extent to which nexus approaches" was implemented.[49] In particular, the Lebanese case in this work calls "attention to the ways in which entrenched farming and energy interests – with political challenges at the local, state, and national levels – shaped considerations of the water-energy-food nexus".[50]

The prospects of integrating the use of water, agriculture, and energy resources at the national level are wide; it is "imperative" for the countries of the MENA region to formulate dynamic policies "and adopt development practices capable of achieving integrated and comprehensive planning and management in the areas of energy, water, and food security for current and future generations".[51] Accordingly, policy recommendations for stakeholders the MENA may include the following:

- Promote PV farms in the region, as a model for developing sustainable way to energy production; reducing water extraction for a smaller environmental footprint; adopting water friendly irrigation systems for the yielding areas; and developing a sustainability index to assess the sustainability of current food security status. This will reduce pressure on environment, improved ecosystem services, water availability and sustainable food production.
- Look to youth efforts to overcome these obstacles. "This would contribute to the conservation of freshwater, making more available for domestic use and a wide variety of productive purposes" (solar farms cooling systems).[52] "Such technologies, reinforced by new policies, could help put MENA on course toward water securi-

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[48] FAO Regional Office for Near East and North Africa, *Effective Management of Water Resources in Arab World Key to Future Growth and Stability*, 28 August 2018, http://www.fao.org/neareast/news/view/en/c/1150769.

[49] Martin Keulertz et al., "The Water-Energy-Food Nexus in Arid Regions. The Politics of Problemsheds", cit.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Claudia W. Sadoff, "Game-changing Water Solutions for the Middle East and North Africa", in *The Water Blog*, 22 November 2017, http://blogs.worldbank.org/water/node/791.

ty. This will require commitment at all levels of society to address cultural barriers impeding change in water use, bridge institutional and policy divisions, and revise overly stringent regulations."[53] Ultimately, solar farming may be an opportunity for youth to offer concrete and constructive policy recommendations directed at relevant stakeholders – locally, nationally, or even regionally.

- Private sector participation is essential in state's legal framework to support financing "through the long-term purchasing power agreement models, in addition to grants and loans from international donors and multilateral financial institutions".[54] This will also create employment opportunities for youth as managers and not workers in water-energy sector.
- When developing policies, understand the cross-border dynamics and opportunities of these recommendations. For example, irrigated agriculture in Lebanon's Bek'aa draws from the Orontes Basin, which is a shared with Syria. Cooperation between Lebanese and Syrian authorities would be the best practice to prevent further depletion of the shared basin.
- Over-abstraction of natural resources cannot be checked instantly as presented in section 5.3, "efficiency measures cannot be adequately implemented, and renewable energy cannot spread out if current subsidy regimes are not phased out" (e.g., wheat production subsidies).[55]
- "Valuing and pricing water is a politically sensitive issue, but it is essential. All countries should try to design affordable, equitable, and sustainable water service fees" and reduce subsidy policies related to water extraction.[56]

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Ali H. Berjawi et al. "Assessing Solar PV's Potential in Lebanon", cit., p. 22.

[55] Najib Saab, "Thirsty Energy or Hungry Water?", in *AFED Forum*, 15 May 2017, http://www.afedmag.com/english/mountada-albia-details.aspx?id=34.

[56] World Bank, *Beyond Scarcity*, cit., p. xii.

6.

A Second Resource Curse: Articulating the Consequences of the Looming Resource Crisis in the Middle East and Plotting a Path for Sustainable Development

Manar Sarie and Ahmad Abdulla

Climate change is responsible for catalysing monumental transformations in resource use. These transformations are being driven by four stark realities. First, the world must deeply decarbonize its energy system, with an increasing number of studies suggesting that we must transition to a "net negative" emission paradigm, in which greenhouse gases are actively removed from the air to avert the worst consequences of climate change.[1] Second, demographic expansion[2] is stressing renewable water resources, while an increase in average global temperatures is instigating a large and irreversible melting of ice sheets and glaciers. These developments compound the relative scarcity of freshwater resources.[3] Third, both the number and severity of extreme weather events is most

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[1] Glen P. Peters et al., "Measuring a Fair and Ambitious Climate Agreement Using Cumulative Emissions", in *Environmental Research Letters*, Vol. 10, No. 10 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/10/10/105004.

[2] See the website of World Population Review: *Total Population by Country 2018*, http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries; and WorldData.info: *Population Growth by Country*, https://www.worlddata.info/populationgrowth.php.

[3] Bryson Bates et al. (eds.), "Climate Change and Water", in *IPCC Technical Papers*, No. 4 (June 2008), https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/technical-papers/climate-change-water-en.pdf.

likely going to rise.[4] Fourth, and perhaps most alarmingly, the world's efforts to stem the emission of warming gases have proven virtually ineffectual,[5] despite continuous attention to the problem and investment in potential mitigation technologies like renewable energy.

Taken together, these realities are forcing nations to adjust their economic imperatives and political strategy. Few regions will be impacted more negatively than the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where long-lived conflicts, demographic expansion, and resource mismanagement have been stressing highly fragile societies and devastated ecosystems for decades.

While the commonly referenced Natural Resource Curse is a man-made catastrophe – where an abundance of rents from natural resource exploitation engenders poor institutions and ineffective government[6] – our chapter suggests that a second resource curse will soon overwhelm MENA, one that is far graver and more urgent. This Second Resource Curse will be precipitated both by nature – with its complex, nonlinear, and unforgiving constraints – and by developments in Middle Eastern societies that have already been locked-in – such as demographic expansion. Although the only way to overcome this curse and avert major damage will be to radically transform priorities and behaviour, most of the technological interventions necessary constitute investments with a long lead-time. A number of current, youth-led initiatives in MENA demonstrate how environmental challenges can be tackled through, for example, sustainable agriculture, trans-boundary watershed management, and renewable energy initiatives. These examples show that a brighter future for the region is theoretically possible, but even if these initiatives are scaled up, it is unlikely that they will dramatically alter the region's destiny without vastly greater changes still. That is why we focus here on large,

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[4] Ottmar Edenhofer et al. (eds), *Climate Change 2014. Mitigation of Climate Change*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg3/ipcc_wg3_ar5_full.pdf.

[5] M. Granger Morgan, "Opinion: Climate Policy Needs More Than Muddling", in *PNAS: Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, Vol. 113, No. 9 (1 March 2016): p. 2322-2324, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1601167113.

[6] Jeffrey A. Frankel, "The Natural Resource Curse: A Survey", in *NBER Working Papers*, No. 15836 (March 2010), http://www.nber.org/papers/w15836; Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI), *Natural Resource Charter*, 2nd ed., New York, NRGI, 2014, https://resourcegovernance.org/node/583.

scalable interventions which could be undertaken through top-down or bottom-up measures, or even through a combination of top-down and bottom-up implementation.

6.1 Our approach

While some research has analysed pathways to sustainable regional development, existing analyses are highly inadequate. Much has been written about the challenges facing MENA when it comes to sustainable development.[7] While existing analyses investigate these challenges in the context of geopolitical developments and demographic realities, they glaringly pay only lip service to quantitative, multi-disciplinary approaches and miss important dynamics which only integrated analyses can reveal.

Here we summarize a recent integrated analysis of the energy-water resource challenge in MENA, shedding light on the technical economic, and political opportunities and challenges that the region faces in light of climate change. Our results betray the dramatic extent to which regional practices in energy and water extraction and consumption need to change for MENA to secure a more sustainable future. The uniqueness of our approach lies in incorporating insights from multiple models into an integrated one.

Using a combination of scenario analysis and multi-criteria decision making, we have developed a range of possible futures for the region. Here, we will discuss in greater detail a few of the starkest possibilities. Our analyses rely on copious existing data from engineering, economics, and the social sciences. Specifically, we incorporate information from engineering economic models, technology diffusion models, and demographic models to determine likely near-term futures of MENA from a natural resource perspective. We focus on possible futures terminating in the year 2030 for several reasons: first, long-term forecasting is notoriously error-prone,[8] especially when multiple, different models are adopted and

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[7] UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *Arab Sustainable Development Report*, Beirut, United Nations, 2015, https://www.unescwa.org/node/94840.

[8] M. Granger Morgan and Max Henrion, *Uncertainty. A Guide to Dealing with Uncertainty in Quantitative Risk and Policy Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

adapted to integrate insights from multiple disciplines. Second, we judge it to be most unlikely that the 2018 to 2030 time period will witness dramatic technological interventions that overcome either the energy or the water challenge. More likely, we will see improvements in existing technologies and the slow progression of emergent technologies (like electric vehicles and energy storage) into the mainstream.[9] Third, the period until 2030 covers the enrolment of the region's youth into the workforce; that of its millennials into decision-making posts; and the growth in climate change refugees. While limiting our analysis to 2030 seems conservative, it is important to note that forecasting changes in political organization is difficult at any time-scale, including a decade.

Moreover, we present narrative results from a sensitivity analysis that delves into the most optimistic and most pessimistic scenarios, exposing the scale of the risks, but also shedding light on brighter futures that would emerge if prudent actions are taken in pursuit of sustainable development.

6.2 The future of MENA

In our analysis we decided to look at the energy and water production and consumptions in almost all MENA nations. Specifically, we looked at the following 15 countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Data on water resources and use were difficult to acquire for many countries, but most had data on energy. Therefore, nations were only omitted where neither water nor energy data were available. Moreover, we explicitly omitted both Syria and Yemen, given the ongoing wars in these two countries. As far as energy is concerned, we looked at the following parameters: primary energy usage (kg of oil equivalent per capita); total electric power consumption (KWh per capita); and energy consumption for water desalination (KWh per capita).[10]

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[9] International Energy Agency (IEA), *Global EV Outlook 2017. Two Million and Counting*, Paris, IEA, 2017.

[10] See World Bank Data website: *Energy Use (kg of oil equivalent per capita)*, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.USE.PCAP.KG.OE.

According to data available, the high consumption of fossil fuels in MENA nations is understandable given the abundance of those fossil fuels in the region and the structural preference governments bestow upon them in terms of subsidies. Indeed, they crowd out alternative fuel sources in all sectors of the economy. This is one of the fundamental challenges facing MENA nations, and it places the future of the entire region at risk.

To evaluate water resources and use, we looked at the following parameters: first, municipal wastewater: produced, collected, treated and direct usage of treated municipal wastewater (all in billion m^3/year); second, available water resources: groundwater produced internally, total internal renewable water resources (IRWR), total renewable surface water and total renewable groundwater (all in billion m^3/year); third, total fresh water withdrawal – primary and secondary (billion m^3/year): surface water, ground water, and the percentage that is used in agriculture, industrial and municipal applications; and fourth, desalinated water produced (billion m^3/year).

Even the most cursory exploratory analysis of the data reveals a startling trend of water exploitation across MENA. Most countries rank high to very high on the water stress index.[11] Few resources remain available, both on the surface and underground, and there is no evidence that the resource mismanagement that led to their original depletion has been changed to prevent further depletion through mismanagement, over consumption, or – more likely – both. This situation made nations turn to desalination early on in their development, and this turn has become an overt reliance in several nations on this presumed solution to the region's thirst. All MENA countries have some measure of desalination capacity. With the exception of Israel, where desalination accounts for the majority of potable water production, MENA nations are producing fairly marginal amounts of water through this method: less than 200 million m^3/year, which is not even one per cent of the total freshwater withdrawal in these countries.[12]

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[11] David Talbot, "Megascale Desalination. The World's Largest and Cheapest Reverse-Osmosis Desalination Plant Is Up and Running in Israel", in *MIT Technology Review*, 18 February 2015, https://www.technologyreview.com/s/534996.

[12] World Bank, *Making the Most of Scarcity. Accountability for Better Water Management Results in the Middle East and North Africa*, Washington, World Bank, 2007, http://hdl.handle.net/10986/6845.

As mentioned earlier, in the absence of more detailed national data, and given the scalability challenges associated with bottom-up approaches, we decided to focus on large, scalable, top-down interventions. Here, we briefly discuss the potential of four interventions, two in the energy space and two in the water space. In the energy space, possible top-down interventions include the adoption of electric vehicles, which has to be incentivized or mandated by government (and, indeed, is being mandated successfully in other nations).[13] The second energy-related intervention is aggressive energy efficiency measures in everything from residential buildings to commercial spaces to industry. These initiatives would not constitute *one single* intervention but many, some of which are more economically, socially, and politically palatable than others. Nevertheless, our goal is not to rehash the wide range of potential energy efficiency improvements that the literature has identified and evaluated, or to judge their potential effectiveness in the MENA context – although that is a useful exercise, in our opinion. Instead, given the range of experience in other nations that have adopted energy efficiency as a central strategy for reducing their energy intensity, we try and predict how the adoption of a similar strategy would affect energy use in MENA nations.

On the water front, we also consider two top-down interventions that are very much within government's power to legislate or support. These include the adoption of efficient reverse osmosis (RO) technologies in lieu of older, less efficient ones. In virtually all MENA nations, desalination is a venture that is state-run or strictly state-controlled, given water's strategic importance. It would therefore be relatively easier to change practices in a few, large, centralized, government-aligned organizations than it would be on a smaller or individual level. The second water-related intervention is the adoption of drip irrigation for the production of agriculture. So far, none of the MENA countries, with the sole exception of Israel, is using this highly acclaimed technology. Drip irrigation is used in combination with reuse of treated municipal water, realizing further savings. Israel reuses 90 per cent of its generated wastewater, making it the leading country in water recycling worldwide.[14] In some regions, drip

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[13] International Energy Agency (IEA), *Global EV Outlook 2017*, cit.

[14] Fluence Corporation, *Israel Leads World in Water Recycling*, 15 February 2017, https://www.fluencecorp.com/israel-leads-world-in-water-recycling.

irrigation brings up to 50 per cent water usage reduction along with increase in agricultural yields.[15] In areas like MENA, where water is scarce and majority of the land is semi-arid or arid, this one technology could go a long way to banking water savings and transforming the future of the region into a more sustainable one.

6.3 Potential technological interventions

The following interventions will have a rapid and high net positive impact in MENA, and will break the energy-water dependency vicious cycle. Adoption of electrical vehicles (EV) in MENA; mandatory energy savings appliances across all sectors; efficient reverse osmosis (RO), preferably joint RO factories in the region; and finally conservation technological measures like drip irrigation combined with re-use of treated municipal water for agriculture, and smart water metres and detectors for locating leakage.

Detecting water leakage, mainly in the distribution system, is one of the most overlooked problems in the developing world. Countries in MENA with no exception have major problems with water loss, accounting up to 50 per cent in some cases. Malta, having one of the lowest rates of renewable water supply in the Mediterranean region was able to reduce its water loss from 4,000 m^3 per hour in 1995 to 450 in 2014,[16] making it a remarkable success story in sustainability and conversion.

There is a need for a wide spread of desalination RO plans in MENA combined with loss reduction measures, an approach that both Malta and Israel have demonstrated with much success. Today it is possible to provide desalinated water at as low as 58 US cents per cubic metre.[17] Moreover, RO desalination technology continues to improve as better membranes are developed and production is industrialized to achieve

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[15] Sharon Udasin, "Netafim: Drip Irrigation Can Increase Rice Yields, Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions", in *The Jerusalem Post*, 24 August 2014, https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/New-Tech/Netafim-Drip-irrigation-can-increase-rice-yields-reduce-greenhouse-gas-emissions-372141.

[16] World Bank, *Making Every Drop Count: Reducing Water Loss in the Middle East and North Africa Region*, 2 September 2014, https://goo.gl/pDrhWi.

[17] David Talbot, "Megascale Desalination", cit.

cost savings. However, as we previously argued, RO desalination is best deployed in conjunction with broader water use reduction measures in all sectors. This can only come through a concerted, top-down effort led by government.

On the energy and fuel consumption side, ambitious transformations that are beginning to occur in other nations, such as the adoptions of EV fleets, would be a boon for both the global EV market and MENA, the latter assuming the region transitions to low-carbon electricity generation sources over the coming decades. For this reason, we do believe that EV fleets should be adopted as soon as possible in MENA, especially in oil – rich countries like UAE, Saudi Arabia and Algeria. At this stage, electrifying light duty transportation through the adoption of electric vehicles would reduce petroleum consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in all MENA nations. This is because, while cars use liquid petroleum, electricity generation in MENA is undertaken with lower-carbon natural gas. Moreover, it is easier to electrify cars and then proceed to reduce the carbon intensity of electricity generation than it is to lock-in liquid petroleum use and then divert large amounts of coal and natural gas – or land and water – to the production of liquid hydrocarbon substitutes. Based on our review of the nascent literature on electric vehicle deployment, achieving 25 per cent penetration of electric vehicles in MENA's light duty vehicle fleet by 2030 would reduce petroleum consumption in the region by about 5 per cent. This is because the gasoline used in the majority of MENA's light duty vehicle fleet accounts for less than a fifth of the region's liquid petroleum use; the rest is middle distillates like diesel, jet fuel, and kerosene, as well as fuel oil and heavier petroleum products. Twenty-five per cent electric vehicle penetration by 2030 is a very ambitious goal, especially given the low current penetration of electric vehicles in the region and governments' utter indifference (currently, at least) to this technological intervention: no dedicated appropriations exist in MENA to stimulate electric vehicle adoption. The 5 per cent reduction in petroleum consumption is remarkably small for such a radical transformation. However, as mentioned earlier, EVs have the added benefit of future-proofing MENA's transportation sector. If MENA adopts them over the coming decades, the costs of renewable energy continue to decline, and the imperative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

strengthens, reducing the carbon intensity of electric power grids in MENA would have the combined effect of reducing the carbon intensity of both the electric power sector and the transportation sector.

The second intervention – aggressive energy efficiency – has the capacity to reduce electricity consumption in the region by anywhere from 20 to 50 per cent, based on existing experience with such aggressive energy efficiency measures in other parts of the world. However, these measures need to be effected through government adoption of building codes, coupled with aggressive enforcement. Countries with lower quality institutions, including those in the MENA region, have generally exhibited weak enforcement, though existential challenges like resource depletion and climate change might well encourage a radical improvement in both building code promulgation and enforcement.

While the effect of those interventions may take time to reap the benefits, countries in MENA have to start implementing advancements to their policies promptly. The change in policy will catalyse a behavioural and consumption shift that otherwise may never happen.

Conclusions

Here we have presented a range of possible futures for the MENA region and articulated the extent to which major technological interventions could alleviate the energy and water challenges that currently plague the region and will increasingly devastate its ecosystem. We have chosen to focus on a limited set of interventions because few solutions scale up at the level required without triggering enormous political and social resistance – nuclear power, a demonstrably safe, scalable, and low-carbon energy source is perhaps the starkest example of this phenomenon. Our choice of technological interventions, which we based on judgment and iterative refinement, is by no means a closed list. In our judgment, if interventions like the ones discussed here are implemented urgently, the future of the region could be made remarkably brighter.

Due to the urgency of the matter, we believe that top-down interventions with long-lead times ought to be identified, evaluated, promulgated, and implemented, if they are in the national and regional interest. That

being said, we strongly believe that no technological advancements can really "save" MENA if no holistic, context-specific approaches are designed and carried out.

Despite our focus on top-down interventions in this chapter, we understand a holistic approach is one that engages with civil society, integrates bottom-up with top-down policies and interventions, and aims towards behaviour, culture and awareness transformation within the society. Technological interventions, stronger institutions, better resource management and social systematic paradigm shift have to go hand in hand to get MENA to a safe harbour, to bend the curve and to prevent a second resource curse.

APPENDIX: SUPPLEMENTARY FIGURES

Figure 1 – Natural resource curse diagram
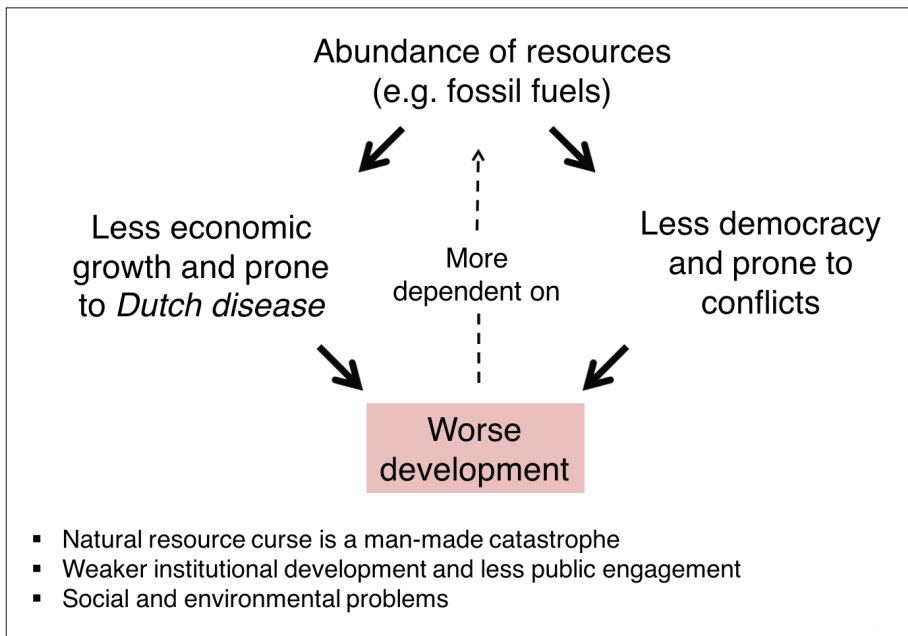
Source: Jeffrey A. Frankel, "The Natural Resource Curse: A Survey", cit., NRGI, *Natural Resource Charter*, cit.
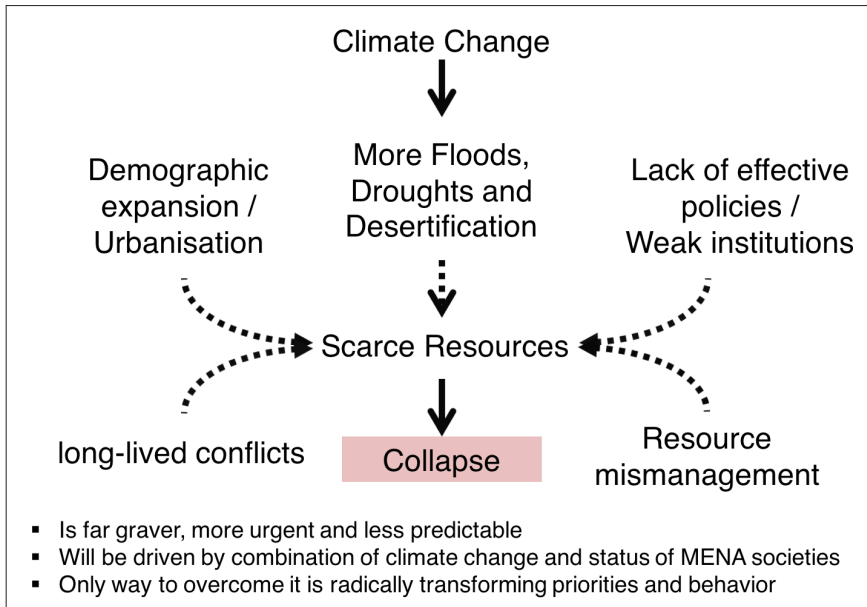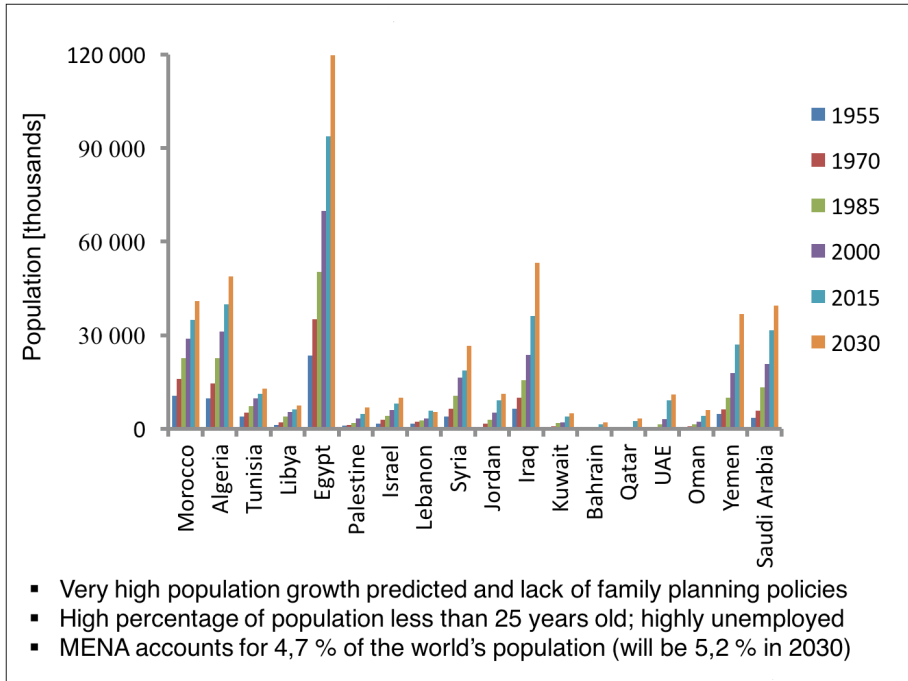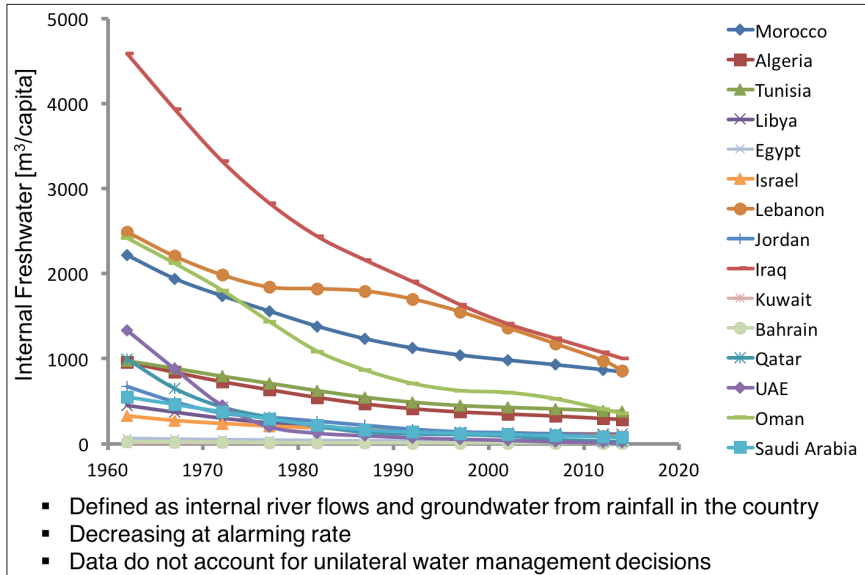
Figure 2 – Second resource curse diagram

- Is far graver, more urgent and less predictable
- Will be driven by combination of climate change and status of MENA societies
- Only way to overcome it is radically transforming priorities and behavior

Figure 3 – Population data and prediction in MENA region

- Very high population growth predicted and lack of family planning policies
- High percentage of population less than 25 years old; highly unemployed
- MENA accounts for 4,7 % of the world's population (will be 5,2 % in 2030)

Source: UNDESA, *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision*, 2017, https://population.un-.org/wpp.

Figure 4 – Renewable internal freshwater resources in MENA region

- Defined as internal river flows and groundwater from rainfall in the country
- Decreasing at alarming rate
- Data do not account for unilateral water management decisions

Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, 2017.

Figure 5 – Municipal wastewater produced, collected and treated per year in MENA region

- Many countries have untapped wastewater treatment potential
- Israel and Tunisia can serve as role models
- Data only partially available for Morocco, Palestine, Qatar and UAE
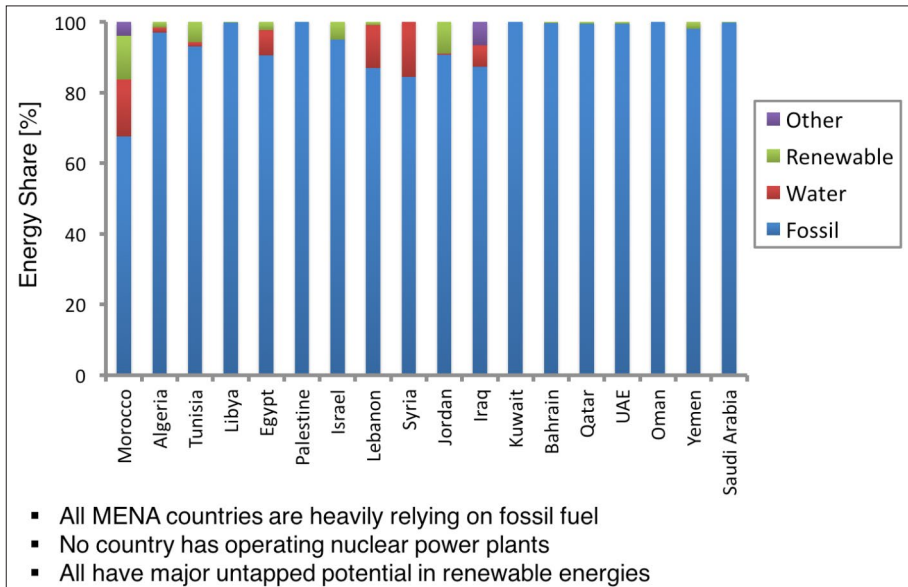
* Data shown for year 2010
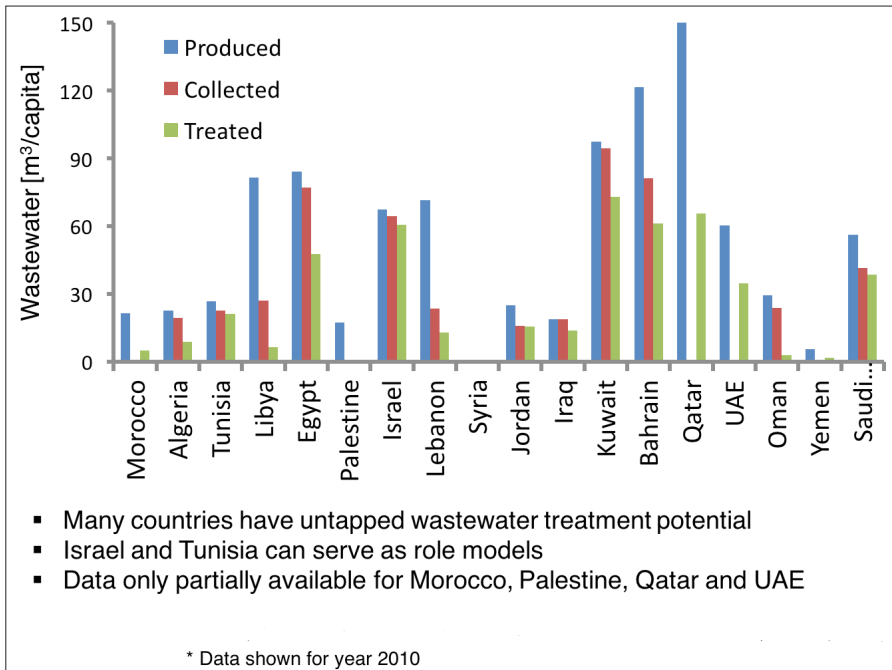
Source: FAO, Aquastat 2014 report.

**Figure 6 – Desalination capacity and desalination
as a per cent of the total water withdrawal in MENA region**

- Water desalination as total and compared to total water withdrawal
- Most gulf countries rely heavily on desalination as water source
- Israel has increased desalination significantly since then
- Total Water withdrawal data from 2014, Desalination data from 2007 or 2012
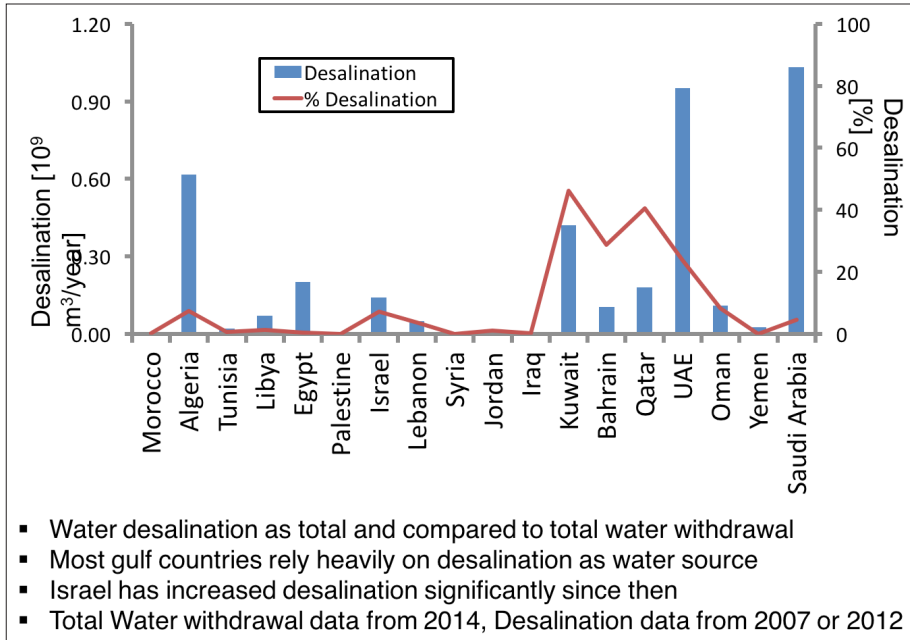
Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, 2017.

Figure 7 – Energy production capacity in MENA region

- All MENA countries are heavily relying on fossil fuel
- No country has operating nuclear power plants
- All have major untapped potential in renewable energies

Source: WorldData.info: Population Growth by Country & Energy Consumption, 2017.

7.

Socially Inclusive Fourth Industrial Revolution: Fostering Youth Employment in the Middle East and North Africa

Semuhi Sinanoğlu

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is one of the youngest regions in the world with more than 60 per cent of its population under the age of 29.[1] Current economies cannot generate enough jobs for this "youth bulge". While the global youth unemployment rate was 13.8 per cent in 2017, the MENA region experienced one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world at 29.6 per cent (see Figure 1), more than double the global average. The demographic projections suggest an increase of the region's population by more than a quarter by 2030, which will amplify the pressure on labour markets.[2]

Another shock looms on the horizon for the MENA economies: fourth industrial revolution. Disruptive innovations such as automation and robotics, 3D printing, the Internet of Things; big data analytics and machine learning, artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality; drones and precision agriculture among others will pose unprecedented challenges to the labour markets and educational institutions in the region.

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[1] Jad Chaaban, "Youth Integration and Job Creation in the Middle East and North African Region", in *NOREF Policy Briefs*, May 2012, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/142540/327283a3ded583ce3a97b5d8cfd33e85.pdf.

[2] World Economic Forum (WEF), "The Future of Jobs and Skills in the Middle East and North Africa. Preparing the Region for the Fourth Industrial Revolution", in *WEF Executive Briefings*, May 2017, p. 1, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_EGW_FOJ_MENA.pdf.

This chapter aims to shed light on programmes/initiatives that address the persistent issue of youth unemployment on the cusp of a new industrial revolution, with a focus on skill acquisition and employability.

Figure 1 – Youth unemployment rate
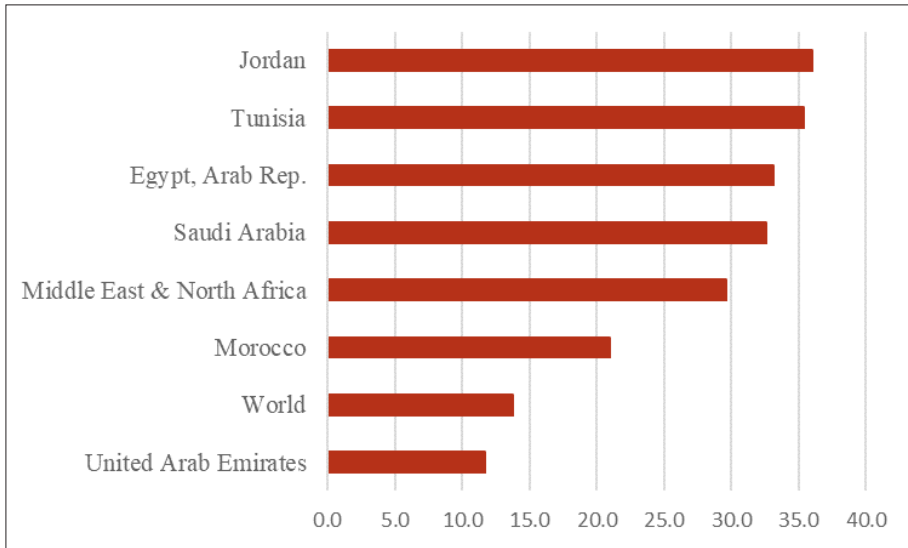
Source: ILO Statistics, 2017, http://www.ilo.org/ilostat.

7.1 Context

The political economy of the MENA region has been characterized by "patrimonial capitalism"[3] – an economic order in which the dominant distributional coalitions do not allow competition in their sectors, corruption permeates governments and people need intermediaries (*wasta*) to get things done, and the regulatory environment is not conducive for competitive private sector development. Indeed, private sector overall displays little dynamism – for example, the private sector gross fixed capital formation (as per cent of GDP) corresponds to only 7.8 per cent in Egypt.[4]

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[3] Oliver Schlumberger, "Structural Reform, Economic Order, and Development: Patrimonial Capitalism", in *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2008), p. 622-649.

[4] World Bank Data: *Gross fixed capital formation, private sector (% of GDP) - Egypt*, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.GDI.FPRV.ZS?locations=EG.

The structural adjustment policies since the 1980s resulted in firm-specific policies that limited free-entry to the domestic market, effectively excluded certain non-privileged firms from government programmes, insulated certain firms and sectors from foreign competition, and constrained performance. This political economy has entailed sub-optimal developmental prospects for the region.[5]

The problem of unemployment in the region stems partially from *insufficient job creation*. The average annual growth of around 5 per cent in MENA countries between 2000 and 2010 has not been translated into job creation in high-value added sectors.[6] Another reason for high level of unemployment is *skills mismatch* – as the balance of employment generation is tilted towards the public sector, neither can labour-intensive high-quality private sector jobs be offered, nor can the workforce attain the high skills necessary for the private sector. For instance, the findings of a 2016 World Enterprise Survey indicate that 19 per cent of firms identify an inadequately educated workforce as a major constraint in Egypt.[7] In other words, industrial and education policies are not aligned.[8] MENA economies also suffer from high degrees of informality. In 2011, the informal sector accounts for around 30 per cent of all jobs in the region.[9] Many small enterprises prefer remaining informal to avoid rigid bureaucracy and red tape, which does not only hamper productivity but also social security rights and decent job conditions.

This is not to argue that the MENA is a homogenous region – in fact, the MENA countries exhibit diversity. In the Human Development Index, for

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[5] Marc Schiffbauer et al., *Jobs or Privileges. Unleashing the Employment Potential of the Middle East and North Africa*, Washington, World Bank, 2014, p. 1, http://hdl.handle.net/10986/20591.

[6] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Youth in the MENA Region: How to Bring Them In*, Paris, OECD, 2016, http://www.oecd.org/gov/youth-in-the-mena-region-9789264265721-en.htm.

[7] World Bank Enterprise Surveys data: *Egypt, Arab Rep. (2016)*, https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/data/exploreeconomies/2016/egypt#workforce.

[8] Masood Ahmed, Dominique Guillaume and Davide Forcieri, "Youth Unemployment in the MENA Region: Determinants and Challenges", in *Addressing the 100 Million Youth Challenge. Perspectives on Youth Unemployment in the Arab World*, Geneva, World Economic Forum, 2012, p. 8-11, https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/28/04/54/vc061312.

[9] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality. Arab Human Development Report 2016*, New York, UNDP, 2016, p. 78, http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/node/2699.

instance, Saudi Arabia ranks 38th, while Yemen ranks 172nd.[10] The region consists of some of the richest and poorest countries in the world.[11] Therefore, any policy proposal should consider this intra-regional variation. My research on clustering of political economies of the MENA region shows that they can be classified into three clusters with respect to their private sector development, labour market protection, and good governance: non-oil industrializer regimes (Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon), oil-rich labour flexible regimes (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman), and oil-rich underdeveloped regimes (Algeria, Yemen, Iran, Iraq, and Libya).[12] This chapter scrutinizes the first two categories, since these countries have displayed some efforts to adjust their labour force and economies for the fourth industrial revolution to varying degrees, in contrast with the third group of countries.

7.2 POLICY CHALLENGES

One of the main intricate policy issues faced by the governments and other stakeholders (civil society organizations, universities, agencies, and firms) in the MENA region regarding youth unemployment is *how to ensure skill acquisition compatible with the needs of the market and promote employability, given the transformation of various sectors due to the fourth industrial revolution*.

To flesh out this transformation: robotics, artificial intelligence and automation will mechanize repetitive manual tasks with enhancing sophistication; 3D manufacturing will render rapid prototyping and dispersed

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[10] UNDP, *Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update*, New York, UNDP, September 2018, http://hdr.undp.org/en/node/2947.

[11] Melani Cammett and Ishac Diwan, "The Political Economy of Development in the Middle East", in Ellen Lust (ed.), *The Middle East*, 14th ed., California, CQ Press, 2014, p. 106, https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/75549_Chapter_3.pdf.

[12] Semuhi Sinanoğlu, *Varieties of Capitalism in the Middle East & North Africa: A Comparative Perspective*, Master's Thesis, Koç University, 2017. This analysis focuses on 17 countries across the MENA, excluding Syria and Israel. Syria is excluded because of the ongoing conflict. Israel's strong trade and investment ties outside of the Middle East that partially insulates and differentiates its technologically advanced free market economy from the regional political economy. Hence, Israel is excluded. Also, the concepts such as "non-oil" or "labour-flexible" are used relatively, based on intra-regional variation.

production possible; the Internet of Things will reduce the labour intensity of monitoring and maintenance on factories and warehouses.[13] Hence, the regional economies may experience employment declines in certain occupations and sectors such as clerical work and hospitality sector, to name a few.

A 2017 McKinsey study estimates that by 2030, 75 million to 375 million workers (3 to 14 per cent of the global workforce) will need to change their occupations.[14] Some scenarios convey that 46 per cent and 50 per cent of all work activities in Saudi Arabia and Morocco are susceptible to automation, respectively.[15] By 2020, 21 per cent of core skills in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council will be different compared to skills that were needed in 2015.[16] The youth in the region is cognizant of this massive transformation. Fifty-four per cent of the respondents of a youth-targeting survey in the MENA stated that they expect to experience significant changes in their jobs because of technological innovations.[17]

The stakeholders encounter three interrelated policy challenges regarding youth unemployment in the wake of the fourth industrial revolution:

1. Labour substitution and skill development. Youth inactivity in terms of the share of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is nowhere higher than in the MENA.[18] In Egypt, the NEET rate amounts to 26.6 per cent while 16.1 per cent in Saudi Arabia.[19] This segment of youth population is not in the system at all. University graduates, on the other hand, usually lack necessary skills for the fourth industrial revolution. Therefore, educational curricula should be redesigned to fac-

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[13] Shahid Yusuf, "Automation, AI, and the Emerging Economies", in *CGD Notes*, 13 September 2017, https://www.cgdev.org/node/3125742.

[14] James Manyika et al., *Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained. Workforce Transitions in a Time of Automation*, in McKinsey Global Institute Reports, November 2017, p. 11, http://bit.ly/2s7QsrA.

[15] WEF, "The Future of Jobs and Skills in the Middle East and North Africa", cit., p. 7.

[16] Ibid.

[17] WEF, *Global Shapers Survey 2017*, August 2017, p. 50, http://www.shaperssurvey2017.org.

[18] OECD, *Youth in the MENA Region*, cit.

[19] See "Share of Youth not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) (%)" in ILO Statistics website: *ILOStat Country Profiles*, https://www.ilo.org/ilostatcp/CPDesktop.

tor into these emerging needs and to promote school-to-work transition, which in many MENA countries takes over five years.[20]

The quality of education should be improved overall. Arab countries score well below the average especially in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).[21] There is also intra-regional variation in terms of skill development. For instance, the UAE ranks 17th out of 119 countries in the Global Talent Competitiveness Index, whereas Egypt ranks 104th.[22]

2. Unravelling social contract. In exchange for trade openness and structural adjustment policies, regional governments offered the public some compensation, which became an integral part of the social contract. Public employment can be construed as one of these compensation strategies,[23] because it provides relatively higher wages with less working hours. Public sector jobs account for 42 per cent of non-agricultural formal sector employment of national citizens in Jordan, 70 per cent in Egypt, and about 80 per cent across the UAE.[24] Government wages amount to 9.8 per cent of GDP in the MENA region; the highest rate worldwide.[25] The large share of public employment distorts incentives to equip other productive skills needed in the private sector. The growing fiscal pressure makes it impossible to sustain high levels of public employment, which will eventually alter the social contract.

3. Widening gender gap. The female labour force participation is traditionally low in the region. Decreasing public employment will jeopard-

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[20] Diego F. Angel-Urdinola, Arvo Kuddo and Amina Semlali (eds), *Building Effective Employment Programs for Unemployed Youth in the Middle East and North Africa*, Washington, World Bank, 2013, p. 2, http://hdl.handle.net/10986/15805.

[21] UNDP, *Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*, cit., p. 31.

[22] Bruno Lanvin and Paul Evans (eds), *The Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2018. Diversity for Competitiveness*, Fontainebleau, INSEAD, December 2017, p. 13, 15, https://www.insead.edu/node/32236.

[23] Irfan Nooruddin and Nita Rudra, "Are Developing Countries Really Defying the Embedded Liberalism Compact?", in *World Politics*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (October 2014), p. 603-640.

[24] WEF, "The Future of Jobs and Skills in the Middle East and North Africa", cit., p. 4.

[25] Ibrahim Saif and Joulan Abdul Khalek, "Youth in the Middle East and the Job Market", in *Carnegie Articles*, 27 October 2011, https://carnegie-mec.org/2011/10/27/youth-in-middle-east-and-job-market-pub-45851.

ize women's positions in the labour market, since in Egypt, for instance, women work disproportionately in the public sector.[26] The digitalization might also further exacerbate social exclusion of women. The percentage of Arab female who access and use the Internet is just 36.9 per cent compared to 46.2 per cent of Arab males.[27]

7.3 Programme interventions

Given the scope and multidimensionality of these challenges, it is impossible to achieve change with isolated interventions by single organizations or merely by governments. On the contrary, cross-sector coordination is warranted for collective impact.[28] In order to accomplish this cross-sectoral coordination, some governments introduced national visions for the implications of the fourth industrial revolution. Without any doubt, the UAE sets an example. The government has launched the strategy for the fourth industrial revolution with emphasis on robotic health care and research in nanotechnology.[29] Also the Smart Dubai Office has kicked off the first city-wide effort to implement blockchain technology in city services – the first initiative of its kind in the world. The Dubai Future Foundation and the Smart Dubai Office will execute the Dubai Blockchain Strategy 2020 in collaboration with IBM.[30]

Oil-rich labour flexible regimes usually capitalize on their rent income to finance their large-scale technology-oriented operations. However, other countries, especially *non-oil industrializer regimes*, can rely on public-private partnerships to finance these initiatives. Morocco has recently announced that a 10 billion US dollar project to build a new industrial

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[26] Roberta Gatti et al., *Jobs for Shared Prosperity. Time for Action in the Middle East and North Africa*, Washington, World Bank, 2013, p. 11, http://hdl.handle.net/10986/13284.

[27] Mona Farid Badran, *Achieving Gender Equality in the Arab Region amidst the Changing World of Work*, Beirut, ILO, April 2017, p. 5, https://www.ilo.org/beirut/information-resources/factsheets/WCMS_549618/lang--en/index.htm.

[28] John Kania and Mark Kramer, "Collective Impact", in *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Winter 2011), p. 35-41, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.

[29] "UAE launches strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution", in *Gulf News*, 27 September 2017, http://bit.ly/2Nu0pMK.

[30] "H.E. Dr. Aisha Bin Bishr On Smart Dubai Office's Citywide Blockchain Implementation", in *Entrepreneur*, 19 March 2017, https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/290701.

and technology hub near the northern city of Tangiers will be financed by Chinese group Haite.[31] The key lesson learned from these pioneering examples is that *public-private partnerships should be promoted in the light of a grand national vision*.

Besides these national-level endeavours, there are other initiatives led by different stakeholders (private sector, civil society, universities). They can be classified into two broad categories: (1) active labour market interventions that aim for job intermediation and skill development through training programmes; and (2) entrepreneurship & innovation-based interventions.

1. Active labour market interventions. There are information asymmetries between job seekers and job providers. SoukTel's *MatchMe* leverages available technology to match supply and demand for jobs and services. However, technology is not panacea for our social problems, and "technological solutionism" should be avoided. Job intermediation sector is the perfect epitome for this. Active labour market interventions usually receive dismal reviews because they do not take into account social stigmas and worldviews. Abu Jaber explains why: "a woman's decision to enter training programmes is often her own, a woman's decision to join the workforce [is] made by the male members of her family".[32] Without any doubt, there are gender-sensitive on-ground programmes as well. Jordan New Work Opportunities for Women (Jordan NOW) pilot programme, for example, strives to foster female labour force participation in Jordan. Yet overall, private and public formal employment networks play a limited role in labour intermediation. Young people usually rely on personal contacts (*wasta*) to secure jobs, and youth with low-income often cannot benefit from these programmes.

In addition to matching services, other organizations such as Education for Employment Foundation offer training programmes tailored for young people across the region (either in-class or on-the-job training).

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[31] "Morocco Signs Preliminary Financing Agreement for $10 Billion Tech City", in *Reuters*, 20 March 2017, http://reut.rs/2n7EMDj.

[32] Mayyada Abu Jaber, "Why Matchmaking in Youth Employment Programs in Middle East North Africa Aren't Working", in *Stanford Social Innovation Review Blog*, 5 July 2017, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/why_matchmaking_in_youth_employment_programs_in_middle_east_north_africa_ar.

ILO's Know About Business curriculum, Fab Lab Egypt's STEM-focused projects also had similar objectives: skills training as add-ons to traditional curricula. However, these programmes face scalability and sometimes credibility problems, since the large number of similar programmes and uncoordinated efforts for skills training make it difficult for relevant stakeholders and participants to judge the quality and equivalency of these programmes.

2. Entrepreneurship & innovation-based solutions. Mostly across the region, large corporations take the lead with entrepreneurship & innovation-based interventions. For instance, the Citi Foundation developed entrepreneurship and financial literacy programmes, in collaboration with INJAZ Al-Arab and trained over 9,000 young people across the region. Similarly, Shell initiated Intilaaqah project that consists of variety of courses, workshops, consulting and awards in the field of entrepreneurship. GE pursued a slightly different approach, and established innovation centres in different cities across the region such as Abu Dhabi and Dhahran.

   Non-profit organizations also actively engage with this strategy. In addition to training programmes, they organize hackathons – competitions for designing solutions for specific problems through applied technology. MISK Foundation is a leading figure regarding hackathons in the region.

   Despite the resources allocated for these programmes, their impact is dubious. Firstly, a recent assessment of entrepreneurship initiatives managed through a vocational training programme in Morocco found no evidence of a positive effect. By the same token, Data of the School to Work Transition Surveys indicate that only 4 per cent of youth entrepreneurs in Jordan reported they benefitted from any type of training. Secondly, entrepreneurs usually come from relatively better economic backgrounds. Therefore, entrepreneurship-based approach is not necessarily socially inclusive. In other words, these programmes usually target relatively better-off, well-connected, urbanized, and educated sections of society, which reproduces existing social inequalities. A survey of Wamda Research Lab showed that nearly all the entrepreneurs surveyed had at least Bachelor's degree at the time of starting the company.[33]

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[33] UNDP, *Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*, cit., p. 85.

Be that as it may, entrepreneurial programmes also incentivize young people to pursue self-employment, and render them more attuned to technological developments. Of 113 successful start-ups[34] that I pinpointed as part of desk review, almost all of them leverage a different fourth industrial revolution technology to create a cutting-edge in their sectors.

7.4 Policy/programme recommendations

Socially inclusive programmatic interventions. The MENA economies exhibit diversity, therefore one-size-fits-all approach cannot be applied for tackling the issue of youth unemployment on the cusp of the fourth industrial revolution. In other words, any programmatic/policy-oriented intervention needs to be context-specific and tailor-made. Different political economy configurations warrant differentiated policy interventions. One programme/policy that works in one context cannot be transplanted into another.

The success of any intervention programme also hinges upon clear micro-targeting of specific groups, which can be classified with respect to level of education (high school, university graduate; NEET), employment status and sector (public, private, self-employed & informal), gender, location (rural, small-mid-sized city, metropolitan area). This micro-targeting is also crucial for ensuring socially inclusive programmatic interventions. For example, job intermediation programmes usually prioritize high school and university graduates and overlook NEET-segment. This rate is quite high for both oil-rich and industrializer regimes, and this under-utilization should be tackled through programme-based interventions.

The clear delineation of target groups should not be implemented in a top-down fashion. These programmes should not just aim for including marginalized/disadvantaged youth, but also situating young people at the core of decision-making processes. When stakeholders decide to initiate such programmes, they can recruit young consultants/advisors on their boards for co-designing these programmes. This will help them understand social stigmas associated with their interventions better. They

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[34] The success of a start-up is defined with respect to its length of operation (more than 1 year), and endowment of seed-funding.

can seek help from young academics for needs-assessment in order to pinpoint most-needed interventions. Hence, a collective impact approach would amplify the impact, and reduce the programme-related costs, too.

Last but not least, Canada presents an interesting example with the recent establishment of Canadian Youth Corps. This kind of national service programmes will allow youth to design and implement their own local projects, and at the same time get prepared for their future market engagements. In lieu of entrepreneurship/innovation-based programmes that are not necessarily financially efficient and optimally impactful, youth corps can be an alternative mechanism to be explored across the region.

Policy recommendations

Private sector dynamism is sine qua non for a successful economic transformation to get prepared for the fourth industrial revolution. Even though non-oil industrializer regimes might rely on public-private partnerships to generate fourth industrial revolution projects, private investment in the MENA largely lags other regions and private-to-public investment ratios in the MENA have also remained below world trends due to financing problems.[35] The main reasons for low private sector credit are crowding out by the public sector and poor regulatory supervision of the banking systems,[36] which eventually hamper employment prospects, too. For example, SMEs typically account for 10 to 40 per cent of all employment in the MENA and access to finance is one of the greatest challenges that SMEs face in the region. A 2011 World Bank/Union of Arab Banks survey of over 130 MENA banks indicates that only 8 per cent of lending goes to SMEs across the MENA.[37] In addition to financing problems, patrimonialism shields politically connected firms from international

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[35] Diego F. Angel-Urdinola, Arvo Kuddo and Amina Semlali (eds), *Building Effective Employment Programs for Unemployed Youth in the Middle East and North Africa*, cit., p. 81.

[36] Lois Stevenson, *Private Sector and Enterprise Development. Fostering Growth in the Middle East and North Africa*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar and Ottawa, IDRC, 2010, p. 119, https://www.idrc.ca/en/node/11216.

[37] Qamar Saleem, *Overcoming Constraints to SME Development in MENA Countries and Enhancing Access to Finance*, Washington, IFC Advisory Services in the Middle East and North Africa, 2012, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/581841491392213535.

competition, and results in sub-optimal economic performances. A 2014 study on political clientelism in Tunisia, for example, reveals that by analysing firm-level data of 662 firms owned by the Ben Ali family that were confiscated after the Jasmine Revolution, politically-connected firms were roughly four times more likely than non-connected firms to operate in sectors subject to authorization and foreign direct investment (FDI) restrictions.[38] Hence, one policy recommendation is to promote FDI by reducing public employment, enhancing foreign ownership in traditionally protected sectors, decreasing bureaucratic red tape, and improving credibility at international arbitration. These policies require political leadership, but one thing is certain that the prevailing social contracts are no longer sustainable. The regimes will not be able to maintain public employment at current levels as compensations. For job prospects in the long run, FDI can serve as important source of financing and medium for economic reforms. Moreover, FDI can provide the necessary momentum for the fourth industrial revolution transformation, especially in non-oil industrializer regimes.

Fourth industrial revolution also cracks a door open for ample opportunities. Big data analytics can be leveraged to ensure real-time synchronization between educational institutions and private sector to signal the required skills/positions in the job market. If the firms prioritize competencies over years of experience, then this approach is likely to alleviate the issue of skills mismatch. By utilizing this technological solution and mobilizing multiple stakeholders, this policy intervention can improve job intermediation processes in the region and serve as a remedy for the problems related to the quality and equivalency of skill development programmes. One crucial requisite for this technological achievement is the promotion of public-private partnerships in the light of a grand national vision, embraced, pursued, and designed in a multi-stakeholder setting. Based on this cross-sectoral cooperation, stakeholders can invest in different sectors/ venues such as STEM education or tech-centres on campus, not just to tackle skills mismatch, but also improve the quality of education overall.

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[38] Bob Rijkers, Caroline Freund and Antonio Nucifora, "All in the Family: State Capture in Tunisia", in *World Bank Policy Research Working Papers*, No. 6810 (March 2014), https://ssrn.com/abstract=2415016.

Established in June 2014, New-Med is a research network of Mediterranean experts and policy analysts with a special interest in the complex social, political, cultural and security-related dynamics that are unfolding in the Mediterranean region. The network is developed by IAI, in cooperation with the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, the Compagnia di San Paolo of Turin, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and the German Marshall Fund (GMF) of the United States. At the core of the New-Med activities stands the need to rethink the role of multilateral, regional and sub-regional organizations, to make them better equipped to respond to fast-changing local and global conditions and to address the pressing demands coming from Mediterranean societies all around the basin.

Beyond the narrow focus on security concerns dominating debates on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), there is a dire need for local perspectives on the many pressing socio-economic and political challenges impacting the "youth" and broader societies in the region. This volume brings together such perspectives offered by eight outstanding young scholars from the region on a broad range of issues: from political activism, to women's empowerment, from environmental challenges to unemployment, all paying attention to youth-inclusiveness. Their accounts highlight the need for policies that are human-centric and not merely state-centric, and for going beyond reproducing "politics as usual", and instead responding to the changing problems and aspirations of societies with their younger and older cohorts.

Book cover: Tunis, 14 April 2017.