NEW TRENDS IN IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA AND THEIR IMPACT ON STATE–SOCIETY RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

State–society relations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have been deeply impacted by the dynamics around collective identities in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings and of other domestic and regional far-reaching developments, such as the failed coup attempt in Turkey or the ramifications of the Syrian conflict. It is therefore of utmost importance to discuss the changes (or lack thereof) in the articulation of collective identities, what pressures shape them, and what impact this has on the societal actors and ultimately on their relations with the state institutions and policies. In this regard two trends can be identified whereby pluralization and hybridization in certain countries, for example Morocco and Tunisia, stand in opposition to entrenchment and polarization, as illustrated by the Israeli and the Turkish cases. The result is heightened conflictuality in state–society relations and within societies at large in the MENA with the risk of spillovers at the regional level.

INTRODUCTION

State–society relations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are in a state of flux. Not only did disruptions in the domestic orders based on the old social contracts – often compounding the impact of regional dynamics – lead to the outbreak of the popular protests and social unrest that convulsed the MENA in 2011, but state–society relations have also been the object of a constant, more or less visible process of contestation and reshaping in the countries that were not affected by the Arab uprisings. Understanding the processes of reconfiguration of the domestic orders in the MENA thus needs to start from an appraisal of the trends that drive state–society relations and that are likely to impact on the different players' regional stances and ultimately the MENA regional order as a whole. Arguably, domestic dynamics tend to influence regional developments in a way that calls for a more fine-grained description and assessment of the politics of domestic order-making.

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State–society relations as an object of research do not exist in a vacuum. They are embedded in the broader political–institutional environment that represents the skeleton of the state and shapes its relations to society. Political and institutional factors such as party politics, the content of the constitution and the powers of specific institutions can be regarded as facilitating or constraining variables in state–society relations. They provide the order-making incentives (or lack thereof) to structure relations both vertically (between the state and society) and horizontally (between the different components of society). State institutions in particular can be defined as a set of "routines, procedures, conventions, roles, strategies, organizational forms, and technologies around which political activity is constructed" (March and Olsen 1989: 22). They are the essence of politics as they regulate the allocation of power resources, shape the goals political actors pursue and influence their strategies, and constrain or allow certain political actions by raising or reducing their costs and by setting the parameters for policy-making (Hall 1986). This top-down function of institutions vis-à-vis state–society relations needs to be matched with other bottom-up factors stressing the relational character of the interplay between states and societies. MENA societies are not monolithic and are permeated by tensions and changes that – often not so visible, and difficult to measure – stand at the core of the revolutionary transformations that have been affecting some countries in the region since 2011. In all respects, institutions and political behaviours are hard to change, but when this happens it is often the result of significant triggering factors such as revolutions or coups and it leads to very visible watersheds in the articulation of power at multiple levels. On the other hand, societal changes are constantly occurring but often remain hidden behind the continuation of long-standing and deep-seated behaviours and ingrained meanings. Nevertheless, societies have a tendency to reinvent themselves, to articulate new identities, needs and claims, and to refashion their relations with state institutions and actors in sometimes powerful ways.

The comparative politics literature discussing the breakdown of authoritarian regimes and the construction of new polities throughout the MENA region makes a distinction between the "political society" and the "civil society" (Bellin 2011, Stepan 2012). The former is made up of parties, parliaments, elections and constitutions, namely the institutions and political actors and processes that represent the structure of the state. The latter is an example of the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary", to borrow Asef Bayat's expression, namely the expression of "politics" taking place outside the confined spaces of political parties and institutions (Bayat 2013). At the most visible level, it was represented by the thousands of people who spontaneously took to the streets and squares at the beginning of 2011, one of the signs of re-politicization in the MENA. In general terms, however, it can be read as the visible manifestation of the societal stances finding channels of free expression. This is the result of often invisible processes of change in the composition, identity articulation and claims of the societal actors, leading to more or less visible changes in their postures vis-à-vis the state as well as its agencies. In this light, the dynamics this report will dwell upon concern the reframing of collective identities throughout the MENA region and their impact on state–society relations. Collective identities stand at the core of societal dynamics and determine groups' needs, interests and stances towards the other societal actors and the state. As such, they often represent the link between societies and state institutions' policies that are framed around identity issues. It is therefore of utmost importance to discuss the changes (or lack thereof) in the articulation of collective identities in the MENA countries, what pressures shape them, and what impact this has on the societal actors and ultimately on their relations with the

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state institutions and policies. The empirical analysis drawn from the MENA shows that important but often little researched changes have taken place on these fronts. This applies both to the countries that have experienced deep transformations in the framework of the Arab uprisings and to those that have not but have nonetheless been affected by changes in their societal make-up as a result of internal and external pressures.

To shed light on these dynamics and their implications for state–society relations in the MENA, this report is structured in three parts. The first part frames the role of collective identities as drivers of domestic order-making in the MENA. It also briefly presents the case studies (Israel, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey)[2] and some background information about state–society relations in each of them. The second part discusses the main trends within collective identity dynamics in the MENA on the basis of the empirical evidence gathered during the fieldwork missions conducted in the four countries between December 2017 and March 2018. Finally, the third part assesses the impact of such dynamics on domestic order-making by extrapolating three general trends. These trends can be tentatively generalized to other cases in the MENA region although they are not meant to be exhaustive or statistically representative. This allows to shed light on state–society relations in the MENA in general and on the need to adopt different interpretative lenses and policy responses.

1. FRAMING THE ROLE OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES IN DOMESTIC POLITICS IN THE MENA

Assessing state–society relations in the MENA through the lens of collective identities means dwelling on the role of specific identity markers in shaping the way in which one group, as opposed to individuals, identifies and differentiates itself from the rest of society on the basis of – but not exclusively on – religion, ethnicity, tribe/clan/family affiliations, gender or age. Not only do collective identities provide order to societies, they are embedded in and produce deeply political acts. Important studies related to the MENA have argued that identity and politics are mutually formed and exist in a dialectic relationship (Wilson 1982, Khoury and Kostiner 1991). Seeing collective identities as social constructs and as political – and not pre-political – acts makes it possible to shed light on two dynamics in which identities and politics interact (Makdisi 2000, Telhamy and Barnett 2002). On the one hand, having a certain communal or group feeling shapes how people see themselves and others as well as creates a particular framework for exercising power vis-à-vis other societal groups or the state. On the other hand, identities are the terrain upon which states construct institutions and enact specific policies. Identity categories in the MENA have thus traditionally been used or manipulated through repression or co-optation by state or non-state actors as a way to justify a particular domestic order.

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2   These cases have been selected so as to be able to conduct our empirical analysis across a very diverse range of countries in terms of political system, history, societal composition, regional power status and salience of the Arab uprisings. In other words, the richness of our sample provides even greater value to the insights developed in this report as they are drawn from a very heterogeneous set of countries.

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While forms of collective identification have always existed as a result of common traits and shared experiences and claims, these are not fixed. Collective identities are constantly reshaped by external contingencies and individual cost–benefit analyses with regard to specific groups' claims and stances vis-à-vis state policies and institutions. This mostly takes place in a gradual, invisible way with some degree of path-dependence ingrained in such processes (Thelen 2003). However, there are specific circumstances that trigger sudden, visible changes in the way in which one or more groups of people perceive their identity and act upon it to fulfil old or new goals. These critical junctures often coincide with changes in state–society relations to which the reconfiguration of collective identities ultimately contributes. State–society relations can be disrupted by external or domestic shocks such as revolutions, (socio-economic) crises and conflicts, leading to a more or less pronounced, top-down or bottom-up restructuring of state institutions. The Arab uprisings that started in 2011 in Tunisia arguably represented one such turning point, prompting important transformations in the institutional set-up and in the domestic orders more broadly, not only in the countries that were directly affected by the wave of unrest but in the MENA region as a whole (Colombo 2018). The (temporary) opening up of spaces for free expression and dissent has impacted forcefully on collective identities in some MENA countries and on their relationship to state institutions and policies, catalyzing processes of change that in some cases had already been ongoing as well as others that emerged for the first time.

The research hypothesis tested in this report is that the process of reconfiguration of state–society relations in the MENA has been significantly shaped – in some cases more than in others – by new trends in identity politics and in particular by changes at the level of collective identities. This dynamic concerns in particular those countries in which collective identities based on religious and ethnic, but also ideological and political, self-identification have emerged forcefully as drivers for contestation and political action during or after the Arab uprisings, although it does not exclude other cases as well, albeit with some nuances. Changes in collective identities have taken different forms, including the pluralization or hybridization of sectarian, tribal or ethnic markers of identity that have become plural in their expressions and claims. Opposite trends pointing in the direction of the entrenchment of existing collective identities or the subsuming of different collective identities under a larger one have also appeared in specific cases across the MENA region, leading in some instances to heightened polarization. The academic as well as policy-related interest around collective identities does not exclusively lie in the study of their changes and continuities, but first and foremost in the assessment of the impact of these dynamics at the political and institutional levels. Firstly, it means asking questions related to the nature, conditions, intensity and direction of the different trends in identity politics. Secondly, it means dwelling on the extent to which changes in collective identities (or lack thereof) have been embedded into institutions and political processes. As will be discussed in the last section of this report, the rewriting of the constitutions in Tunisia and Morocco provided important spaces to discuss and negotiate the role of collective identities within the new state architectures between 2011 and 2014. In other contexts, such as in Egypt, there has been no successful institutional accommodation of alternative claims based on such changing collective identities.

As discussed in the background paper of Work Package 4, studying collective identities, their changes (or lack thereof) and their impact at the institutional and political levels means asking two interrelated sets of questions. Firstly, to what extent can we observe a dichotomy between

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pluralization and hybridization, on the one hand, and entrenchment and polarization of collective identities, on the other, in the MENA? Is it possible to speak of a pluralization of collective identities, meaning the process through which collective identities defining people's sense of belonging have increased in number without necessarily becoming more pluralistic over time (Boserup and Colombo 2017)? Is this the result of the "explosion" of pre-existing collective identities along competing and/or conflictual fault lines, or is this dynamic linked to the "bubbling up" of previously dormant collective identities? Have some collective identities, on the contrary, become more entrenched and polarized to the detriment of others? Secondly, what is the impact of collective identities on the restructuring or maintenance of the domestic political order? How do collective identities manifest themselves at the level of organized groups, their composition, interests and claims? In addition, how are these interests and claims taken into account by state policies and institutions? What domestic order emerges from this dynamic in terms of cooperation versus conflict in state–society relations? These sets of questions are thoroughly scrutinized in the following pages of this report on the basis of the data drawn from some forty-five in-depth interviews carried out in Israel, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey with interviewees belonging to the categories of state officials, members of political parties, experts and academics, journalists and activists (the full list of interviews is provided in the Annex). These four case studies have been selected as they present rich, even contrasting evidence with regard to the research hypothesis on the changing role of collective identities in the MENA, which can be summarized by the dichotomy "pluralization/hybridization vs entrenchment/polarization". This is very healthy and confirms that discussing this dynamic in its different forms is relevant for shedding light on similarities and differences across the region. Major differences in this regard have to do with the legacy of previous state–society relations and the place of collective identities within them, to issues pertaining to the domestic institutional and political architecture, to regional and external drivers and to the different salience of 2011 as a turning point compared with other watersheds, for example the failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016. To capture these differences, it is important to start with a short description of the situation in each of the four case studies as far as the interplay between collective identities and the domestic order is concerned.

Starting with Israel, Israeli society is extremely complex, diversified and heterogeneous. It is often described as a mosaic, with a large number of distinctive collective identities coexisting, competing and occasionally clashing with each other in the political arena. Emerging with the creation of the Israeli state in 1948, *Israeli identity* is a relatively new construct. As the Israeli state extended the right to acquire Israeli citizenship to Jews all over the world, the collective identity of Israeli society was constructed as a pre-eminently Jewish one.[3] This ethno-religious definition of the Israeli collective entails an overlap as well as a tension between the "Israeli" and the "Jewish" collective identities at the political and the societal level (Evron 1995). Moreover, it excludes Israel's non-Jewish citizens – roughly 20 per cent of Israeli citizens – from the Israeli collective (Kimmerling 1993: 415). Herewith related, it is important to note that not all Israeli citizens define themselves as "Israelis" or primarily so. This concerns many, if not most, Palestinian citizens of Israel, who, for political and cultural reasons, would not identify as "Israelis". But it also includes large parts of the Jewish ultra-Orthodox (*haredi*) community who have remained anti-Zionists and

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3 The so-called Law of Return of 1950, which allows every Jewish person and their descendants over three generations to immigrate to Israel and become an Israeli citizen, well reflects this state of affairs, as do the official holiday cycle and the symbols of the state (Zerubavel 1995: 219).

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define themselves primarily through their Jewish religion or ethnicity. Other groups and individuals may also identify as Jewish first. Altogether, sub-identities (or "sub-cultures") have remained strong in Israel, often challenging the construction of the supposedly overarching Israeli identity (Kimmerling 2001). The mosaic of Israel's collective identities is also marked by very different cultural groups and ethnicities, including Moroccan, Polish, Yemeni and Ethiopian Jews (to name but a few), but also Druze and Palestinians, with most communities having a very different history and, partly, status.[4] In addition to the older communities, between 2005 and 2013, around 60,000 African refugees and asylum seekers (mostly Eritrean and Sudanese) entered Israel. At present their number is estimated at over 35,000 people.[5]

Against this backdrop, a number of important fault lines characterize Israeli society and politics in terms of collective identities. Four major fault lines can be identified here (Del Sarto 2006: ch. 4). The first one is the classical left–right divide, which mainly pits supporters of Labour Zionism and Revisionist Zionists against each other. This fault line revolves around the preferred policies vis-à-vis the Israeli–Palestinian and wider Arab–Israeli conflicts, with Labour Zionism being more open to territorial compromise with the Palestinians than supporters of Revisionist Zionism, who are territorial maximalists. The latter group includes Likud voters and religious or nationalist supporters of Israel's settlement project in the Palestinian territories. Economic policies – egalitarian/social vs neo-liberal preferences – also play a role in this divide, although economic issues have traditionally been subordinated to the political–territorial question. The second major fault line is the Jewish–Palestinian one. In a state that defines itself as Jewish, most of the Palestinian (or Arab) citizens of Israel have remained second-class citizens at best, while Arab political parties have never participated in government coalitions. Israel's Palestinian population is quite diverse, comprising, inter alia, nationalists, secularists, Islamists, conservatives, liberals, Bedouins, Muslims and several Christian denominations. The Jewish–Palestinian fault line in Israel largely overlaps with the divide separating Zionists from non-Zionists;[6] many Palestinian-Israeli citizens would prefer to see Israel become a "state of all its citizens" (instead of a "Jewish state"), as the current debate about the Jewish nation-state law illustrates. The third major fault line is the secular–religious divide, which mainly concerns the Jewish majority. This fault line is important given that there is no clear separation between state and religion in Israel, with Jewish religious parties having always been represented in the Israeli parliament and usually in government coalitions as well. Yet it is important to note here that both the religious and the secular camps are far from being homogeneous: the secularists may comprise human rights and LGBTQ activists as well as supporters of a two-state solution with the Palestinians, but also fervent nationalists and territorial maximalists, and everything in between. Similarly, the religious sector not only includes different religious sects but also ultra-Orthodox and national-religious

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4   The older communities are the Palestinians and the Druze, along with some ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities, followed by East European Jews who started immigrating to mandatory Palestine in the late 19th century. Middle Eastern Jews came to Israel in the 1950s. The so-called "Russian" Jews (hailing from the former Soviet Union after the fall of the Berlin Wall) and the Ethiopian Jewish community immigrated more recently.

5   While Israeli governments have adopted a restrictive policy towards these immigrants, including deportations, "voluntary repatriations" and the fortification of the border with Egypt, the African asylum seekers add to the group of residents of Israel without citizenship rights. Incidentally, this group of Israeli residents also includes the approximately 300,000 Palestinian citizens of East Jerusalem (who are "permanent residents") as well as foreign workers.

6   Israel's ultra-Orthodox Jewish community also defines itself as non-Zionist or anti-Zionist as they consider the creation of Israel through human hand as a blasphemy.

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Jews, which have very different positions towards the state and its institutions. The fourth fault line separates Jews of European origin (Ashkenazim) – Israel's founding generation – from Jews from Arab and Asian countries (Mizrahim), most of whom immigrated later to Israel and who for decades remained overrepresented in the lower socio-economic classes. The Ashkenazi–Mizrahi divide may have become less relevant in recent years. However, it is worth noting that it also divides Israel's Jewish Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox communities into different groups, each with its own spiritual leader(s) and political representation. Finally, with regard to the political salience of these collective identities, it is important to note that Israel has a purely proportional electoral system with a relatively low threshold (currently set at 3.25 per cent). Hence, many of the different collective identities at the societal level tend to be represented in the political realm, where they may compete with each other for resources and power.

Turning briefly to the Turkish case, collective identities in Turkey have historically existed and continued to thrive despite successive governments' attempts to crystallize Turkish identity as a homogeneous and secular dominating force confronting society's peripheral masses (Yılmaz 2008, Keyman 2012).[7] In Turkey, religion and ethnicity are seen as the two main determinants that define clear cleavages in society and shape the debate on identities. As far as the religious element is concerned, four collective identities – Alevis, non-Muslims, secularists and Sunni conservatives – can be detected, each of which is further differentiated internally according to other dimensions. In particular, the balance between the secular groups and the conservative ones has traditionally been one of the main points of contention at the societal and political levels as much as the cleavages built around ethnicity. In this regard, the main distinction is made between the "Turks" and the "Kurds", whose mutual relations have been subject to major ups and downs over time. From a historical perspective, the identity debate within Turkey's Kurdish community has evolved over the claim for the "recognition of difference" (Keyman 2012: 468), which has led to the Kurdish identity being perceived as having a greater "political face" in comparison with other collective identities. It must be noted that these collective identities continue to exist in a very intertwined social environment and no identity group is homogeneous in itself, being constituted by a number of diverging political opinions or ideologies.

Finally, Morocco and Tunisia display similar features as far as far the place in society of collective identities and their political role is concerned. Morocco is an Arab-Muslim country. Most of the population is officially Muslim (99 per cent), and more specifically Sunni, and the other 1 per cent includes Christians, Baha'i and Jews. From the ethnic point of view it includes both Arabs and Berbers. Berbers (or Amazigh) are considered the native population of North Africa and are estimated to represent about 35 per cent of the Moroccan population. Today they closely intermingle with Arabs, and bilingualism – the standardized version of Berber languages is Tamazight – is a common characteristic in modern Morocco. However, until recently they have been among the most marginalized groups of the population from a cultural, linguistic and economic perspective. Although they have actively participated in the fight for independence, they have been sidelined in the narrative centred on nationalism, which emphasizes the Arab and Islamic components of the Moroccan identity (Karimi 2016). This national narrative was instrumental in forging a common

7   The centre–periphery dichotomy is extensively used in the analysis of state–society relations in Turkey. This theoretical framework was first used by Mardin (1973) to examine the cleavages in late Ottoman and early republican Turkish politics.

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sense of belonging: "even though we have multifaceted ethnic and cultural components, Moroccan society is quite homogeneous. After independence we went through a 'Morocconization' of our identity. First of all, we are Moroccans", claimed one interviewee (Interview 35).

The mosaic of Morocco's society is characterized by two important fault lines. The first one is the Islamist–secularist divide, which is also projected onto the organized social and political levels. The largest political parties/movements with Islamist orientation are the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) and Al-Adl Wa'l Ihsane (AWI), alongside a range of Salafi groups of different orientations. The PJD is a political party that shares some affinities with the Muslim Brotherhood and stands for a strategic alliance with the monarchy. The pragmatism of the party brought its members to power in 2011 and in 2016 after the legislative elections. AWI is a political movement, not legalized but tolerated, with a rigid hierarchical structure. It considers the monarchy a "compulsory authority", aims to establish a civil state and questions the fact that the king bears the title of "Commander of the Faithful", one of the cornerstones of the Moroccan monarchy's legitimacy. Secularists, usually referring to themselves as "modernists", are generally defined in opposition to Islamists. Historically they were identified with the political Left (e.g., the Communist party is one of the oldest Moroccan parties), whereas liberals were sponsored by the monarchy as a counterweight to the Left. All in all and contrary to other Arab countries, in Morocco Islamists and secularists have traditionally tended to cooperate in building up an inclusive political order (Masbah 2014). The second fault line is the loyalist–republican divide, which is more difficult to define: on the one hand, it is not publicly acknowledged due to the important role played by the monarchy as the cornerstone of the whole political system; on the other hand, "the differences between Islamists, Loyalists and Modernists are not sharp because there are a lot of interrelations between these groups" (Interview 44). The relative simplicity of the political dimension of Morocco's collective identities has traditionally been the result of a non-pluralistic political arena and of the repeated episodes of state violence against dissidents and activists. By contrast, a great number of civil society groups – such as those devoted to gender or human rights – have been created as a way to foster participation, bypassing the empty political parties. In this regard, one of the respondents argued that

> in Morocco associations have always existed. Some of them were linked to the political forces and were initiated by them; others, such as religious associations, created, inversely, political parties; while others were launched to overcome political parties. Civil society has always played an important role in the democratization of the country. We did not have a revolution but an evolution. (Interview 43)

The discussion about Tunisia should start from what, according to a number of authors, are the main factors responsible for the ingrained general climate that favours moderation and consensus at both the societal and the political levels. Among the factors quoted are the relative homogeneity of the Tunisian population in terms of religious and ethnic affiliations – 98 per cent are Sunni Muslim Arabs, most of whom belong to the Maliki school. The country also hosts well-integrated Berber (1 per cent of the total population), Jewish and European communities. Another factor that is often acknowledged as having had an impact on the country's modern and contemporary history and state–society relations, up to the 2011 revolution, is the relatively high level of education of the population. If one takes the Human Development Index (HDI), which captures three basic

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dimensions of human development – health, education and income – between 1980 and 2012, Tunisia's HDI rose by 1.9 per cent annually, going from 0.459 to 0.712, and was 0.725 in 2015, which places Tunisia above the level of most countries in the MENA region (Murphy 2013: 242, Zlitni and Touati 2012). Moving from this relatively homogeneous situation and high standards in key indicators capturing societal well-being in spite of the repressive and authoritarian political situation prior to 2011, Tunisia's trajectory in the past seven years is even more remarkable in terms of the opening up of spaces for collective identities to play a more pluralistic and hybrid role in shaping state–society relations.

2. PLURALIZATION/HYBRIDIZATION VS ENTRENCHMENT/POLARIZATION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES IN THE MENA

A number of factors have led to changes in the role of collective identities throughout the MENA region, a dynamic that has taken different forms in different countries. Although not all the MENA countries have experienced it yet, it is nevertheless worth shedding light on this dynamic in order to grasp potential future developments and the impact it is already having on the domestic political and institutional processes in some places and potentially on the region as a whole. In this respect, it is possible to discern two main opposing trends that stand in a dichotomy. The first trend is the *pluralization and hybridization of collective identities* under the impact of the (temporary in certain cases) opening up of the societal and political landscapes. The Moroccan case is illustrative of this trend, which can be further defined as the growing to maturity and in some cases the rapprochement of previously existing collective identities. In February 2011, thousands of Moroccans took to the streets to demand democracy, an end to corruption, more justice and economic reforms. In Morocco, as opposed to other MENA countries, the revolutionary moment, which started as a reformist movement, has not led to the ousting of the regime in power or to violent civil war. In the words of one respondent: "everything has changed for everything to remain the same: the country is still a constitutional monarchy with a centralized power in the hands of the king, Mohammed VI, and the demands of the population have only been partially met" (Interview 37). However, 2011 has undoubtedly influenced the reconfiguration of state–society relations on the basis of the pluralization and hybridization of those groups that, building on ethnic, religious and/or ideological self-identification, have been at the forefront of contestation and political action during and after the uprisings of 2011. Domestic order-making has been affected as well, as partially new and hybrid patterns of political and institutional activity have started to emerge that transcend or escape the processes and categories known in the past. The pluralization/hybridization of Morocco's collective identities has to be understood as an expansion of those that already existed, as was stressed by all the interviewees, rather than as an increase in their number. Although most respondents belonging to civil society were unanimous in declaring that they "have always existed" (Interviews 36, 37, 38, 39), they were also equally prone to acknowledge the widespread feeling that 2011 had changed people's perceptions of the political arena. "People feel more legitimized to protest" (Interview 41) and "people are less afraid and there is less repression" (Interviews 36, 38, 40) were two of the most commonly heard replies. Others stressed, however, that "the state is still very harsh with activists" (Interviews 35, 39, 41, 42) and all of them agreed on the fact that "there are still three topics that cannot be debated: the monarchy, Islam and the Western Sahara".

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In Morocco, several collective identities were subsumed under the umbrella of a broad group known as the 20th February Movement. "For the first time in the history of modern Morocco, all members of the opposition movements, associations, individuals and parties gathered under the umbrella of one single movement surmounting psychological and organization barriers", argued one of the interviewees (Interview 35). In reality, Morocco already had a history of cooperation between the Islamists and the secularists in its recent past (Masbah 2014). This trend was reinforced in 2011 when the Islamists and leftist parties joined forces – Al-Adl Wa'l Ihsane and the Federation of the Democratic Left composed of the Socialist Unified Party, the Socialist Democratic Vanguard Party and the National Ittihadi Congress – to demand more justice, freedom and dignity. "Since 2011 we have experienced a rapprochement between Islamists and leftist parties. We are experiencing a *mélange* of identities", argued one interviewee (Interview 36). More than forty associations and parties have joined and supported the 20th February Movement, a horizontal movement, transversal to civil society, composed mainly of self-organized youth with a very active presence on the Web and on social media (Hoffmann and König 2013). The movement succeeded in creating a common platform among a broad and diversified group of societal and political actors. The progressive forces of the movement were mainly composed of young activists who in most cases were the "kids" of the militants that had opposed the Moroccan regime during the "Years of Lead" (Hivert 2015: 672). The other components of the movement were leftist parties' youth sections, civil society organizations (CSOs) and civic groups such as the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH), the Alternative Movement for Individual freedoms (MALI), the National Union of Moroccan Students (UNEM) and independent activists with diverse backgrounds: Trotskyists, Marxists–Leninists, Maoists, liberals, anarchists, diplomats, the unemployed and Amazigh. "For the first time, the recognition of the Amazigh as an official language became a slogan chanted by the crowd at a national level. For us it was a victory and a recognition of the work we had done previously", commented one Amazigh interviewee (Interview 38). Before 2011, only a few political actors had defended the claims for recognition and empowerment voiced by the Amazigh minority. However, despite this new sense of cohesion and common purpose, the reality on the ground tells a different story. The Amazigh movement was deeply heterogeneous and encompassed a number of approaches and points of view vis-à-vis the other collective identities and the role of the state. This heterogeneity presented an obstacle because it caused organizational problems in light of the fact that the majority of the Amazigh associations did not have funds or access to training. "In 2015 we created a coalition that brought together 100 associations", argued one of the Amazigh interviewees, "but two thirds of them are practically dormant: they do not have experience in lobbying at the national and international levels and do not have a budget. This is entirely due to internal reasons" (Interview 39).

As discussed in the next section, the quick approval of the new Moroccan constitution in July 2011 and the PJD's victory in the November 2011 elections led to several splits in the unity of the different collective identities that had previously coalesced around the 20th February Movement. The fragmentation of the movement and the (re)emergence of particularistic claims had in reality started earlier with the debate on gender equality (Borrillo 2017: 115). The gender equality question was not among the first battles of the movement,[8] and only became important at a later time. This occurred when rural women, known as Sulaliyyates, who are at the forefront of struggles over land rights, housing and political representation in Morocco, staged yet another protest in front of

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8   February 20th Movement, *Morocco Campaign* (video), 16 February 2011, https://youtu.be/S0f6FSB7gxQ.

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the parliament in Rabat with the support of the Democratic Association of Morocco's Women after the large mobilizations in 2009 (Mandraud 2011). Since then, issues related to the role of women and the recognition of gender equality as a human rights issue started to occupy centre stage in the debates and claims of the 20th February Movement and to crack it from within. It is possible to argue that the gender issue is pivotal to understand the confrontation between the different identities of the movement and in particular between the secularists and the Islamists and among the women's groups themselves. While, on the one hand, the secular forces of the movement chanted "women and men have the same rights", walking together during the demonstrations, the Islamists chanted "women and men are the same towards militancy" and walked separately (Borrillo 2017: 117). The approval of the constitution fragmented the fragile women's union once and for all. Several women's associations were satisfied with the adoption of Article 19, which calls for gender equality. Other, more radical groups, such as the coalition Printemps Feminist pour la Démocratie et l'Egalité, left the movement or remained but contested the idea that the constitution represented a significant change in terms of gender equality (Borrillo 2017: 117). The rift between the secular groups and the Islamists also grew wider and wider. A female respondent from one of the secular women's groups stated: "I do not understand how we can fight together. When we speak about women's rights we speak about equality whereas the Islamists speak about 'complementarity'". (Interview 40)

Other members of the secular women's groups questioned the alliance with the Islamists on the ground that

> our aim is not the partial recognition of gender equality but of democracy and human rights, or rather individual rights that are not respected by them. Our idea of individual rights applies to freedom of consciousness and worship, which also includes the right to decide whether or not we want to do the Ramadan. (Interview 41)

To conclude on the Moroccan trajectory of collective identities pluralization and hybridization, the trend towards rapprochement among the different identities under the umbrella of the 20th February Movement in the wake of the popular unrest and the opening of some spaces for debate and expression turned out to be instrumental. When the monarchy quickly managed to assert its control over the transition process – concretely through the King's speech to the nation on 9 March 2011 outlining the steps in the revision of the constitution – and to take the steam out of the protest movement, the different identities themselves started to feel more secure in the comfort zone of their particularistic claims, thus leading to the fragmentation of the 20th February Movement and to its political and institutional irrelevance.

The Tunisian case provides another example of the pluralization/hybridization of collective identities in the MENA, although it distances itself from the Moroccan trend of rapprochement followed by renewed fragmentation discussed above. In the aftermath of the revolution of January 2011, debates around identity issues have grown significantly and have had an impact on the political and institutional development of the country (Interview 11). While before 2011 identity-related issues were generally regarded as taboo – to protect the seemingly homogeneous Arab-Muslim nature of Tunisian identity and the peaceful character of the country – the watershed of the revolution provided a space and opportunity for societal differences, new claims and a new

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discourse around the role of minorities to emerge. This discourse has been powerfully framed within the "right to diversity" language (*droit à la différence*) thanks to the relentless work of Tunisian civil society. Against this backdrop, it is possible to understand the extent to which the pluralization of collective identities has been a key driving force of societal dynamism and political activism in the period 2011–14, and to many people this process represents a structural change for the country (Interview 13). "Between January and October 2011 the political agenda was set by civil society as it turned out to have grown stronger than the political parties in the ARP [the Assembly of the Representatives of the People – Assemblée des représentants du peuple]", argued one of the interviewees (Interview 12). For example, fault lines have started to emerge among those that define their political identity in terms of being Muslim, with a distinction between moderate/pragmatic Islamists (e.g., Ennahda) and more radical ones (e.g., Salafists), drawing an important line within the Muslim-Sunni Tunisian political identity (Voltolini and Colombo 2018). Another fault line that has been projected onto Tunisian society for the first time is that between Arab and Amazigh, moving up the ladder from the individual level to the national one through the collective level. To be fair, collective identities in Tunisia have always been heterogeneous. However, what has been transformed since 2011 as a result of the changing political circumstances has been the perception of these identities by the people themselves and, most importantly, the fact that "a new opportunity structure has emerged whereby it was for the first time possible to claim 'to be something else' and 'to act differently'" (Interview 12). Another interviewee argued that

> after 2011 Tunisian people have realized that they are not a homogeneous category. Different collective identities have started to define them and this process has led to a growing confrontation and sometimes conflict among different groups as a means to construct these identities. (Interview 16)

The pluralization/hybridization of collective identities in Tunisia has taken two forms. The first is the fragmentation or "explosion" of previously existing collective identities. It has been observed that collective identities have "exploded" and have given rise to a number of sub-identities that have put forth claims and competed for recognition and power. This is apparent also in terms of the ways in which collective identities, which used to be regarded and treated as homogeneous by the state, have revealed fissures, and dynamics of competition and conflict have emerged. The fragmentation of the groups that mobilize around women's issues is representative of this trend. Although women's empowerment has traditionally been a key area for civic activism, in the past this has taken place within the strict boundaries of what was allowed by the authoritarian regimes of Bourghiba and of Ben Ali. The Union Nationale de la Femme Tunisienne (UNFT), created in 1956 upon the country's independence, was traditionally co-opted by the ruling authorities to show that they had an agenda on women's issues. The Union was the mouthpiece for a form of "elitist feminism" or "*feminism de l'état*" (Interview 18). The creation of the Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates in 1989 and, in particular, its becoming the strongest voice for the women's emancipation movement in the post-Ben Ali era is an example of the pluralization of collective identities in Tunisia and of the hybridization in the tone of the claims of the women's movement. More than that, the activism around women's issues after 2011 has been one of the key defining features of the Tunisian transition away from authoritarianism. Against the backdrop of a political landscape in flux, women's activism after 2011 has not been monolithic and "lack of solidarity, antagonism and competition" have tended to prevail among the societal groups that have made

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women's issues the core of their cause (Interview 17). The main divide has been between the conservative/Islamist-leaning groups, on the one hand, and the progressive/secular ones, on the other. "This divide has impacted upon the very identity of women in unexpected ways and has created problems and conflicts among women who had been used to working together", argued the same interviewee (Interview 17).

Turning to the second form of the pluralization/hybridization of collective identities in Tunisia, this can be defined as the "bubbling up" of new, previously repressed or dormant collective identities. Contrary to the previous form of pluralization/hybridization exemplified by the trajectory of women's issues and claims, the collective identities that have bubbled up to the surface and come to the fore had previously been either non-existent or unorganized and silent. This has been the case, for example, of the militant groups mobilized around LGBTQ issues and rights. These groups have multiplied in number and have gained substantial visibility as a result of the "embeddedness" of their discourses within transnational/global trends (e.g., the spread of technology, communication) (Interview 13). This has been accompanied by demands for better representation and more inclusiveness, which have been couched in terms of heightened identity self-consciousness. Another example is represented by the youth as a subgroup within collective identities. After 2011 the space for youth to take part in civic-activism – and to a lesser extent political – initiatives has multiplied. However, as in other Arab countries the Tunisian youth have become divided along ideological, religious and mainly socio-economic fault lines. This was already apparent during the January 2011 revolution when "the youth in the cities protested for civil rights while the youth in the countryside took to the streets for better economy conditions" (Interviews 16, 22). Further evidence of this split is the fact that the protests of January 2018 took place almost exclusively in the countryside.

Two further examples drawn from the Tunisian case exemplify this, both of which are tied to geographical disparities and to the long history of marginalization experienced by some regions and territories since independence (Bono et al. 2015). In the light of the important role played by the peripheries in setting the stage for the January 2011 revolution, regional and local collective identities have been sharpened thereafter vis-à-vis the central powers (Interview 11). In particular, some CSOs from the interior regions (e.g., Sidi Bouzid, Kasserine) have been the carriers of specific claims built around their identity as groups from marginalized and dispossessed territories. While advancing these claims, previously hidden tribal identities have even been constructed with reference to certain regions (e.g., Sfax). In the words of one interviewee, "tribalism has partially re-appeared in Tunisia – not as a political phenomenon but as a way to affirm local identities that were not sufficiently taken into account at the national level" (Interview 13). According to other respondents, this new self-affirmation of regional and local collective identities is rather instrumental, intended to gain more voice at the national level through the work of CSOs. Nuances in the cultural, language and customs-related expressions across the Tunisian regions – often depicted as caricatures – are increasingly highlighted by journalists and commentators to speak of this pluralization/hybridization of collective identities in the country (Interview 18). Special mention in this regard should be made to the emergence of the Amazigh identity in Tunisia, which has gained visibility through demonstrations and public actions and claims often inspired by the experience of the Moroccan Amazigh groups. This is a clear example of the working of the principle of the "right to diversity" that was forcefully proclaimed in Tunisia after the revolution of 2011.

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The second trend discussed in this report is the *entrenchment and polarization of previously existing collective identities*. Both Turkey and Israel exemplify this, albeit in different respects and with different implications. In the case of Turkey, the salience of identity politics stems from the fact that "identity groups in Turkey are interpreted on the basis of their political influence", as expressed by one interviewee (Interview 1). Identity dynamics and their impact on state–society relations have become a featured topic of the social and political agenda, especially during the phase of opening and democratization ushered in by Turkey's European Union accession process. Although marked by a number of ups and down, the framework of EU–Turkey relations did influence the rights-based policy-making approach implemented by the authorities towards certain collective identities. The 2013 reform package, which aimed at catering to the demands of different identity groups through steps such as restoring non-Muslims' property rights and boosting the rights of the Alevis, was significant in this respect. This trend has also shaped by the identity-oriented discourse that the political elites themselves have increasingly made use of in the past decade. In parallel to this opening, societal self-identification in Turkey has veered towards the conservative groups, which had been previously excluded from public life and service. "Religious values have found a legitimate place in the public sphere and the demands of the lower middle class have been better looked after", argued one interviewee (Interview 4). The conservatives' growing visibility both in politics and at the civil society level is believed to have led to a feeling of exclusion among certain segments of the secular community, once the pivot of Turkish society. This process has been accompanied by one of "self-criticism" among the secular community, especially after the failed coup attempt, over the exclusion of the conservatives from "the history of the Republic" (Gündoğar and Görgülü 2017: 19). It is thus possible to observe that the post-15 July environment has led to the lifting of the established bias against a previously disadvantaged social group in society and – more importantly – to the entrenchment of nationalist sentiments and tendencies. These have become the pole of attraction for a variety of identity groups across the conservative–secular spectrum and beyond. As a result, neither conservative nor secular-minded people are seen as "monolithic" blocs any longer (Interview 2).

Nevertheless, polarization at the level of the main ethnic and religious cleavages can be partially observed. Being perceived as a minority, the core demands of the Kurdish community in terms of the recognition of their right to citizenship without implications for their ethnicity, the opportunity to use their mother language in education and the general enhancement of democratic standards have mostly received palliative treatment. While acknowledging the efforts made by the Turkish authorities, the perception among the Kurdish population is that public and educational initiatives, such as the neighbourhood councils and the Kurdish-language courses operating especially in the south-eastern part of Turkey, have had a limited impact on changing their status. Against this backdrop, the onset of the civil war in Syria and its regional repercussions have created the conditions for a hardening of the Kurdish collective identity and of their claims and – since 2015 – for the reigniting of inter-communal tensions particularly but not exclusively in areas inhabited mostly by Kurds. On the other side, religious subgroups such as the Alevis and Turkey's non-Muslim population have opted for a more conciliatory approach. On the one hand, the institutional growth of Alevis was characterized by more inclusiveness and moderation (Göner 2005). Their claims are primarily focused on the maintenance of social peace, equal citizenship, freedom of religion and belief (e.g., the removal of compulsory religious courses from state education) and the recognition of Cemevis as a place of worship (Genç et al. 2017, Tol 2017). The Alevi identity has benefited

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in terms of gaining visibility from the partial political and societal opening discussed above and relaxation of state policies that started between 2010 and 2013–14 as part of the government's reform agenda targeting minority rights in the context of Turkey's EU accession.

> When there is a convergence of interests, it creates an advantageous environment between two sides as witnessed during the Alevi opening. In that period, the visibility of the Alevi identity was heightened through the visits of high-profile statesmen to Cemevis. The Alevis are generally backed by secular-oriented political groups, yet for now they are waiting for a new political actor to bring them to the centre of discussion. (Interview 5).

However, the regional circumstances sparked by the Syrian conflict and the rise of the ISIS threat have raised concerns among the Alevis that they too could be targeted by the jihadists. Although Syrian Alawites and Turkey's Alevi community are linked by only distant ties, it is understood that what the Alawites in Syria have suffered has generated anxiety to a certain extent among the Alevi community in Turkey, leading them to turn inwards (Tol 2017: 10).

On the other hand, Turkey's non-Muslim groups are relatively seen as less active in the political sphere and their rights-based claims mostly revolve around the recognition of autonomy in the elections of their religious representatives, the management of community schools and cultural rights – compared with other collective identities. It can be argued, in the words of one interviewee, that "they act like an audience amidst the developments happening around the country. When there is an issue challenging their identity-based claims, their voice is much clearer. Otherwise, they prefer not to intervene and to live their own lives within their own community" (Interview 1). This does not mean, however, that non-Muslims show indifference towards their acquired rights.

Another example of the growing entrenchment/polarization of collective identities is the case of Israel. Israel was obviously not affected by the Arab uprisings, although it did witness a popular protest movement against the high costs of living in the summer of 2011. The major changes affecting Israeli politics and society in recent years were triggered by events that happened well before the start of the Arab uprisings, most chiefly the breakdown of the Oslo peace process and the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada in late September 2000 with its numerous terrorist attacks. These events triggered a notable shift to the right in Israeli politics and the collapse of the Zionist Left; subsequent conflicts with Hamas and Hezbollah and the inflammatory rhetoric of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad additionally contributed to the creation of a general sense of being under attack in Israel (Del Sarto 2017). Engaging in the politics of insecurity, Israeli governments have relentlessly promoted and amplified this sense of besiegement. Traditionally heated political debates have been replaced by a general acceptance of a no-compromise approach to security and the Palestinians, with consecutive right-wing governments pushing maximalist territorial ambitions. The consensus that emerged in Israeli policies and that persists today is based on the worldview of classical revisionist Zionism with its perception of an inherently hostile environment – hence the need for forceful policies and deterrence. However, it is also infused with ethno-religious conceptions of politics and messianic beliefs. This neo-revisionist credo has remained the ideology of the Likud as well as of the settler movement, whereby religious beliefs and security considerations have become increasingly intertwined (Klein 2010: ch. 3). Israeli society has undoubtedly remained heterogeneous, but it has also become "more closed and frightened",

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as one interviewee put it (Interview 23).

Furthermore, the polarization and distance between different collective identities and groups have grown stronger. Almost all interviewees identified this as a significant development in recent years, to the point that some feared that Israel's social cohesion was at risk (Interviews 24, 25). The growing polarization of collective identities is particularly visible regarding the divide between the political Right and a tremendously weakened political Left. By now, the hegemonic Israeli narrative points to the threats that Israel is facing, which besides terrorism and allegedly sinister Iranian ambitions also include all those (both abroad and at home) who "hide behind the mask of anti-Zionism to de-legitimize Israel or even to deny it its right to exist" (Interview 26). Concurrently, Israeli settlers may warn of the "traitors", those Israelis and international activists who "come to insult us and who together with the Palestinians come to make our life harder" (Interview 27). A growing polarization also seems to have occurred along the secular–religious divide. While this divide has a long history in Israeli politics, both sides seem to have the impression that they are the weaker one. However, religious preferences have undoubtedly become much stronger in Israel (including all denominations), with the religious population having grown considerably in recent decades due to higher birth rates. Moreover, it is not irrelevant that most Jewish religious parties have participated in right-wing government coalitions since the 2000s. The religious settler movement has also grown stronger, both demographically and politically. As Israel is "not moving in the direction of secularism and the inclusion of difference" (Interview 30), progressive-liberal activists feel as if they are facing an uphill battle. However, things are not black and white in this realm: for instance, the LGBTQ movement "enjoys good health" in Israel (Interview 23) and secular feminist activists may join forces with female religious activists in their fight for the right of women to pray at the Western Wall in Jerusalem (i.e., Women of the Wall) (Interview 30). Moreover, the growing strength of religious conservativism in Israeli society is somewhat counterbalanced by the approximately one million people who immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union after it collapsed, and who are generally not very religious. This segment of Israeli society has strong representation at the government level, a fact that contributes to the growing religious–secular polarization. Thus, the Yisrael Beyiteinu party led by Avigdor Lieberman, which caters to the collective of "Russian" Israelis, has initiated a number of "secularist" bills, aiming for instance at the adoption of faster conversion procedures and the drafting of haredi Jews into the Israeli army. The ultra-Orthodox community, which is non-Zionist and therefore feels very distant from the problems of the Israeli state, is particularly threatened by the prospect of being forced to serve in the military. As one haredi interviewee put it, "Israel does not concern me", stressing that "I do not want to talk about the State of Israel. I am not a Zionist and I do not participate in the politics of this country" (Interview 31). In general, the ultra-Orthodox religious sector seems to be concerned by what it perceives as a growing secularization, the "lack of true spirituality" (Interview 31) and the growing disconnect from religious teachings and traditions (Interview 25).

As regards the Arab–Jewish divide, the growing power of the neo-revisionist Right is undoubtedly affecting the relationship between the Jewish majority and the Arab-Palestinian minority in Israel.[9] The discourse adopted by consecutive right-wing Israeli governments, which depicts the Palestinian

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9   While Palestinian citizens of Israel were never fully included in the Israeli collective, many (if not most) of them consider themselves anti-Zionists or non-Zionists – if Zionists are defined as those "who come to this land thinking that it belongs to them, thinking of having the opportunity and the right to drive me out of my house" (Interview 32).

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citizens as a "fifth column", only contributes to this growing divide. Concurrently, the mainstream media regularly warns of the "radicalization" of the Arab-Israeli public and their leaders (Peleg and Waxman 2011). In parallel, the objective of wanting to strengthen the Jewish character of the state, as expressed by right-wing and religious political activists as a major objective of their activities (Interviews 25, 26), obviously increases the tensions between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority. The recent law defining Israel as the Jewish nation-state is a case in point: this law reserves collective rights and the right to self-determination to the Jewish collective only (Lis and Landau 2018). And while Palestinian citizens of Israel tend to see the settlers and right-wing voters as "the other" (Interview 33), the perception expressed by one Israeli settler that "the Knesset is still full of anti-Semites and murderers" (by which she meant the Arab Knesset members) (Interview 27) does not bode well for the future of Arab–Jewish relations in Israel either. Finally, whereas the Ashkenazi–Mizrahi fault line and the political underrepresentation of the Mizrahim and Sephardim seems to have become less salient (Interviews 25, 34), a new fault line has been emerging, namely the one between rich and poor, adding an additional layer of societal fragmentation. The background of this development is the fact that Israel has moved from an originally egalitarian and socialist-oriented society in its founding years to an OECD country that in 2013 ranked fifth in terms of income inequality (after Chile, Mexico, Turkey and the United States). At the political level, this development is reflected in the growing importance of socio-economic issues in the political debate. Some political parties have even profited from this development (such as Yesh Atid and Kulanu), presenting themselves as champions of greater socio-economic equality. While the divide between rich and poor largely transcends collective identities, it is important to note that the Arab citizens of Israel and the ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities are overrepresented among the poorest segments of Israeli society.[10] Indeed, the income of about one in five Israeli households falls below the relative poverty line; among the Arab citizens of Israel and the ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities, over one in two households is poor (OECD 2013, Dattel and Feldman 2013; see also OECD 2018: 15-6, Dattel 2017).

3. ASSESSING THE CONTRIBUTION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES TO DOMESTIC ORDER-MAKING IN THE MENA

Studying collective identities in the MENA region offers advantages from multiple standpoints. Firstly, it helps deconstruct the view according to which changes (or lack thereof) at the societal level (the civil society recalled at the beginning) tend to be subsumed under more important and impactful transformations in the political society once political and institutional processes are set in motion. On the contrary, the interplay between the two continues to unfold and to have an impact on state–society relations at large. Secondly, focusing on collective identities in the context of political and institutional development allows one to counter the risk of reifying identity politics. The last part of this report assesses the impact of the opposing trends in collective identities discussed above at the political and institutional levels. It dwells on the extent to which this dynamic has given rise to competing or alternative interests and claims and on whether states in the region have acted upon them and have successfully enshrined them in state institutions and policies. This last point is particularly important as it has a direct effect on the type of domestic order that is created and maintained. The analysis focuses on organized forms of political action and on

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10 The Ethiopian community is also overrepresented in the weaker socio-economic classes in Israeli society.

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institutional arrangements articulated around collective identities. Against this backdrop, identity politics can be studied at two different levels: the meso and the macro. On the one hand, the meso level of analysis is the level of organized collective behaviour, namely that of organized groups (e.g., political parties, networks, trade unions, charities, social movements) and of their actions and interactions. On the other hand, the macro level is the level of state policies and institutional structures (e.g., dominant social and cultural norms, constitutional legal systems, etc.). This level is particularly important in relation to the countries undergoing political transition processes.

By keeping these two levels of analysis in mind, it is possible to distinguish three trends when it comes to the impact of collective identities at the political and institutional levels. The first trend can be described as formal opening at the political level without substantive pluralism. This trend is exemplified by the Moroccan case. As already argued, with the adoption of the constitution in July 2011 and the victory of the PJD in the November 2011 elections the 20th February Movement lost traction and started to fragment. The main rift between the movement's constituencies had to do with the support lent to the monarchy, which decided to take a proactive role in steering the political and institutional transition in the direction it desired (Dalmasso 2012). This was framed by most interviewees as the King's successful attempt to "gradually neutralize" the opposition. "With the worsening of stability in the MENA region, the King rolled back the 2011 political opening. State repression has resumed and people have gone back to being scared", argued one interviewee (Interview 36). It therefore appears that the pluralization/hybridization of collective identities in Morocco has shaped the domestic order ambiguously: on the one hand, the monarchy has had to take into account and respond to some of the claims made by the population (as in the case of the Amazigh) by opening up the political space and by initiating institutional reforms (e.g., the referendum on the new constitution). On the other hand, regional dynamics such as the civil wars in Libya and Syria and the rise of the jihadist threat in the MENA region were exploited by the monarchy as an excuse to end the political opening shortly thereafter.

All in all, the simple adoption of the new constitution – hailed as a big achievement by the monarchy and by some political parties – does not represent any meaningful and deep change either in the institutional architecture of the state or in how politics is made. The constitution was often described as "an empty shell" (Interview 38), or, to use a simile, as if "you receive the keys of a house but someone else has the double" (Interview 36), and finally as being "very ambiguous" (Interview 35). The adoption of the organic laws required to implement its provisions was delayed – and in some cases has yet to be completed – and for the most part this has happened without the participation of civil society. "The former government of Benkirane has claimed to involve the Amazigh community for the drafting of the organic law by creating an email where we could send our recommendations", explained a disappointed member of the Amazigh community (Interview 39). The result of this lack of a participatory approach is an organic law adopted in 2016 by the government (but still lacking the vote of the parliament) that does not concretely establish Tamazight as an official language. The ambiguity of this formal opening was stressed by another Amazigh representative:

> we do not understand whether it is an official language or not. The law does not guarantee the fact that Tamazight should be used by professors and teachers in schools and universities, in the media and in the administration. Plus, they have created another

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institution that should consider case by case whether it has to be used officially or not. (Interview 38)

The ambiguous character of the constitution has also been denounced by women's associations. The Penal Code is in contrast to the principle of equality stressed by the constitution.

> We had to wait until 2014 for the abolition of art. 475 of the Penal Code that provided that whoever 'abducts or deceives' a minor can escape prosecution and imprisonment if the abductor marries the victim. Moreover, the law against violence against women, which has been adopted recently [in February 2018], does not provide a definition of domestic violence and does not explicitly criminalize marital rape. (Interview 40)

Other institutions that have been inaugurated since 2011 in order to guarantee the democratic transformation of the country are seen in a slightly more positive light despite their ineffectiveness. One interviewee argued

> The existence of the National Human Rights Council (NHRC), which should guarantee the respect of human rights, is a good thing although it is too weak. It is not independent, it has to submit its reports to the King before any publication and it does not address sensitive issues such as the Rif demonstrations that have been taking place in the North of the country since 2016. (Interview 42)

According to other respondents, the NHRC indeed "has an impact at the local level" and "it demonstrates the evolution of the political scene" (Interview 37). The most troubling evidence of the lack of true political opening following 2011 is the fact that freedom of expression is dangerously in retreat in Morocco. It is indeed common to hear people say they are scared: "we are followed and controlled during the whole day" (Interview 42). Others point to the fact that "the state today uses other instruments of repression such as newspapers that carry out defamatory campaigns against political activists" (Interview 37). Concerning the economic reforms, frustration is very high and most of the respondents consider the Rif demonstrations as the expression of this malaise.[11] In the past year and a half peaceful protests have encompassed the whole range of socio-economic rights (more hospitals, schools, roads, jobs), giving birth to the social movement known as al-Hirak – one of the longest-living protest movements in the region since the Arab uprisings. The response of the state to this peaceful popular mobilization has been twofold. On the one hand, it started (after nearly a year) to use an iron fist against the protesters and arrested the movement's leader (Interview 44); on the other hand, around the same time two ministers (of the Interior and of Economic Development) had to resign in October 2017 and the PJD's Prime Minister, Saâdeddine El Othmani, launched a plan for the economic development of the region. "The state knows that after the Arab uprisings they have to respond to the demands of the population. Or at least they pretend to do it", argued one interviewee (Interview 44). For the time being, however, we can talk about "two-speed politics: the one led by society, which is quick and one by the state institutions, which is very slow" (Interview 36).

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11 In October 2016, an Al Hoceima-based fishmonger was crushed to death in a rubbish truck while he was trying to retrieve his confiscated fish. After that, people in the northern Rif region took immediately to the streets to express their frustration and anger.

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Turning to the second trend concerning the impact of collective identities at the political and institutional levels, it is possible to observe the hardening and polarization of political stances. Again, the Turkish and the Israeli cases tell two similar stories with some differences. In the case of Turkey, the position that has been increasingly hardened is the nationalist one, which has become the umbrella under which a number of societal groups have united. This trend correlates with regional and international developments in addition to domestic ones. Among these factors, the migration crisis linked to the Syrian civil war has brought another dimension into the identity debate. "Like other collective identities, 'being a Syrian' is increasingly discussed as a notion of identity, especially in the cities with the biggest number of refugees", argued one interviewee (Interview 10). According to the same interviewee, this situation is a source of concern among the local communities, which highlights the importance of a properly functioning social integration plan run by local governments and provincial authorities. As already discussed, the 2016 failed coup attempt has created favourable terrain for a renewed nationalist rhetoric within political circles as well as the public opinion. Politically, "the direction of Turkey's ruling political party [AKP], which principally addresses conservative sensitivities, is now more on the nationalist side, getting closer to the stance of the Nationalist Movement Party [MHP]", argued one interviewee (Interview 2) – as also exemplified by the result of the parliamentary and presidential elections held in Turkey on 24 June 2018 that reflected the united conservative and nationalist tendencies in the society. Socially, a majority of the population believes that the nation is under threat, and that during this time of serious danger to Turkey's integrity following the July 2016 failed coup attempt, discussions regarding the status and place of collective identities should not be on the agenda (Gündoğar and Görgülü 2017). Symbolically, 15 July was declared by legislative proposal as a national holiday, the "Day of Democracy and National Unity", in 2017. The commemoration events of the first anniversary of the failed coup attempt put specific emphasis on the rhetoric of national solidarity.

As argued by the interviewees, the political climate in the post-coup attempt period has contributed to constraining the progress of social initiatives and of civil engagement and mobilization with regard to almost all collective identities, which hinders the interaction between them and therefore pushes them to retreat into their own shells. Countering this trend, some elements of hybridization of collective identities can be detected, producing spaces and sub-identities that tend to be mobilized by social movements around diverse subjects such as gender equality and women's rights or environmental protection. "These social movements function at the civil society level and might seem far from political issues. Yet they also have a rights-based nature and take a political attitude while addressing social issues", argued one interviewee (Interview 5). At the same time, these social movements provide the terrain for interaction and collaboration between different collective identities around specific issues. "There is a visible engagement between secular and conservative feminists and secular and conservative environmentalists as they try to resolve the same social problems. Here, hybridization of collective identities is a 'multiplying factor' and as such it is valuable for democratization efforts" (Interview 5). Similarly, dynamics among the youth from different identity groups in Turkey show that growing social interconnectedness spurred by globalization is pushing them to come together. Yet the youth are still told to prioritize conformity rather than conflict within their immediate community, although they share significant discrepancies (Interview 5). As a result of this conformity, at the organizational level, although

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youth activism within politically oriented groups tends to increase, its ability to produce change at the social and political levels has been constrained. Once again, the political climate as well as regional developments outside the borders of Turkey are believed to have a depoliticizing effect on the youth regardless of their collective identity.

Turning to the Israeli case, the hardening and strengthening of previously existing positions mostly concerns the neo-revisionist narrative. As right-wing governments have dominated Israeli politics for over fifteen years, ethno-religious and ultra-nationalist collective identities and political forces have grown stronger. In particular, the settler movement and its supporters have witnessed a significant political empowerment, as evidenced by the growing political strength of the pro-settler party Ha-Bayit ha-Yehudi ("The Jewish Home") and its participation in consecutive Israeli government coalitions. Claiming that it is "God who gave us this land", one interviewed settler stressed that "our voice is now taken into consideration by the government" (Interview 27). Significantly, the political Right has largely succeeded in marginalizing the Palestinian issue. To put it in the words of this settler, "we continue to work our land and take what is ours" (Interview 27). Conversely, the political Left feels increasingly embattled. As another interviewee put it, "we live in a country where it is easier to declare openly one is gay than to declare publicly one is a leftist" (Interview 23). Perhaps even more importantly, facing multiple attempts by the government "to silence us in different ways [...] we keep working outside of the official political space", as one interviewed activist reported (Interview 28). Indeed, notwithstanding the government's attempts to target left-wing CSOs with restrictive legislation, an impressive number of progressive-liberal civil society organizations are still active in Israel, seeking to defend human rights as well as the two-state solution with the Palestinians, which they consider intrinsically linked to the future of Israeli democracy (Interview 28). They are also very active in defending the rights of African immigrants and asylum seekers who face imprisonment or deportation (Interview 29). However, their work has become increasingly difficult. "Organizations such as B'Tselem and Breaking the Silence were respected [...] but now are seen as traitors of the nation", complained one interviewee associated with a left-wing political party (Interview 28). However, many people no longer feel represented at the political level and doubt whether their activities are having or will have a political impact in the current political climate.

In addition to the growth of the neo-revisionist forces and the decline of the Left, another interesting development is the increasing activism of Arab-Palestinian political forces. Incidentally prompted by a change in the electoral law that raised the threshold to enter parliament to 3.25 per cent – a measure that was meant to target the small Arab political parties – two Arab parties and one Jewish–Arab party merged into one single party, the Arab Joint list. This party is currently the third-largest party in the Israeli Knesset. While seeking to join forces in spite of the political, socio-economic and religious differences within the Arab community, the objective of political activists associated with the Joint List is to increase the political participation of the Arab citizens of Israel so as to achieve the equality of all Israeli citizens (Interview 32). In other words, the objective is "to develop a common sense of responsible citizenship" (Interview 33). While parliamentary politics is the main objective of these political activists, they also cooperate with different Israeli civil society organizations that promote equality, Jewish and Palestinian alike. These goals and their modus operandi seem to represent a departure from the Arab communities' approach to Israeli politics of previous decades, when participation in Israeli politics was considered a betrayal of

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the cause (Interview 32). Similarly, while ending Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories still enjoys a high priority, the focus of attention seems to have shifted to the civil rights and living conditions of the Palestinian communities within Israel. Interestingly, the "explosion" of the collective political identity of the Palestinian citizens of Israel was identified as the most important political development in recent years by a Palestinian-Israeli political activist (Interview 32). It is interesting to note that a similar development seems to be taking place among the Palestinian residents of Arab Jerusalem, who are entitled to participate in local elections but usually have refrained from doing so; for the first time, a joint Jewish–Arab list is running for the local elections in Jerusalem in October 2018.

Finally, the Tunisian case tells a very different story compared with the Turkish and Israeli cases since it represents the only success story of democratization among the countries that underwent the Arab uprisings. In the context of this democratization process, state–society relations in Tunisia after 2011 have been characterized by the search for inclusion, moderation and participation through dialogue and compromise. One interesting aspect of the Tunisian case is that the pluralization/hybridization of collective identities has gone hand in hand with a pluralization/hybridization at the level of civil society and political society. Although numbers in themselves do not say much about the dynamism of Tunisian society and politics, it has been observed that a large number of civil society organizations, associations and political parties have emerged, trying to find their own niche and thus exploiting identity issues for self-identification and the advancement of claims (Interview 13). It is largely thanks to some of the (new) identity-based demands that progress has been made in making the Tunisian state more democratic, accountable and responsive vis-à-vis society (Colombo 2018). For example, it is thanks to the mobilization of more than 100 women's associations – in spite of all the rifts and the divisions among them – that a new law introducing the concepts of violence against women, of moral and sexual violence, and of economic exploitation was adopted in July 2017 after being held up in the legislative process for more than twenty years (Interviews 12, 17; Colombo and Meddeb 2018). Similarly, it is thanks to the "bubbling up" of previously repressed or silent regional and local collective identities that the issue of the inequalities between the core and the periphery has entered the public debate, to the point that the "Code des collectivités locales", namely the organic law regulating regional and local governance, was adopted by the ARP only ten days before the Tunisian municipal elections held on 6 May 2018.[12] The Code introduces several important provisions implementing the decentralization plan, addressing the economic marginalization of certain areas and ultimately fostering local democracy.

A final note on Tunisian civil society is in order here. When speaking of inclusion, moderation and participation, these terms mainly refer to the ability of Tunisian civil society to act as "a complementary actor to the state institutions" (Interview 12). Many interviewees also argued that civil society in Tunisia became a pole of convergence of different collective identities through a culture of dialogue and compromise during the so-called "golden age" of civil society activism between 2011 and 2014 (Interviews 12, 13, 16). In other words, although collective identities in Tunisia are plural in number as well as in substance, the existence of a common Tunisian identity has not been jeopardized by the pluralization/hybridization process. On the contrary, "Tunisian identity – dating back to only 60 years – has been further reinforced after the events of 2011 and over

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12 The previous local elections in Tunisia had been held in 2010.

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the course of the democratic transition", argued one interviewee (Interview 20). This is the result of the mobilization and hard work of civil society that has pushed for reforms and obtained them – although democratic consolidation still has to be achieved and some of the changes appear more cosmetic than substantive because of significant problems with implementation (Interviews 16, 21). The limits of this process involving Tunisian civil society have started to manifest themselves since late 2014, in particular after the parliamentary elections of October 2014. Being in the spotlight is not always beneficial for civil society. Some sectors of Tunisian civil society have been exposed to excessive professionalization and specialization with a view to attracting scarce funding. "This is an externally driven process and some of the CSOs have lost the connection to the people and claims they purport to represent", acknowledged one civil society activist (Interview 14). In addition, another shortcoming that concerns the Tunisian civil society landscape is the stark gap that exists between the means, outreach, activism and sometimes aggressive competition of the Tunis-based CSOs – often derogatorily called "Tunisoises" – and the plethora of associations that are active at the local level but have limited budgets and visibility (Interview 15). This fragmented landscape at the level of civil society has acted as a powerful constraining factor on the overall democratization process the country has experienced since 2011. Moreover, the political society has "failed to uphold its commitments and has fallen back on old, '*divide et impera*' strategies to implement largely superficial reforms" (Interview 16).

CONCLUSIONS

This report has explored the nature, scope and impact of different trends concerning collective identities in the MENA region by drawing on the comparative empirical assessment of four case studies: Israel, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. The analysis of these case studies points to two opposing trends: pluralization/hybridization vs entrenchment/polarization of collective identities. Nevertheless, this dichotomy does not capture the full complexity and the nuances of every case. What should be clear by now is that the different trends experienced by these countries reinforce the argument that societies in the MENA region have undergone significant changes in the last decade and in particular in the years since 2011. The Moroccan and the Tunisian cases offer interesting evidence concerning the pluralization/hybridization of collective identities and their impact at the institutional and political levels. They also point to the existence of significant differences within this trend: in the former case the temporary convergence and rapprochement of already existing collective identities under the umbrella of the 20th February Movement, while in the latter case the "explosion" (i.e., fragmentation) and the "bubbling up" of old collective identities with new forms, meanings and claims. The pairing of the Israeli and Turkish cases offers another viewpoint from which to gauge the role of collective identities in domestic order-making in the MENA. In both cases the trend of entrenchment/polarization of existing collective identities – be they in the form of the nationalist rhetoric in Turkey or of the neo-revisionist tendency in Israel – represents a significant change compared with the previous contemporary history of partial societal diversity and pluralism. One point in common among the four case studies is that issue-based activism at the level of civil society, such as around gender equality and women's rights or environmental issues, has been significant across all cases. This has provided the terrain for interaction and cooperation among different collective identities.

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To make sense of the pluralization/hybridization vs entrenchment/polarization dichotomy as well as to enrich its explanatory potential, three factors should be mentioned. The first is the temporal one. The 2011 revolts and the ensuing transition processes represented an important turning point for both Morocco and Tunisia, although a number of continuities exist with previous trends at the societal level. It is indeed not possible to fully appraise the "revolutionary" nature of 2011 for the civil society and the political society of Tunisia without taking into account the preparatory phase that took place, for example, during the years of Ben Ali with regard to the growing perception of marginalization felt by the inhabitants of specific peripheral regions and territories that subsequently became the basis for the "bubbling up" of specific collective identities and claims at the local level. On the contrary, in Israel and Turkey the entrenchment/polarization of existing collective identities straddled a much longer time frame that includes the past fifteen to twenty years, which makes this dynamic more robust than in the Moroccan and the Tunisian cases. It is true, however, that it has been in the past five to seven years that this dynamic has acquired political and institutional salience (particularly in the Turkish case) and led to the entrenchment of nationalist sentiments and of the predominant neo-revisionist narrative. The second factor has to do with the context-driven nature of changes in collective identities. In this respect not only is the context represented by the domestic and local dynamics and actors of each individual country, but regional and international ones need to be factored in as well. In the cases of Israel and Turkey – and in the Middle East in general – the impact of collective identities and cleavages on societal, institutional and political patterns cannot be isolated from the porousness of these countries vis-à-vis the external context. The Syrian conflict and its regional ramifications are a case in point as far as Turkey and partially Israel are concerned (in the latter case, the second Palestinian Intifada and Iran's quest for regional hegemony following the demise of arch rival Saddam Hussein during the US invasion of Iraq are probably more important). By contrast, in Morocco and Tunisia – also taking the differences between the two into account – the trend towards the pluralization/ hybridization of collective identities has rather been strongly influenced by the legacy of existing political and institutional structures particularly in times of transition (Colombo 2018). Finally, the third factor that allows for making sense of the pluralization/hybridization vs entrenchment/ polarization of collective identities dichotomy is the issue of leadership. In all four countries state authorities have continued to exploit and manipulate the collective identities and the cleavages among them to achieve their goals, thus fostering pluralization or entrenchment dynamics. Once again the set of factors incentivizing or constraining elite behaviours is varied and they range from purely domestic issues, including political calculus, institutional inertia and electoral dynamics, to externally-driven ones. Among the latter the role of the EU vis-à-vis the four cases taken individually, its transformative potential in external relations and its ability to work as an "anchor" for its partners can be mentioned.

To conclude, studying changing patterns of state–society relations in the MENA region through the lens of the role of collective identities proves a useful exercise both theoretically and empirically. On the one hand, it allows us to counterbalance prominent but necessarily partial state-centric analyses of domestic politics in the MENA (e.g., Kamrava 2016). On the other hand, it makes it possible to explore the link between identity politics at the individual level and macro political and institutional developments. This link represents the core of the analysis of state–society relations. In the light of the empirical evidence presented above, it can be argued that a greater degree of complexity has been injected into state–society relations in the MENA countries in recent years.

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However, being the result of different trends concerning collective identities and responses at the political and institutional levels – among other things – this greater complexity has not necessarily translated into more conflictual state–society relations and the predominance of centrifugal instead of centripetal dynamics at the domestic level. The final result depends on the combined direction of the two variables assessed in this report, namely opposing trends in relation to collective identities and the behaviour of state authorities vis-à-vis those identities. Similar, self-reinforcing trends in the two variables in the cases of Israel and Turkey – going in the direction of entrenchment/polarization – mean that state–society relations are not conflictual between the hegemonic collective identities and the state at this time of writing and probably will not be in the years to come. However, the entrenchment/polarization trend leads to greater conflict within society between the hegemonic and the non-hegemonic collective identities and to the disjuncture between an important part of it (i.e., the collective identities that are marginalized and treated as minorities – for example, the Left , the Arab citizens, and the African refugees in the case of Israel and the Kurdish population in the case of Turkey) and the state. This conflict potential dangerously applies to the relations vis-à-vis the outside world as well because the collective identities that have become hegemonic in Turkey and Israel tend to espouse nationalist and ultra-nationalist preferences. The other two cases of Morocco and Tunisia instead present mixed features whereby the initial opening up of civil society after 2011, the activism and the emergence of pluralized/hybrid collective identities (away from the dichotomy between hegemonic and non-hegemonic collective identities) and claims have not been entirely matched by processes of inclusion at the political and institutional levels. This is particularly the case in Morocco where business as usual has tended to prevail and only largely symbolic policies have been enacted to respond to the people's demands. In this light, conflictual state–society relations cannot be underestimated currently and in the years to come in the country. On the contrary, Tunisia has been partially able to develop more virtuous strategies to make state and society complementary players that operate through dialogue and compromise.

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ANNEX: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

TURKEY

Interview 1: Journalist, Istanbul, December 2017

Interview 2: Senior academic/CSO expert, Istanbul, December 2017

Interview 3: Journalist/CSO member, Istanbul, December 2017

Interview 4: Sociologist/CSO member, Istanbul, December 2017

Interview 5: CSO expert/researcher, Istanbul, December 2017

Interview 6: Academic at university, Ankara, December 2017

Interview 7: Academic at university, Diyarbakır, January 2018

Interview 8: Lawyer, Diyarbakır, January 2018

Interview 9: CSO expert/researcher, Diyarbakır, January 2018

Interview 10: CSO member/physician, Diyarbakır, January 2018

TUNISIA

Interview 11: Institutional representative (male), Tunis, January 2018

Interview 12: Institutional representative (female), Tunis, February 2018

Interview 13: CSO activist, women's issues (female), Tunis, February 2018

Interview 14: CSO activist (male), Tunis, February 2018

Interview 15: Institutional representative (non-MENA nationality), Tunis, February 2018

Interview 16: Journalist, Tunis, February 2018

Interview 17: Feminist activist and academic, Tunis, February 2018

Interview 18: Intellectual, Tunis, February 2018

Interview 19: CSO activist (female), Tunis, February 2018

Interview 20: Academic at university and intellectual, Tunis, February 2018

Interview 21: CSO activist (male), Tunis, February 2018

Interview 22: Academic at university, Tunis, February 2018

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ISRAEL

Interview 23: LGBTQ activist, Tel Aviv, February 2018

Interview 24: "Russian" activist, Sderot, March 2018

Interview 25: Shas activist, Jerusalem, March 2018

Interview 26: Likud activist, Netanya, March 2018

Interview 27: Settler, Jerusalem, February 2018

Interview 28: Meretz activist, Tel Aviv, February 2018

Interview 29: African refugee, Tel Aviv, February 2018

Interview 30: Feminist activist, Tel Aviv, March 2018

Interview 31: Haredi, Bnei Brak, March 2018

Interview 32: Palestinian (Israeli) activist 1 (Muslim), Yokneam, February 2018

Interview 33: Palestinian (Israeli) activist 2 (Christian), Jerusalem, March 2018

Interview 34: Mizrahi activist, Haifa, March 2018

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Interview 35: Intellectual, Rabat, March 2018

Interview 36: Opposition leader, Casablanca, March 2018

Interview 37: Journalist, Marrakesh, March 2018

Interview 38: Amazigh representative (female), Rabat, March 2018

Interview 39: Amazigh representative (male), Rabat, March 2018

Interview 40: Feminist activist, Rabat, March 2018

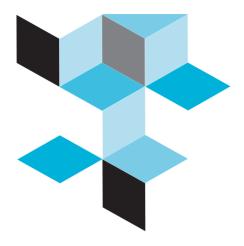Interview 41: Opposition representative, Rabat, March 2018

Interview 42: Human rights activist, Rabat, March 2018

Interview 43: Institutional representative (male), Rabat, March 2018

Interview 44: Institutional representative (non-MENA nationality), Rabat, March 2018

Interview 45: Institutional representative (female), Rabat, March 2018

Interview 46: Intellectual, Beirut, June 2018

Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture: Mapping geopolitical shifts, regional order and domestic transformations (MENARA) is a research project that aims to shed light on domestic dynamics and bottom-up perspectives in the Middle East and North Africa amid increasingly volatile and uncertain times.

MENARA maps the driving variables and forces behind these dynamics and poses a single all-encompassing research question: Will the geopolitical future of the region be marked by either centrifugal or centripetal dynamics or a combination of both? In answering this question, the project is articulated around three levels of analysis (domestic, regional and global) and outlines future scenarios for 2025 and 2050. Its final objective is to provide EU Member States policy makers with valuable insights.

MENARA is carried out by a consortium of leading research institutions in the field of international relations, identity and religion politics, history, political sociology, demography, energy, economy, military and environmental studies.