the MENARA **booklet** for
The Humanitarian Sector

Jordi **Quero** & Cristina **Sala** (Eds.)

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Mustafa Khayat. Syrian refugee camp, Karkosik Erbil.
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The *MENARA Booklets* are a series of publications, created under the MENARA Project framework, which provide insights on the Middle East and North Africa regional order. These Booklets translate scholarly-sounded research into helpful insights for practitioners, including humanitarian agencies; development agencies and NGOs; the private sector; and academia. In each of the four Booklets you may find a compendium of articles and extracts covering the most pressing issues for your field of expertise.

The *MENARA Booklet* for the Humanitarian Sector provides you state-of-the-art and thoughtful analysis which may help your organization to better address challenges and inform your daily decisions. It includes our researchers' main ideas on topics like demographic, economic and environmental factors shaping violence in the region; militarization and armed group proliferation; the erosion of the authoritarian state; Turkey's and Lebanon's responses to refugee movements; and regional implications of the situation in Gaza, the Syrian and Yemeni wars and the post-conflict scenario in Libya. All these, read together, would offer a comprehensive picture of the most critical elements affecting the humanitarian reality of the region.

Under the framework of the MENARA Project, fourteen research institutions have been carrying out fieldwork in the last three years to improve our understanding of the Middle East and North Africa amid a shifting context. It has studied the geopolitical order in the making, identified the driving forces behind it, shed light on bottom-up dynamics and assessed the implications of these processes on the EU and its policies towards the region. All in all, analysis and ideas from fact-finding missions, interviews, stakeholders meetings and focus groups come together to offer you a valuable outcome.

The extracts presented in this compilation have been modified and adapted by the editors. For the sake of accessibility, we have rid every bibliographic reference and footnote included in the original versions of the articles. For those interested in them, please check the full original versions at **www.menaraproject.eu**. Some other minor editing changes have been introduced to make the document fully coherent (such as changes in names and number of sections and subsections or the elimination of some graphs and infographics). We have tried to respect each author's contributions, trying to be as less intrusive as possible.

We hope that The *MENARA Booklet for the Humanitarian Sector* is useful and enjoyable for you.

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Military factors in the MENA region: Challenging trends

SVEN BISCOP & JULIEN SASSEL

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EGYPT: EVOLUTION OF THE ARMED FORCES

Egypt's armed forces are among the largest in the MENA region. Next to its army, navy and air force, Egypt has an important air defence command and large paramilitary forces (Central Security Forces in the Ministry of Interior, and a National Guard). As a result of its central geographical position in the MENA region and its large population, Egypt continues to be one of the main actors in region, despite its ongoing economic and military decline.

The armed forces have constituted a central element of Egypt's political life since the advent of the Republic in 1952, and they have become an important factor in Egyptian society as well, assuming an increasing role in domestic affairs in recent decades. This is a significant change from the years of unsuccessful wars against Israel and foreign intervention (e.g. in Yemen). Since that time, Egyptian rulers have all had military backgrounds, with the exception of President Mohamed Morsi, who has an academic background. Nevertheless, the armed forces as an institution had slowly lost its grip on politics, especially during the administrations of Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak. Since 2011 the armed forces have retaken a prominent role in politics, first by allowing the removal of President Mubarak (although he came from its ranks) and then by ousting President Morsi in 2013. The election of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to the presidency allowed the armed forces to present themselves as the protector of the state. The actions of the armed forces in both 2011 and 2013 may be interpreted as attempts to maintain the status quo, which was threatened by chaos in 2011 and by President Morsi's policies in 2013.

In parallel with this involvement in internal politics, the armed forces are increasingly used in countering terrorism within the country and fighting an insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula. Despite several attempts to professionalize and increase the training of the troops (which has often been considered the armed forces' Achilles' heel), the high proportion of conscripts among the rank and file decreases the effectiveness of training and could partly explain the high death toll in the fight in the Sinai.

With regard to foreign interventions, Egypt has adopted a stated policy to "support national armies", in accordance with which it is now providing Syria's Bashar al-Assad with an unknown number of advisers and some material support. According to the same policy, Cairo is supporting the Libyan National Army faction of General Khalifa Haftar. Both moves seem to be tied to Egypt's will to counter whatever movements may be linked to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Egypt is also part of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, although its participation remains limited. At the same time, Egypt had been the strongest proponent of a Joint Arab Force under the banner of the Arab League in 2015. However, this initiative has been sidelined by the Saudi initiative for an Islamic Military Alliance.

The election of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to the presidency allowed the armed forces to present themselves as the protector of the state

EGYPT: EVOLUTION OF PROCUREMENT AND DEFENCE INDUSTRY

The armed forces relied for decades on Soviet equipment before turning to Western suppliers (first and foremost the United States) in the wake of the Camp David peace treaty with Israel in 1978. Since then, while not totally abandoning Soviet and Russian designs, the Egyptian military has primarily relied on Western equipment. Cairo is also the beneficiary of substantial Foreign Military Assistance (FMA) from the United States, amounting to 1.3 billion dollars in 2016. Egypt has nevertheless sought to diversify its sources of supply, as relations with the USA became strained after the Obama administration criticized Morsi's ousting. This culminated in a hold on deliveries of AH-64 attack helicopters, F-16 fighters, Harpoon ship-to-ship missiles and M1A1 tanks. The hold was lifted in 2016, but in 2017, under President Donald Trump, the USA withheld just under 200 million dollars out of the 1.3 billion dollar military aid package because of concerns over human rights. In the meantime, Egypt had negotiated several contracts with Russian and European firms for armoured vehicles, ships and fighters.

The Egyptian DTIB has grown since the birth of the Republic and is among the largest in the MENA region. However, it has failed to develop beyond the lower tiers of technology and is mostly limited to the assembly of kits of foreign origin, while domestic production is of poor quality. The Egyptian DTIB, which is entirely under the control of a conglomerate, the Arab Organization for Industrialization (AOI), seems keen to maintain a low level of ambition while seeking partnerships to ensure technol-

ogy transfers, notably with China. In addition, the factories owned by the Egyptian armed forces are part of a broader economic conglomerate, which makes the armed forces one of the largest economic agents, if not the largest, in the country. It should also be noted that a large proportion of the products manufactured in Egyptian military factories are civilian or dual-use. While this Sunni power enjoys Western backing, the largest Shia country in the region is pursuing a different strategy.

IRAN: EVOLUTION OF THE ARMED FORCES

Iran's military is characterized by its dual nature: the regular armed forces are tasked to defend the territorial integrity of the country, while what must be considered an ideological army, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), is in charge of the defence of the regime within and outside the borders of Iran. Therefore, next to the conventional army, navy and air force, the IRGC has its own ground forces, naval forces and air force (which is in charge of Iran's ballistic missile programme). The IRGC also has authority over the Basij militia, which in peacetime is a religious police force, but also a source of irregular reserves. The Basij numbers remain vague: it officially comprises 11 million members, but is believed to actually have 100,000 members. It must also be noted that all armed forces are under the command of the Supreme Guide of the Revolution, Ali Khamenei, who is the Commander in Chief.

The Iranian armed forces operate on the assumption that the country's military strength is inferior to that of its regional rivals (Saudi Arabia and Israel) and the United States, and therefore it would be unable to match them in a symmetrical conflict. Iran therefore seeks to deter through a strategy of anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) in the choke point of the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf, and through its ballistic missile programme. Linked to this, Iran has pursued and maintained relations with proxies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon. In the case of the Houthis in Yemen, Iran's support may be understood to be an opportunistic move aimed at bogging down Saudi Arabia and its allies. Relations with proxies are cultivated through the external action branch of the IRGC, the Al-Quds Force, led by famed Major-General Qassem Soleimani. His presence in conflict areas in Iraq and Syria is a way for Iran to demonstrate its commitment to its regional allies.

Iran's involvement in regional conflicts is now considerable as it supplies arms, advisers and fighters to Bashar al-Assad in Syria; it supports the Al Abadi government in Iraq while aiding in the development of Shia Popular Mobilisation Unit militias; and its support for the Houthis in Yemen has enhanced their ability to inflict casualties on the Saudi-led coalition.

TABLE SIGNATORIES TO MULTILATERAL ARMS CONTROL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

	NonProliferation Treaty (NPT)	Comprenhensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)	Geneva Protocol	Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)	Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)	Hague Code of Conduct (HCoC)	Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)
Algeria	1995	1996/2003	1992	1993/1995	2001		
Bahrain	1998	1996/2004	1988	1993/1997	1988		
Egypt	1968/1981	1996	1925/1928		1972		
Iran	1968/1970	1996	1929	1993/1997	1972/1973	2002	
Iraq	1968/1969	2008/2013	1931	2009	1972/1991		
Israel		1996	1969	1993		2002	
Jordan	1968/1970	1996/1998	1977	1997	1972/1975		
Kuwait	1968/1989	1996/2003	1971	1993/1997	1972/1972		
Lebanon	1968/1970	2005/2008	1969	2008	1972/1975	2002	
Libya	1968/1975	2001/2004	1971	2004	1982		
Mauritania	1993	1996/2003		1993/1998		2002	
Morocco	1968/1970	1996/2000	1970	1993/1995	1972/2002		
Oman	1997	1990/2001		1993/1998	1992		
Qatar	1989	1996/1997	1976	1993/1997	1972/1975		
S. Arabia	1988		1971	1993/1996	1972/1972		
Somalia	1968/1970			2013	1972		
Sudan	1968/1973	2004/2004	1980	1999	2003		
Syria	1968/1969		1968	2013*	1972	2002	
Tunisia	1968/1970	1996/2004	1967	1993/1997	1972/1973	2002	
Turkey	1969/1980	1996/2000	1929	1993/1997	1972/1974		
UAE	1995	1996/2000		1993/2000	1972/2008		
Yemen	1968/1986	1996	1971	1993/2000	1972/1979		

Signed and ratified | Signed but not ratified | Not signed

** Assad's government sent a letter to the United Nations Secretary General announcing that his government had signed a decree providing the accession of Syria to the Chemical Weapons Convention*
Created by CIDOB.
Compilation & analysis: Erzs€bet R6zsa & Oriol Farres.

IRAN: EVOLUTION OF PROCUREMENT AND DEFENCE INDUSTRY

Iran spends comparatively less on its military than its regional rivals (Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)). However, the budget increased to 3.85 percent of GDP in 2016, skyrocketing from 2.5 percent in 2015. Part of this increase was to cover undisclosed programmes.

The situation of the Iranian DTIB remains difficult to assess: due to the multiple embargoes which have targeted the country since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, it has proved difficult to shift from defence materiel supplied by Western countries (and first and foremost the United States) to that produced by other countries. This leaves the armed forces with few alternatives but the development of a local DTIB. Through retro-engineering and copies, the Iranian DTIB is able to produce new systems and ensure the maintenance, repair and overhaul of existing assets. It must also be noted that Iranian universities provide skilled manpower, including engineers. Nonetheless, the quantity of materiel made available by its DTIB does not compensate for the clear technological superiority of the Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf. With regard to its naval forces, Iranian shipyards are able to produce the torpedo and missile speedboats used by the IRGC, and more ambitious programmes to produce submarines and vessels have been initiated. Iran has also presented several designs for domestically developed and produced systems, including unmanned aerial systems, aircraft and missiles. It remains difficult to assess the real capacities of such systems, or even to prove their existence, as some presentations have been dismissed by other countries as mere propaganda. However, lower-tier products of the Iranian DTIB are consistent with an A2/AD strategy which could be enacted in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, and the waiving of sanctions thanks to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear programme will ease access to foreign technology.

ISRAEL: EVOLUTION OF THE ARMED FORCES

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are considered to be the best military forces in the MENA region. They have a qualitative advantage over all other countries while keeping a quantitative edge thanks to compulsory service for both men (thirty-two months) and women (twenty-four months). This leads to a substantial number of reservists which can be quickly mobilized in case of need. It must also be noted that Israel is the only country in the MENA region to have a nuclear arsenal, increasing its deterrence capability. However, Israel has never acknowledged possessing nuclear weapons, having never tested them.

The IDF paradigm has shifted away from a model implying warfare against neighbouring countries, as was the case for all wars from 1948 to 1973, to contrasting asymmetric warfare against nonstate actors (Hamas and Hezbollah

being the most important) and the threat from Iranian regional policies and the potential military application of its nuclear programme. Asymmetric warfare originating in the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula and southern Lebanon does not constitute a vital threat to the Israeli state. However, military campaigns against such asymmetric threats now constitute the IDF's most frequent operations. The IDF have managed to put a provisional end to those confrontations, leading to ceasefires with belligerents, but there is no long-term peace in sight. In addition, their opponents' development of effective asymmetric tactics and their large arsenals of rocketry have led to military and civilian losses beyond what Israeli society considers acceptable (especially during the 2006 campaign against Hezbollah).

Asymmetric warfare originating in the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula and southern Lebanon does not constitute a vital threat to the Israeli state

Nevertheless, the IDF continue to field large numbers of armoured and mechanized units as if to engage in symmetric warfare against their neighbours. However, this does not impede the development of other capabilities in terms of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), missile defence, precision weapons and substantial investment in cyber warfare.

ISRAEL: EVOLUTION OF PROCUREMENT AND DEFENCE INDUSTRY

Israel relies mostly on its own DTIB and solid ties with Western countries for its procurement. While in recent decades most of the aircraft flown by the IDF have been of American design, the country has developed other partnerships, both in the past (mostly involving French designs) and in the present (as it has agreed to buy Italian M-346 trainers). Israel has a long-standing partnership with Germany for the production of both submarines and surface vessels.

The domestic DTIB has developed a wide catalogue of assets, ranging from tanks to small arms, which have seen limited export and are mostly designed for the domestic market. It has also made substantial developments in several niche sectors for export, including cyber defence, missiles, missile defence, ISR and unmanned aerial systems.

This development of the Israeli DTIB was made possible by significant defence expenditure but also by US FMA (amounting to 3.1 billion dollars in 2016). This assistance has been maintained and expanded despite difficult relations between the Obama administration and the Netanyahu cabinet. It must also be noted that Israel is the only country beneficiary of US FMA which is exempted from the requirement to spend the assistance on equipment made in the USA. In addition, Israel is able to maintain its technological superiority over other regional actors thanks to the United States' agreement not to export F-35 fighters to other MENA countries.

SAUDI ARABIA: EVOLUTION OF THE ARMED FORCES

Another important regional military power in the MENA region is Saudi Arabia (SA). Next to the conventional triad (i.e. land forces (RSLF), navy (RSN) and air force (RSAF)), Riyadh has created various separate structures (e.g. Air Defence Forces (RSADF), Strategic Missile Forces and National Guard (SANG)). The Saudi armed forces as a whole constitute one of the largest and best equipped forces in the region.

Besides the army, which traditionally is tasked with the territorial defence of the country, the National Guard shares the same core tasks while also being in charge of internal security. Indeed, it is often described as a praetorian guard of the House of Saud and has historically acted as a political counterweight to the regular army units, which are deemed inefficient and unreliable. It retains its own inventory of arms and has recently established an aviation air wing. In general, the National Guard is better trained and equipped than the regular army and its capabilities go beyond the task of internal security.

The Strategic Missile Forces are based on an unknown number of Chinese designs (DF-3 and DF-21). The current status of the missiles, and what their exact purpose is meant to be, is unknown. There has been speculation about its possible use in the framework of Saudi–Pakistani nuclear agreements. The missiles could also be made immediately available to a domestic nuclear programme, should an Iranian nuclear military programme materialize.

Saudi Arabia has traditionally avoided direct confrontation in armed conflicts. Various factors are now pushing SA to assume a more direct role in regional conflicts and develop its capabilities, including the emergence of Iran as a regional competitor, the spread of various forms of Islamism and the United States' perceived disengagement from the region. SA has therefore taken the lead in several initiatives targeting its designated foes: the creation of an Islamic Military Alliance (aka the Islamic Alliance to Fight Terrorism), which is supposed to be related to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (while excluding notable OIC members such as Iran and Algeria). On the other hand, SA is trying to pressurize the GCC members in the strengthening of military ties. So far, the initiative is mostly supported by the UAE and Bahrain while Qatar, Kuwait and Oman have not shown much enthusiasm in the matter.

In the broader context of the "Vision 2030" document, the Saudi armed forces are meant to institute a number of reforms, ranging from defence policy to the development of a national defence industry. The different elements of the armed forces are scheduled to further increase their capabilities, in particular in terms of deterrence against Iran. The air force should see its capabilities in transport, air refuelling, ISR and

airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) beefed up, as the conflict in Yemen has highlighted several shortfalls in these areas. The navy is also set to see a dramatic improvement in the capabilities of its fleet with the procurement of heavier surface ships and strengthened naval aviation. This move is aimed at improving readiness for asymmetric warfare against Iran's Revolutionary Guard Navy in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz.

The army and the National Guard would also partly turn toward a more expeditionary model, as demonstrated by the procurement of wheeled armoured vehicles. There were also talks to reduce duplication between the RSLF and the SANG and to increase in teroperability, but diverging acquisitions and recent developments have demonstrated that there is still a long way to go. For instance, the SANG had to deploy units with French CAESAR wheeled artillery in support of RSLF units involved in Yemen, as the RSLF lacks the appropriate artillery.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned developments represent significant increases in capabilities and will take time to be integrated in the defence framework. Otherwise, they would simply constitute further pieces of advanced hardware without a purpose – a white elephant. It is also important to mention that SA has taken few steps to develop a proper unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) component.

SAUDI ARABIA: EVOLUTION OF PROCUREMENT AND DEFENCE INDUSTRY

SA has long-standing procurement relationships with several Western countries and the fourth largest defence budget in the world. The budget has come under strain, however, due to the fall in oil prices. The country launched its "Vision 2030" plan aimed at reducing the dependence of the Saudi economy on oil revenues. The plan includes a goal to "localize" 50 percent of defence expenditures by 2030. This may be overly ambitious, as it is currently at a level of 2 percent and does not fit with the expected main procurements in the future. In addition, recent developments in the USA and the stated policy of "America First" could further challenge this plan, as American industries might be even less willing to share part of the workload with foreign countries.

However, SA is looking to diversify its suppliers, and it could include procurements which are not state-of-the-art in their respective segments but which could lead to technology transfers. Recent contracts with suppliers such as Pakistan (Al Khalid MBT, JF-17 fighter), Georgia (Didgori APC), Spain (Alakran Mortar Carrier Systems), South Africa (Ingwe ZT3 anti-tank missile), Ukraine (An-178 and An-132 airlifter) and China (CH-4B UAV) could lead to technology transfer and production in SA, with a significant gain in experience for local industries.

ARMS TRADE IN MENA: WHO ARE THE MAIN CLIENTS OF THE GREAT POWERS?

The Middle East & North Africa is said to be one of the biggest arms markets in the world. Regional conflicts and domestic security concerns allegedly justify the need for acquiring more weaponry and new military equipment. But weapons purchases are also a way of building –or diversifying– alliances with world powers, thus positioning oneself in accordance or against their influence over the region. An overview of arms transfers in the last eight years clearly shows to which extent MENA is embedded in global competition among the great powers.

Note: The SIPRI Arms Transfers Database uses its own unit of measure: the Trend-Indicator Value (TIV). The TIV does not represent sales prices for arms transfers, but rather the volume of military resources transferred between actors. It is based on the known unit production cost of a core set of arms and only accounts for actual deliveries of major conventional weapons.
Source: Information available at SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, 2018.
Created by CIDOB.

TURKEY: EVOLUTION OF PROCUREMENT AND DEFENCE INDUSTRY

As the second-largest armed forces within NATO, the Turkish armed forces (TAF) are able to fight low- to high-intensity conflicts, on the basis of NATO requirements or national policies. As a member of NATO, in the past Turkey had to defend its common border with the Soviet Union, and it is now participating in NATO operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Turkey maintains difficult relations with Greece (including disputes over airspace and maritime borders) and continues to deploy troops in the northern part of Cyprus. However, the TAF have focused operations on countering the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in south-eastern areas of the country and in neighbouring areas of Syria and Iraq. This has led to harsh urban warfare and airstrikes within Turkey. The scope of such operations has been extended by the state of emergency which was decreed in the aftermath of the attempted coup on 15 July 2016. On this matter, it is still difficult to predict the consequences of the removal of large numbers of TAF officers on the effectiveness of the armed forces in ongoing operations within and outside of Turkey. In the short term, the Turkish gendarmerie, which acted as a paramilitary force, was detached from the armed forces and is likely to evolve into a pure police force.

The operation Euphrates Shield was effective in removing opponents (both Islamic State and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) under the Syrian Democratic Forces umbrella) from border areas and establishing buffer zones that are now a safe haven for the Free Syrian Army. It is unlikely the TAF will enter further into Syria. Such developments may lead to the TAF shifting from a traditional "cold war" and territorial defence model to a more expeditionary model by acquiring the relevant systems and strategic enablers.

While Turkey has mostly relied on foreign procurement, often limiting itself to the production of foreign designs under licence (which may or may not include improvements), the country's policy to develop its DTIB has begun to bring results, including a catalogue ranging from small arms to vessels. Local industry currently meets 64 percent of procurement requirements, up from 24 percent in 2002. The stated aim is to attain self-sufficiency by 2023, a symbolic date (the hundredth anniversary of the Turkish Republic) but also a realistic one. This goal is partly motivated by strained relations with traditional partners. Turkey is already exporting its defence industry products to countries in the MENA region, and their use by the TAF in the MENA region could increase their attractiveness as battleproven equipment. Unlike many other MENA states, Turkey was able to develop its DTIB due to a locally available skilled workforce and the spillover from civilian to military technologies. However, some shortfalls persist in locally available know-how. For instance, Turkey is not yet able to design and produce engines for its future tank, the Altay. The five armies discussed above are the military powerhouses of the region. Yet the region is further comprised of middle powers, who can exert substantial military power.

Armed conflicts and the erosion of the state: The cases of Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Syria

VIRGINIE COLLOMBIER, MARIA-LOUISE CLAUSEN, HIBA HASSAN, HELLE MALMVIG, JAN PÊT KHORTO

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The 2011 uprisings deeply affected the political order in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The popular protests directly challenged incumbent regimes' authority and legitimacy and in turn triggered what can be characterized as a crisis of the state itself. While in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt state institutions, as well as the very idea of the nation-state, have proven resilient in the face of the sudden disruption of power relations, this has not been the case in Syria, Libya or Yemen, where the uprisings rapidly became militarized and resulted in armed conflicts with foreign military intervention. Similar processes had occurred a decade earlier in Iraq, where military intervention by the American-led coalition and the ousting of Saddam Hussein in 2003 had a significant impact on state capacities and triggered dynamics that are still ongoing and in many respects mirror current trends in the overall MENA region. (…)

In these three countries, the transformation of the initially peaceful 2011 uprisings into armed conflicts pitting pro- and anti-regime forces against each other has further weakened the institutions of the state and led to extreme power fragmentation – especially in the security sphere; the collapse of formal political institutions and increased influence of armed actors over political processes; and the constitution of new power networks triggered by war economy dynamics. This has been the case irrespective of whether warfare eventually resulted in regime change or not. Similar dynamics have been at play in Iraq as Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's focus on securing control of key institutions, including the security services, resulted in the further weakening of institutional capacity and deep divisions within state structures along ethno-sectarian party lines that paved the way for the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014. (…)

THE CHALLENGE OF REBUILDING CENTRALIZED STATES: PRIVILEGING LIBYA'S NATIONAL OR LOCAL INSTITUTIONS?

A focus on national-level political institutions – legislative and executive – has not proved particularly successful as a means to rebuild the centralized state, as demonstrated in the cases of Libya and Iraq, because these institutions have often lacked the capacity to recentralize service provision and security in the context of the new realities on the ground, including in some cases the presence of foreign actors. This inability to deliver what is expected of the "state" has been detrimental to the overall legitimacy of the centralized state.

This inability to deliver what is expected of the "state" has been detrimental to the overall legitimacy of the centralized state

Libya exemplifies many of the trends highlighted in the introduction to this section, with the specificities of local service delivery serving to reinforce the power and significance of local communities vis-à-vis the central state embodied in newly formed national-level political institutions. With the start of the 2011 civil conflict, newly developed local councils or local elites took on governance functions as the Gaddafi regime collapsed. This trend largely mirrored the local nature of newly formed armed revolutionary brigades. Despite the essentially local nature of the new power structures, the initial focus of international actors and Libyan political elites following the end of the conflict was on building national-level political institutions, particularly through electing the General National Congress (GNC) in July 2012. Elections for municipal councils took place between 2013 and 2014, based on a legal framework that made them responsible for all local service delivery. While in some areas they replaced the existing local governance actors/bodies, in others they became one of several actors in this space.

Since the breakdown of Libya's nascent national-level political institutions in 2014, the local nature of governance has been further reinforced, to the detriment of the political institutions of the central state. In the context of having two parliaments and governments, the central state's already weak ability to manage public finances and ensure a sufficient operating budget to provide basic services has further deteriorated. The fact that municipal and local councils in some areas have continued to provide limited services, coupled with the fact that they are elected, has provided these local bodies with a degree of legitimacy that generally exceeds that of national level authorities.5 The strength of the local over the national-level political institutions has been further bolstered by certain international organizations working at the municipal level, and by the inability of national-level authorities such as the Government of National Accord (GNA) to secure basic service provision.

However, it is perhaps a positive sign that the idea of the Libyan state remains significant for municipal councils, albeit with an undefined concept of "decentralization" and with budgetary concerns apparently viewed as one of their main links with national political institutions. The highly centralized nature of the Libyan economy, based on oil and natural gas extraction, coupled with poor tax administration capabilities, has meant that municipalities continue to rely on the economic administration enshrined in the NOC and the CBL. The fact that these two bodies have more or less continued to function is testament to the fact that they were among the most technocratic institutions in the country before 2011 (given that they were responsible for the vast majority of the Libyan economy), and to the fact that they have been protected during the post-2011 transition. However, even the NOC's administrative integrity has been threatened by the fact that it relies on physical assets – Libya's oil infrastructure – to function. As a result, different groups on the ground have been able to blockade or take control of state infrastructure in pursuit of partisan aims (political and/or economic). This has reduced the potential for these bodies to play a role in rebuilding the legitimacy of the centralized state, as well as further linking the rebuilding of the state to rebuilding security structures.

One further challenge in the Libya case is that institutional divisions and continuing conflict have rendered the economy deeply dysfunctional, as highlighted by the founding of a parallel Central Bank and National Oil Company (albeit with limited success) and the collapse of the banking system. The proliferation of players willing to take advantage of the crisis has dramatically increased corruption and malfeasance in the financial sphere, as well as the de facto privatization and plundering of state resources.

Armed groups and actors across the country in particular have made use of their military might on the ground to join or build profiteering networks that also include businessmen, politicians and members of the state administration. They have largely benefited from – and, by doing so, deepened – the blurring of the distinction between state and non-state, private and public interests, as well as between legitimate and illegitimate activities. They have, for instance, become involved in the diversion of state funds – notably through exerting pressure on managers of major commercial banks, misusing Letters of Credit and playing a direct role in cash distribution circuits (which should go from the Central Bank directly to local banks) – which allows them to finance their activities, but in so doing weakens state control over key economic functions.

In Tripoli, the "militia cartel" that provides security on the ground to the GNA seems to have been motivated to a large extent by access to power and resources, rather than particular political views. Yet the special relationship between the cartel and the Presidential Council (PC) has also enabled them to exert considerable influence over appointments to

key positions in the state administration and state-owned companies, and therefore to increasingly influence political decision-making. In the east of the country, Khalifa Haftar's strategy for consolidating his authority and expanding the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) has also been at least partly dependent on his capacity to source and distribute economic benefits and equipment to his eastern constituencies, especially among the tribes. The foreign support networks he has built up (especially in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, UAE) have played a key role in this regard, thereby bypassing the traditional "state" channels altogether.

THE CHALLENGE OF REBUILDING CENTRALIZED STATES: ONE SYRIAN TERRITORY, MANY SYRIAN "STATES"

The situation in Syria shows many parallels with Libya insofar as governance has become increasingly fragmented and localized. However, in contrast to the Libyan example, local governance is (to varying degrees) linked to entities with differing visions of the state: the regime, opposition groups, the Kurds and the Islamic State (IS). The country is de facto divided into different areas dominated by different actors, which has been interpreted at times as the unravelling of the Syrian state as a territorial sovereign entity. However, the reality is that governing structures are highly dispersed among loose networks of multiple actors that compete over, or divide, governing tasks between them. All over the country, multiple groups enact and perform what are perceived as key state tasks – sometimes living side by side, and other times fighting, competing and negotiating in overlapping networks of power. These cross-cutting lines defy the simple rebel-versus-government control dichotomies that have become all too familiar from military control maps. Governing structures in Syria have become extremely fragmented, overlapping and above all localized, in no way resembling the highly centralized Syrian state from before the 2011 uprising, even though the Assad regime is keen to project an image of an uninterrupted all-powerful dawla (state).

Government-held areas have been calmer overall than those controlled by the opposition, with fewer active front lines and aerial bombardments and better access to international aid. This has obviously created more conducive conditions for governance in terms of providing basic public goods, administrating daily life and providing the civilian population with a relative sense of security. Importantly, the regime has been able to draw on the Syrian state's existing institutional and administrative capacities as well as its international status as a sovereign state. Yet there are vast differences between the territories nominally controlled by the Assad government.

The overlapping and very localized force structure is closely tied to Syria's war economy and business patronage networks. These have enabled

the regime to simultaneously provide a minimum of (government) services to local communities and to nourish new and old power bases. Militia leaders and their families – both foreign and Syrian – have played a central role in these mechanisms. So too have business leaders, some of whom have, for instance, engaged in smuggling and trade of oil from IS-controlled areas to the regime or in illegal trading from regime-held territory to besieged areas. Local business leaders that help fund the armed groups are in return given rewards and remunerations such as government positions in the public sector, with local intelligence bureaus or as heads of the many new charity organizations that act as intermediaries for the regime. The Syrian government has also used contracts, properties and urban development rights to retain the loyalty of its patronage networks.

The situation in Syria shows many parallels with Libya insofar as governance has become increasingly fragmented and localized

These patronage networks have been in part reconfigured due to war and displacement, with a new cohort of crony businessmen emerging. The new business figures have, on the one hand, made it possible for the regime to partially circumvent international sanctions and create a new loyal power base that feeds on the war economy and is dependent on the regime's continued survival. On the other hand, the new networks are highly decentralized, heavily involved in the illegal war economy and strongly influenced by foreign powers, thereby positioning the Syrian state in a less controlling role than before the war.

In opposition-held areas, opposition groups and activists have aimed from early on to create alternative governance structures to those of the Assad government. Importantly, however, the opposition efforts were not intended to create a new territorial sovereign entity or to break up Syria but rather to replace the Assad regime's state institutions within the existing national framework of Syria. The key civilian body – the so-called Local Administrative Councils (LAC) – initially grew out of the activist networks and over time were replicated all across the opposition-held areas – in part at the request of international donors – just as provincial councils were revived and organizational links with external opposition structures were established. Opposition governance became, in the words of one of the interviewees, "a simulacrum of the Syrian government".

Performing key tasks associated with "stateness" such as delivering basic health care, electricity and water, or even running local bakeries and providing affordable bread, have from the beginning been important vehicles for building local support in opposition-held areas. Local councils, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and armed groups have therefore attempted to fill the void left by the withdrawal of the central government.

Their governance efforts, however, have been heavily impacted by a hostile environment of rebel infighting, regime military attacks, sieges and inconsistent donor funding. Moreover, the Assad government has deliberately targeted opposition attempts to build alternative institutions, from military attacks on health care facilities and bakeries to "evacuating" members of the local administrative councils.

Local councils, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and armed groups have therefore attempted to fill the void left by the withdrawal of the central government

Moreover, armed groups, local councils and a variety of NGOs have ended up competing to provide basic services and regulation, and therefore competing for legitimacy. In practice governance structures have always been extremely localized and scattered, with very weak vertical linkages to, and support from, the Syrian National Coalition (ETILAF) and the Syrian Interim Government (SIG). Armed groups have often employed coercive means to tax goods and services, and have directly benefited from their control over lucrative channels of trade, smuggling and looting. However, such practices have also served to distribute resources and provide common goods to their own clients and extended families. Similarly, the armed factions' smuggling routes and shady wheeling and dealing with regime intermediaries have served as sources of self-enrichment and inflated prices on basic goods for the civilian population, especially in Eastern Ghouta, but at the same time these dodgy deals have facilitated the deliverance of goods to besieged areas. Poor living conditions, deep insecurity and a sense that the opposition has lost the war for good are now steadily causing Syrians to move from opposition-held to government-held areas. Yet people interviewed by the MENARA team underlined that local councils enjoy a form of popular legitimacy in their local communities that armed actors have not acquired, and that local council governance has for many Syrians been a whole new experience of participatory and representative politics that will have a long-lasting impact.

Building on the proclaimed principles of feminism, ecology and self-defence, the Kurdish Democratic Society Movement (TEV-DEM) in northern Syria has endeavoured to form a new grassroots system of democracy known as Democratic Confederalism since gaining control over the Kurdish territories. In 2014, TEV-DEM announced the creation of three autonomous cantons in Afrin, Kobani and Jazeera. These are formally ruled through provincial councils, referred to as

Democratic Self Administrations (DSAs), a highly structured, multilevel administrative system in which the commune plays a key role. These self-administrations function as an administrative umbrella under the provision of the General Council of the Self Administration in Northern and Eastern Syria.

Each of the three DSA administrations has generally been able to provide basic services to the local population such as electricity, health care, education and security. Most of these services are provided for a fee, signalling that the DSA of each autonomous canton enjoys a more solid and exclusive authority compared with rebel-held areas, where service provision is often shared and fought over among multiple competing actors. The DSAs have developed a number of institutions to administer various aspects of life in each canton. These institutions provide the main services in each of the cantons and the DSA pays the salaries of most of the employed personnel. The DSAs are also able to raise revenue from construction permits, taxes on land and cars, and border trade. The construction of roads, the provision of electricity and the management of health clinics are financed exclusively by the Kurdish authorities.

The regime has accepted this co-governance and outsourcing of its sovereignty, insofar as it has freed up valuable resources to be used elsewhere, while at the same time reminding the local population of its continued administrative presence

Interestingly, while service provision and administrative functions are essentially undertaken by the DSA, the Syrian regime remains in control of many government institutions (especially in Al-Hasakah and Qamishli, including the airport and a military base), just as the Syrian government continues to pay the salaries of many state workers and civil servants in state-run schools. Indeed, the DSA coordinates with regime institutions and works to a large extent in parallel with them. Thus, some services such as higher education and transport are planned, coordinated and paid for by the Syrian regime, and the regime also continues to provide key official state documents such as passports and certificates.

This pragmatic division of governing functions between the Syrian regime and the Kurdish authorities has, on the one hand, allowed the DSA to build relatively well-functioning and autonomous institutions. The regime has accepted this co-governance and outsourcing of its sovereignty, insofar as it has freed up valuable resources to be used elsewhere, while at the same time reminding the local population of its continued administrative presence. On the other hand, however, for the Kurds the continued presence and administrative foothold of the regime constitutes a constant reminder that it may intend to reclaim full authority over the Kurdish areas and Syria's external borders once the fighting is over in opposition-held areas. The extent to which Kurdish authorities will be able to sustain some degree of autonomy will largely depend on the support they receive from external powers – the USA, Russia and Turkey. If the USA remains committed to staying in north-eastern Syria in order

to contain Iranian influence and secure some leverage in political negotiations, this may enable the Kurds to persevere. If not, the Kurds may stand to lose most of what they have built.

THE CHALLENGE OF REBUILDING CENTRALIZED STATES: YEMEN'S UNITY IMPERILED?

The mismanaged (and very recent) unification of the country in 1990, followed by several years of civil war, together with the weight of tribal structures, can account for the fact that Yemen has long been regarded as a "fragile" state, lacking strong central authority and with limited government control outside of the cities. As a result of the 2011 uprising and the subsequent failed transition process, Yemen now appears to have broken down into an agglomeration of "small states" where traditional "state" functions are being carried out by different actors, including militias, armed groups and tribes. With the onset of the 2015 war and Saudi military intervention, political and local groups emerged and created their own order. In the south, the cities of Aden, Lahj, Al Dhale, Abyan and Shabwa, as well as the eastern governorates of Hadramawt and Al Mahra, are purportedly controlled by Hadi's government. Yet these governorates are subjected to varying degrees of control by pro-Hadi forces; security forces loyal to the UAE-backed former Aden governor, Aydrous al-Zubaidi; and other UAE-funded militias, including the Security Belt forces in Aden and the elite forces in the Shabwa and Hadramawt governorates. Interviewees have confirmed that local leaders, rather than Hadi's government, are in reality handling governance. Secessionist groups in the south have become more organized, thanks in large part to the support they have received from the UAE. The Houthis, who formed their own cabinet, have seized government facilities in the north and started performing state functions. Living conditions in the areas controlled by the former Houthi–Saleh alliance, particularly in the governorates of Saada, Hajjah, Amran, Hodeidah, Sana'a, Dhamar and Ibb, were described as "worse than in the rest of the country" due to the war, "although local security was perceived to be better than elsewhere".

Direct foreign military involvement and competition, in particular between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, also contributed to the collapse of central authority and the division of the country into different areas of influence and control. Unlike Saudi Arabia, the UAE has been backing the secessionist groups under the pretext that "Hadi is a serial incompetent", and the country is believed to be carving out "strategic footholds for itself" in the south, "undermining Saudi influence" in Yemen. The Emiratis have seized the island of Socotra, in the Gulf of Aden, and have been establishing an air base on the island of Perim located to the west of the Bab al-Mandeb

coast. Differences between Saudi Arabia and the UAE have started to surface, particularly after Al-Zubaidi's forces surrounded Hadi's government in Aden in January 2018. The UAE, which is a staunch opponent of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), has been at variance with Saudi Arabia over the latter's support of the MB-affiliated Al-Islah Party against the Houthis. Moreover, before Saleh's death, the UAE was encouraging Saudi Arabia to back the former president instead of Hadi.

Interestingly, despite the war, overland trade has continued and the extraction of resources by the various groups in control of parts of the territory has been key to the expansion and consolidation of their power. The Hadi government has been able to generate income by resuming the export of hydrocarbons resources. Tribes in Mareb, Shabwa and Hadramawt have seized the oilfields in their governorates, while UAE-backed military forces, according to some of our interviewees, have controlled export facilities in Hadramawt and Shabwa since the withdrawal of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in 2016. The Hadi government has negotiated with the tribes and other UAE-backed forces in Hadramawt to export oil seized at the Al-Shihr facilities and in July 2016 a European oil trading firm, Glencore, secured a deal with the government to buy 3 million barrels for 40 US dollars a barrel. In Mareb, gas production has continued despite the war, with "the refinery [...] running at or close to capacity (estimated at 8,000–10,000 barrels a day) since at least late 2015". Mareb governor and strongman Sultan al-Aradah has used the money from oil and gas revenues to pay local militants and civil servants and for the provision of water, electricity and infrastructure services. In addition, property prices have peaked in the city of Mareb and electricity supply, "historically limited to around four districts, now reaches nine out of 14 districts". For the Houthis, customs and taxation make up the majority of income, reaching 1.2 billion US dollars in 2014. Before their alliance fell apart in December 2017, the Houthis and Saleh were sharing around YR10 billion (30 million US dollars) a month generated from customs collection. The Houthis also levied taxes on local markets and firms. Anecdotal accounts from Sana'a indicate that signs of wealth, including luxurious cars and houses, have become visible among Houthi leaders.

THE CHALLENGE OF REBUILDING CENTRALIZED STATES: IRAQ'S POLITICAL SYSTEM AS A MAJOR THREAT TO THE STATE

In contrast to what is described in the other cases studied in this report, recent developments in Iraq (military successes again the Islamic State, overall improved security and the organization of parliamentary elections in May 2018) have been described as a positive indicator that the state might be on its way towards regaining capacity and authority. However, re-

construction after decades of war and conflict is an overwhelming task. In particular, it would require major attention to the "institutional reconstruction" of the Iraqi state, which has not yet been translated into a nationally shared and viable vision for (re)building the institutions of the state.

The inertia and corruption of the political system have been central to the crisis of the Iraqi state, both before and after the focus was put on defeating IS militarily. Interviews in Baghdad shed light on the widespread and cross-sectarian disillusionment of Iraqis with politicians and the political system in general. The political practice of the *muhasasa*, a power-sharing arrangement between the Shias, the Sunnis and the Kurds which was meant to secure minority representation, is particularly criticized by Iraqis, as it has had the unintended effect of emphasizing sectarian identity over issue-based politics. Iraqis pointed to sectarianism and its misuse for political ends as one of the reasons for the rise of IS. As a consequence, sectarianism has been somewhat delegitimized as a mobilizing tool, as evidenced in the 2018 parliamentary election campaign. Yet ethno-sectarian background remains a key determining factor in how people vote and frame their position in Iraqi society.

Although there were more than 200 parties running in the 2018 elections, the key coalitions are headed by political actors that have, in most cases, been part of the political elite since 2003, were shaped by repression during the Saddam regime and in several cases spent their formative years in exile. These coalitions were largely, although less profoundly than in the past, based on confessional affiliations, so in those cases where there was an attempt to establish a national cross-sectarian appeal, they would often put forward local candidates that matched the community's ethnic or sectarian identity.

The influence of tribal structures on politics is another element that has fed the perception of a political system where political parties are essentially engines of influence for specific actors or groups. Strong tribes can help "their" representatives get elected in return for favours after the election. Hence, while politicians are criticized for their lack of vision and national outlook, it is not uncommon to expect that a vote for a specific politician will be personally advantageous.

Many Iraqis perceive corruption, together with the lack of reform of the public sector, as the main reason for the degradation of the economic situation and the inability of the state to provide basic services. Corruption is indeed entrenched in all aspects of the politico-economic system, with politicians using their positions within the state institutions to access revenues stemming from oil and to build patronage networks that extend into the military and the private sector. The practice of using public employment or promotions as rewards for loyalty (including hiring unqualified people based on their political or sectarian affiliations) constitutes a major prob-

lem and has led to a bloated and, in some cases, incompetent public workforce. For many Iraqis, the development of the private sector is therefore seen as a possible way not only to create jobs, but also to challenge the political status quo, as it would loosen their dependence on politicians who have been using public sector employment in exchange for support.

For many Iraqis, the development of the private sector is therefore seen as a possible way not only to create jobs, but also to challenge the political status quo

The Iraqi state is federal, but the fragmentation and lack of capacity in the Iraqi central state has led to calls for greater local autonomy, most notably by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). The independence referendum in September 2017 strained relations between Erbil and Baghdad and led to the Kurdish being forced out of Kirkuk. At the same time, the KRG has experienced recurrent protests over (the lack of) public salaries, maladministration and corruption. Likewise, serious protests erupted in July in the southern part of Iraq, starting in Basra, over the lack of services, especially water and electricity, as well as corruption and the lack of jobs. These protests have been directed at the entire political elite, including the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), and have demonstrated that the feeling of alienation from the political elite unites all sectarian and ethnic groups in Iraq.

The low voter turnout in the 12 May election of approximately 45 per cent is a warning sign that the Iraqi population has lost trust in the democratic system as a means of holding politicians accountable and achieving real change. Moreover, while Muqtada al-Sadr's victory can be seen as an indication that voters have opted for an anti-establishment and anti-corruption agenda, it remains to be seen how this will affect the Iraqi state-building project.

Militarization and militia-ization dynamics of armed group proliferation in Egypt and Libya

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The protest movements that brought down entrenched autocratic rulers in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011 and provided inspiration for other protesters in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Iraq and Yemen were predominantly peaceful in nature and enacted by non-armed mass movements. A few weeks into the protest movement, however, armed groups proliferated in Libya as a result of the militarization of the conflict between the regime and its opponents and direct international military intervention. From 2012, armed groups also emerged and expanded into several other states, and by 2013 they had come to play prominent roles in the domestic power struggles and political competitions across the region, although the contexts in which they evolved and the influence they exerted varied considerably.

While the human suffering and socio-economic stagnation that accompany the contemporary proliferation of armed groups may appear similar across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the dynamics and their specific configurations differ from case to case, as do the aims, goals and ambitions of the armed groups as well as their relations with the local and national state apparatuses with which they interact or operate. While some armed groups have been at least formally integrated within state institutions, others appear bent on fully or at least partially destroying or replacing the incumbent regimes through the use of violence.

The present paper identifies two distinct dynamics at play in the different types of proliferation of armed groups and in their increasing presence in different political and power systems in the MENA region. Rather than providing a comparative overview of all the relevant cases in the contemporary MENA region, it provides thick empirical description and analysis of two selected cases where armed groups have proliferated since 2011, to very different extents and under very different structural circumstances: Egypt and Libya.

The analysis of the Egyptian case shows that the single most important dynamic behind the proliferation of armed groups across the entire spectrum of ideology, strategy, tactics and geographical implantation since 2011 has been regime-orchestrated repression. The analysis also shows that the process through which armed actors have proliferated is best understood as a transformation of contentious politics. In this paper we refer to this process as the "militarization of contention".

The analysis of the Libyan case, meanwhile, shows that here warfare, foreign interventions and the weakness of nascent state institutions have been the key drivers in the proliferation of armed groups since 2011. Although regime-orchestrated repression did play a role in the militarization of contention early on in the uprising, armed actors were allowed to consolidate and expand their influence over Libya's politics by taking advantage of institutional weakness and by allying with actors pursuing common interests, while not necessarily sharing the same ideology or political agenda. In this paper we refer to this process as the "militia-ization of politics". (...)

MILITARIZATION OF CONTENTION IN EGYPT

In the years following the toppling of President Hosni Mubarak in January 2011, Egypt witnessed both the emergence and the subsequent disappearance of several forms and repertoires of contentious politics. From 2011 until 2013, the predominant repertoire of contention was peaceful and mass-based. Millions of Egyptians participated in thousands of more or less organized or spontaneous protest marches, demonstrations, rallies, sit-ins, strikes, street festivals and other public performances. On numerous occasions, such events developed into episodes of collective violence including street battles between protesters and the authorities, fighting between opposed factions of protesters, and sexual harassment and assault. Yet the majority of the thousands of events served as peaceful tools to push for political concessions to be given or decisions to be taken.

In the wake of the military coup led by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in July 2013, this picture began to change. From then on, an explicitly violent, revolutionary repertoire of collective action came to dominate contentious politics in Egypt. Hence, the first three years of Sisi's presidency saw more than 700 members of the Egyptian security forces killed in acts of violence committed by armed non-state actors. In comparison, only half that number of casualties was observed among the Egyptian security forces during the ten-year insurrection led by the Islamic Jihad and Jamaat Islamiyya in the 1980s.

This radical transformation of the repertoire of contentious politics occurred in two ways. Firstly, the number of both protests and protesters fell significantly. The risks for protesters increased considerably due to the indiscriminate repression launched by the new military regime of Abdel Fat-

tah al-Sisi in July 2013 against the former supporters of Mohammed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood as well as the gradual expansion of the target group for repression to include other segments of protesters and activists. In particular, the security forces' killing of more than 1,000 peaceful protesters while clearing Nahda Square in Giza and Rabaa al-Adawiyya Square in Heliopolis on 15 August 2013 sent a message that protests by the Muslim Brotherhood's supporters would no longer be tolerated, and that the security apparatus was willing to cross the line and use mass violence against protesters – a step that until then had been avoided. In the wake of interim President Adly Mansour's promulgation of the so-called "protest law", which from late 2013 criminalized all spontaneous protests, the overall number of street protests dropped further. As illustrated by the protests by tens of thousands of Egyptians against the trading of the two Red Sea islands Tiran and Sanafir with Saudi Arabia in spring 2016, the inclination to use protests as a tool to pressure the executive had not disappeared. But as the same example also illustrates, the tight control exercised by the security apparatus had by then rendered protests less influential than they had been in the years immediately following the toppling of Mubarak.

Only half that number of casualties was observed among the Egyptian security forces during the ten-year insurrection led by the Islamic Jihad and Jamaat Islamiyya in the 1980s

Secondly, the transformation of the repertoire occurred as a result of the proliferation of armed groups in Egypt after 2013. Analytically, we can break down this process of the militarization of contentious politics into three distinct sub-processes: the "creation" of new revolutionary groups, the "expansion" of existing Salafi-jihadi groups and the "radicalization" of existing non-violent or moderate Islamist groups.

The emergence of newly created groups with a revolutionary ideology began shortly after the military coup in July 2013 and the clearing of Raba'a al-Adawaiyya and Nahda squares in mid- August of the same year. The new, armed revolutionary groups carried names such as "Molotov", the "Revolutionary Resistance Brigade", "Arson" and the "Execution Movement". In their propaganda materials they presented themselves as the armed continuation of the Egyptian revolution of 25 January 2011 and insisted they would take "revenge" on the regime of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi for stealing the Egyptian revolution.

The limited information we have about these groups suggests they were not created as paramilitary wings of other groups. Rather, they were armed and revolutionary in their making. Several of these groups appear to have had shifting ideological orientations. While references to "Islam" appear regularly in their propaganda texts, their slogans and ideas suggested

a rather eclectic position encompassing both secular and Islamist orientations, and they rarely made use of Salafi-jihadi concepts and framings. Typically, they condemned the Sisi government and criticized the Muslim Brotherhood's attempts to collaborate with the Egyptian state. But they were also critical of the political quietude of the Egyptian Salafist groups. According to their propaganda materials, the route to a better future is through armed revolutionary action. Neither the Muslim Brotherhood's party politics nor the Salafists' missionary activity were accorded great importance. Rather, they seemed focused on destroying the regime and killing its supporters. (...)

In the course of the fieldwork undertaken by the MENARA team in March 2018, interviewees across the spectrum of experts, political activists and government employees expressed common concerns about – and, for some, outright fear of – the potential for violent collective action enacted spontaneously by masses of impoverished Egyptians with little to lose. As one interviewee put it: "last time [in 2011] protesters behaved well – they even returned and cleaned up. Who knows how they will behave next time. It is highly likely that we will see brutal violence and rioting." Yet none of the March 2018 interviewees expressed concerns that the urban-based revolutionary groups, which had emerged in 2013, 2014 and 2015 constituted a threat to the regime or to them personally. Opponents of the regime described it in dystopian and Orwellian terms as a machine that is far too strong and consolidated to be challenged with arms in hand. Supporters of the regime, on the other hand, emphasized the threat that such groups posed to the public, but dismissed the possibility that the urban revolutionary groups would be able to challenge the regime.

The expansion and mutation of existing Salafi-jihadist groups began well before the military coup in 2011. Yet the military coup in 2013 played an important role in mobilizing supporters of these groups. Indeed, the majority of the violent attacks against the Egyptian security forces reported after the coup in July 2013 were committed by Salafi-jihadists.

Some of these groups seem to have been created alongside the revolutionary groups after the military coup in 2013. During 2014, for instance, the densely populated areas in the Egyptian Nile Delta and along the Nile Valley saw small pockets of armed Salafi-jihadists emerge for the first time in decades. The most prominent of these new urban-based jihadist groups was the Al-Qaeda-inspired Salafi-jihadist group known as "Soldiers of Egypt" (Ajnad Misr), which was created in 2014. Before the Egyptian authorities dismantled the group in mid-2015, Soldiers of Egypt carried out a number of attacks in Giza and in Cairo, predominantly targeting civilian guards and police officers guarding public offices, government personnel and buildings. Other like-minded groups were reported to be operating in the Western Desert near the border with Libya. (...)

When the MENARA team conducted its fieldwork in Cairo in March 2018, interviewees expressed various degrees of concern about the potency of the Islamist insurgency and generally regarded Islamist terrorism as a security threat to be reckoned with. Most of the interviewees also expressed disbelief in the media coverage of the conflict in Sinai, pointing out that state censorship rendered the reporting from Sinai untrustworthy and propagandist in nature. Nevertheless, the same interviewees expressed belief in the regime's claim that the ongoing fourth military campaign in Sinai entitled the "Comprehensive Operation" (al-Mua'mila al-Shaamila), which had been launched a few months before the field mission took place, was successful and had uprooted the insurgents.

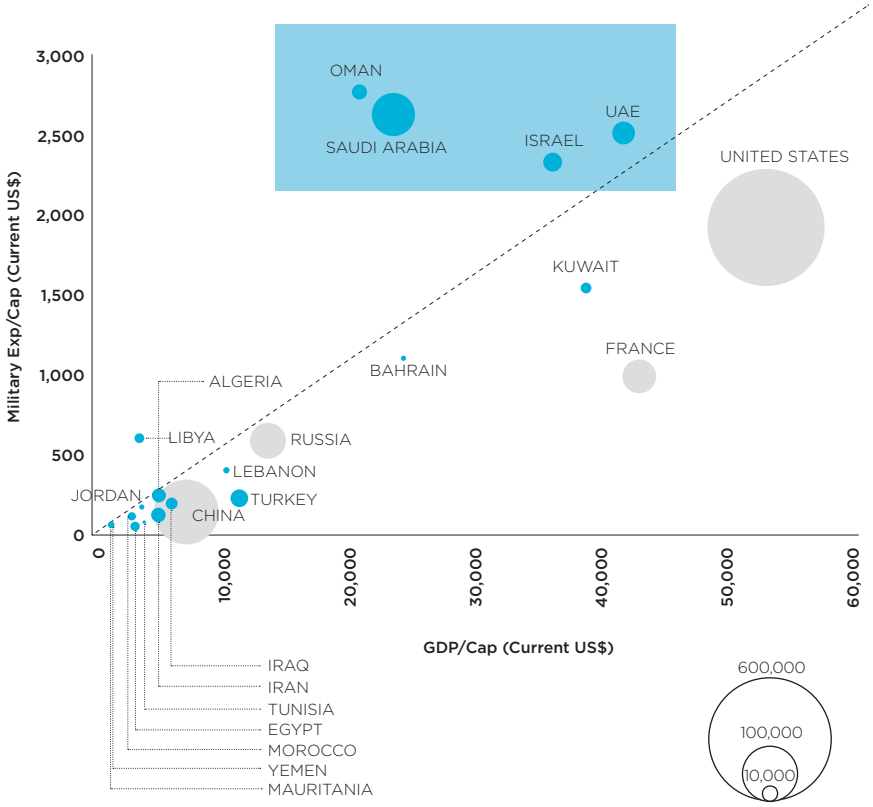
Alongside the expansion of revolutionary and jihadist groups in Egypt after the July 2013 coup, a broader radicalization of existing moderate, pragmatic and legalist non-violent political groups was taking place. Arguably the most significant of these processes of radicalization took place within the Muslim Brotherhood, which by 2013 had become the single most important civil political actor in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood had gone through a series of transformations since its creation in 1928. The organization had survived massive state repression of its members by President Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s, in part by going underground and establishing a paramilitary branch. In the 1970s, the Brotherhood had accepted an invitation from President Anwar Sadat to enter into the formal political arena as a counterweight to the socialists and Nasserists. This had required the Muslim Brotherhood to distance itself from the use of political violence and embark on a decades-long trajectory of gradual integration into legal political contestation within the regime-controlled political institutions. Under President Mubarak, the organization had continued to use its limited role in Egyptian politics, as a tolerated but still illegal organization without proper party structures, to develop an organization capable of the mass mobilization of voters. These voters could endorse its candidates whenever and wherever they were allowed to compete in local and parliamentary elections as independents or on the electoral lists presented by the legal political parties.

The military coup in 2013 turned the latter assessment upside down. In the wake of the toppling of the Morsi government and the subsequent massacres at Rabaa al-Adawiyya and Nahda squares in mid-August 2013, the strategy of pragmatically cooperating with the authorities while gradually grooming the Brotherhood to become a legal and formal competitor for political power seemed like a failure to a growing number of the organization's supporters. In the eighteen months following the military coup, elements in the group's leadership that had escaped repression carried out a strategic evaluation, concluding that the repression had left the organization deeply divided internally.

THE MILITARY GAP: THE WEIGHT OF WEALTH AND POPULATION IN MILITARY BUDGETS

Comparing military expenditure with wealth and population provides an idea of whether or not military eorts are justied by demographic weight and economic capabilities. Some regional and world powers –such as Turkey, Iran, France, China, or even the US– have huge military budgets, but do not spend that much in per capita terms and in relation to their wealth. On the contrary, a few high-income countries –namely Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Israel and Oman– spend much more than could be expected, given their much smaller populations. Looking at military expenditure in relative terms shows how countries are militarized in relation to their actual weight.

MILITARY EXPENDITURE PER CAPITA VS. GDP PER CAPITA (2014)



Note: No data available for Qatar, Sudan and Syria.
Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (2018) and International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook Database (2018).

On one side stood a minority of members who continued to support the pragmatic approach aiming towards renegotiation, re-legalization and re-entry into formal politics. This group generally supported an approach that included compromising with the Sisi government and accepting that Morsi could not return to the post of president in return for continued inclusion in the political process. On the other side stood the majority of members who favoured taking a more confrontational stance towards the regime. This faction was especially strong among the younger members of the Brotherhood who, as a consequence of the indiscriminate repression of the existing leadership of the organization, had gained increasing influence over the strategic orientation of the group and its cadres. They believed that the Brotherhood's predicament had been caused by its collaboration with the regime and with the military high command. Some also argued that the same was true of the Salafist Noor party, with whom the Brotherhood had teamed up during Morsi's presidency.

Whether this was motivated by a longing for revenge or by a strategic assessment of the potency of insurgent violence, they seemed to agree that the preferred tactical orientation of the group should be to seek the destruction of the military regime. As this faction within the Brotherhood gained ground, observers noted by 2015 that although the group did not officially support terrorism, it appeared to have adopted a more tolerant attitude towards it than it had done at any point since the 1970s. As noted by some observers, the exiled leadership's condemnations of violence enacted or endorsed by the group's own youth cadres or supporters were becoming less prompt. Instead, the leadership seemed to an increasing comprehension of the violent and revolutionary inclinations of its fringes and seemed increasingly to refrain from condemning it.

During the fieldwork undertaken in Cairo during March 2018, interviewees expressed doubts about the Muslim Brotherhood's capacity to return to politics anytime soon. Most interviewees, including critics of the Sisi regime, believed that the Brotherhood had squandered the opportunity provided by the 25 January 2011 revolution with its reckless approach to governing and its subsequent endorsement of violence. Others who had been closer to the organization – or perhaps secretly supported it – expressed bewilderment and saw the betrayal by the military and the secular elites as responsible for what they saw as the dire conditions of Egyptian politics.

MILITIA-IZATION OF POLITICS IN LIBYA

Because the Qaddafi regime fell as the result of a civil war and foreign military intervention, and because of the weakness of the transitional political institutions established in 2011–12, armed actors immediately played a major role in Libya's security sphere and in the new political

scene. Yet their role has continuously evolved and increased since 2011, to the point that they have become central actors in Libya's new power networks, holding determining influence over the two competing centres of political power: the Government of National Accord (GNA), established in Tripoli, and the House of Representatives (HoR) in Tobruk. Because of differences in terms of social structures, political trajectories and interactions with foreign actors between the western and eastern parts of the country, however, this evolution has followed divergent paths. In the west, the webs of common interests among leaders of certain armed groups, some politicians, technocrats and businessmen means their focus has been on self-preservation (albeit at the expense of potential competitors) rather than the promotion of a particular political project. In the east, the militarization of governance has been made possible by the mobilization of key constituencies around the "anti-terror" and "anti-militias" narratives, as well as by the control and distribution of resources by the Libyan National Army (LNA) General Command. While these do not constitute a political project, they may well continue to form the core of a strategy for power expansion.

In the eighteen months following the military coup, elements in the group's leadership that had escaped repression carried out a strategic evaluation, concluding that the repression had left the organization deeply divided internally

In Libya, the proliferation of armed groups started soon after the protests against Qaddafi broke out in February 2011, as the regime attempted to repress dissent and external actors provided military support to Qaddafi's opponents. As early as March 2011, the nature of the initially peaceful mobilization changed. Armed opponents of the regime (essentially armed groups with a local dimension or ideological underpinning) faced not only Qaddafi's security apparatus, but also other civilians who had taken up arms to defend the regime. Militarized contention was therefore coupled with a civil war that cut through Libyan society and contributed to the proliferation of armed groups and weapons across communities and throughout the country.

In the absence of a serious reconciliation project supported by the transitional authorities and the international community, the fault lines that divided Libya after the 2011 war were almost automatically transferred into the new political arena, while other divisions (re)emerged. The civil war had already led to a clear division of the country and society between "victors" and "losers" (respectively the pro-revolution and pro-former regime cities, communities and armed groups). Soon after the war, a new fault line rapidly appeared between the civilians who had joined revolutionary brigades and the former regime military defectors

who had joined the rebellion. On top of this, armed groups had an essentially local dimension and were deeply fragmented along lines that followed divisions and rivalries between families, tribes and cities, as well as between the east and the west.

The decision to prioritize the organization of parliamentary elections in the first phase of the political transition, in July 2012, played a key role in cementing divisions and further polarizing Libya's new power map. Yet it also played a role in pushing these multiple local power centres to gradually coalesce into broader alliances. As the elected General National Congress (GNC) was set to become the site where major decisions would be made and where the shape of the new state would be designed, groups and factions competing for power concentrated on controlling it and excluding their rivals so as to become the dominant force. The GNC immediately became the centre of competition between newly formed rival political coalitions that coalesced around the Muslim Brotherhood and the National Forces Alliance (NFA). It proved to be extremely weak and dysfunctional as a locus for managing such a fierce competition for power.

The most powerful local armed groups, allied with political factions often emanating from the same cities or communities, started using their military might to impose specific political aims that they felt would serve their common interests

Armed groups were able to capitalize on the weakness of the GNC to pursue their own agendas. The most powerful local armed groups, allied with political factions often emanating from the same cities or communities, started using their military might to impose specific political aims that they felt would serve their common interests, including pressuring members of the GNC into making highly divisive decisions. Among the most significant of these were the authorization of the October 2012 military intervention against the town of Bani Walid, considered a stronghold of the former regime, and the adoption of the Political Isolation Law in May 2013. The law led to the resignation of several high-level politicians from the NFA and altered the balance of power in favour of the Islamist-led coalition. This resulted in political deadlock and institutional paralysis within the GNC, highlighting the significant impact of actions in the security sphere on the nature of political competition.

With the resulting deadlock, competition between rival coalitions intensified and gradually shifted outside the new political institutions. In a clear example of the growing dominance of military conflict over political competition, former army general Khalifa Haftar in February 2014 announced the dissolution of the elected GNC in a televised speech designed to encourage armed groups opposed to the Islamist-led coalition to move

against the elected body. This did not meet with much support. A few months later, however, continuing violence in eastern Libya, and Benghazi in particular (caused by a mixture of Islamist militancy, tribal feuds and criminality), provided more favourable ground for constructing a military coalition to lead an operation that aimed at changing the balance of power. Haftar launched Operation Dignity in Benghazi in May 2014 with the objective of ridding the eastern city of Islamist and jihadist militias. The operation was born of a deep disenchantment on the part of former military officers, notably those from the east, with the GNC's collusion with Islamist armed groups and its perceived lack of support for the army and its fight to re-establish security in Benghazi. (...)

Polarization and militarization of contentious politics reached new heights in 2014, with a significant escalation of violence between the armed groups of the two broad coalitions that had emerged in the previous two years. The election of the GNC's successor, the House of Representatives, just a month after the launch of Haftar's Operation Dignity in June 2014 provoked the collapse of the process of political transition envisaged in 2011 and the emergence of rival political institutions. Each military coalition was now linked to a separate "national" administration. The newly elected HoR and its government, dominated by the so-called "liberal" camp and by supporters of General Haftar, was established in the eastern city of Tobruk. The "revolutionary" or "Islamist" camp within the GNC refused to step down despite severe election losses and maintained the body elected in 2012 in Tripoli, with the support of hard-line armed groups and politicians from Misrata and their allies gathered in the Libya Dawn coalition. Military confrontation escalated between rival political and military coalitions fighting for legitimacy and for recognition (including from the international community) of their respective "national state institutions" at the expense of their rivals.15 Significant support provided by external powers from the region (Egypt and the United Arab Emirates for the Dignity coalition; Qatar, Turkey and Sudan for the Dawn coalition) reinforced the local actors' view that political victory could be achieved by military means. (...)

While the narrative remained political, military might was increasingly mobilized in order to seize control of Libya's economic and financial resources, including the hydrocarbons sector, strategic sites and key infrastructure such as airports and border crossings, and Libya's economic and financial institutions. Operation Libya Sunrise, launched at the oil terminal of Sidra by Misratan forces with the support of the GNC in December 2014, marked a turning point in this regard, and resulted in direct military confrontation between Misratan and pro-HoR forces. Clashes continued over energy infrastructures even after the Misratans ended the siege of Sidra and withdrew in March 2015. Similarly, from the end of 2014, the pre-exist-

ing conflicts between minority Tebu and Tuareg communities in southern Libya – especially around the control of smuggling routes and energy infrastructures – were increasingly instrumentalized by the northern coalitions and framed in terms of the national divide between Dignity and Dawn. Tebu and Tuareg armed groups allied themselves to forces respectively from Zintan and Misrata and entered into direct military confrontation for the control of oilfields (in particular the two giant oilfields of al-Sharara and al-Fil, in the Murzuq basin), leading to a serious deterioration of the security situation in the cities of Obari and Sebha, and major displacement of the population. (…)

Instead of allowing for the reunification of the national political institutions as intended, the UN-led dialogue therefore led to the emergence of two rival power centres after 2016: the Presidential Council (PC) of the GNA, born of the LPA and led by Fayez Sarraj, which was established in Tripoli in March; and Khalifa Haftar and the General Command of his self-styled LNA, who gradually expanded their authority over the east of the country. Power networks were rearranged around these two new "executive" authorities, recognized as the "government" in place, and therefore as the political authority, by a significant portion of their respective constituencies. However, the authority of the two power centres emanated from different sources and translated on the ground in very different ways, especially in the relationship each maintained with armed groups. Sarraj, who was appointed to a position created by the LPA, took a large part of his authority from the legitimacy conferred on him by the international community. Yet he lacked the military might that would have given him actual power on the ground, which meant that he had to negotiate with the armed groups from the very moment the decision was taken to establish the Presidential Council in Tripoli. In contrast, Haftar, who created his own position as the LNA commander in chief and enjoyed real power on the ground, devoted significant efforts to reinforcing his legitimacy domestically and internationally from the very moment he launched his Operation Dignity in 2014.

These developments have accentuated the shift of political authority outside of the political institutions within which competition would be organized and managed. Even when they still formally play a central institutional role, as in the case of the HoR, elected political institutions (parliaments) have become peripheral to the competition for power. Similarly, the influence of political parties and movements is now essentially limited to backstage and unofficial channels (for instance, through the funding of specific armed groups). Instead, power networks were gradually rearranged around the two new power centres, through a complex web of relationships of mutual dependency in which the armed actors ended up dominating the political ones. (…)

As of summer 2018, a "militia cartel" formally placed under the authority of the GNA was completely dominating the security landscape at the city level. To the extent that the political positions of the forces in this "cartel" are known, they are highly heterogeneous. Indeed, the support they have provided to the GNA seems to have been motivated to a large extent by access to power and resources, rather than particular political views. The blurring of distinctions between state and non-state, private and public interests as well as legitimate and illegitimate activities is clear in the armed groups' economic role: they have become involved in the diversion of public funds – notably through exerting pressure on managers of major commercial banks, misusing Letters of Credit and playing a direct role in cash distribution circuits – which allows them to finance themselves. As elsewhere across Libya, armed groups in Tripoli have taken advantage of their military might on the ground to join wider profiteering networks that include businessmen, politicians and members of the state administration, which the "authorities" are powerless to stop. These armed groups have also taken advantage of the weakness and dependency of the political authorities to gain unprecedented influence over state institutions, for instance through the role they now play in appointments to key positions in the state administration and state-owned companies. Overall, they seem so far to have prioritized protecting their economic interests and consolidating their influence over the political establishment rather than playing a direct political role. The balance of power in the east of the country has also shifted in favour of armed actors, as Haftar and the General Command of the self-styled LNA have become the main player (to the detriment of the HoR) and gradually imposed militarized governance over the region. This was made possible by Haftar's ability to make tribal alliances and absorb armed brigades and civilian volunteers into the LNA. Distribution seems to have played at least some role in the LNA's expansion strategy, however, which means that Haftar's ability to act as a distributor is contingent at least in part on the foreign support networks he has built up, as well as the economic and/or security context which enables him to maintain a monopoly on such distribution. In contrast to the west, where no clear political project seems to be guiding the actions of the armed groups allied with the GNA, in the east the "fight against terrorism" has remained both a major objective and a mobilization tool for the LNA, as was recently illustrated by the military campaign in the eastern city of Derna, as well as the regular strikes conducted in desert areas to the south of Sirte and in the south. Whether or not this security-focused alliance would hold together in the case of a return of institutionalized politics remains to be seen, especially given that increasing restrictions on freedom of speech and movement and the strong political role played by tribes have contributed to the limiting of political debate.

Demographic and economic material factors in the MENA region

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DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS: EMERGING TRENDS

From the 1950s, many states across the region have pursued state-led models of development, supported by substantial public investment and often populist social policies. State efforts to extend social welfare provisions, improved per capita physician ratios and life-expectancy, and declining maternal and infant mortality rates helped lead to half a century of rapid population expansion. Other countries, such as Israel and the Gulf states, saw rapid rates of migration from within the region and from Europe, North America and South Asia. However, from the mid-1960s, most countries across the region went through a "demographic transition", where TFR began to decline, in part related to increased levels of education, family planning, urbanisation and shifting patterns of migration.

The total population of the MENA region has increased fivefold since the 1950s, from just under 110 million in 1950 to 569 million in 2017. Despite generally declining rates of fertility (discussed below), absolute population numbers are expected to further double to over 1 billion inhabitants by 2100, according to medium variant projections. By the end of the century, therefore, there will be more people in the MENA region than in China, whose population is expected to continue to shrink to just over 1 billion; and more than in Europe, the population of which is expected to recede by approximately 10 percent by 2100.

The largest absolute contribution to the regional increases in population will come from countries that are already experiencing demographic transitions to varying degrees. Egypt, Iraq and Sudan will continue to be prominent population centres across the region, despite a declining TFR. This effect – of increasing absolute population, despite declining rates of fertility –is due to population momentum, which is generated by the high proportion of women of childbearing age – even whilst the number of child births per woman has declined considerably. For example, although family

planning policies have by and large been considered successful in Egypt – with fertility rates declining from five children per woman in 1982 to just over three in 2002 – the population momentum has meant that Egypt's total population tally has continued to increase dramatically and the TFR has started rising again since 2000. Today, Egypt's population already exceeds 97 million, and will remain the most populous country in the region in 2050 with some 154 million inhabitants. Accordingly, Egypt, Iraq and Sudan will become increasingly prominent population centres across the region, in comparison with Turkey, Iran and Morocco for instance, which have lower fertility rates, or smaller nations in the region, such as Mauritania and Yemen, which currently have the highest fertility rates in the region. Egypt, Iraq and Sudan are expected to house 49 percent of the region's total population by 2100 – 199 million, 156 million and 137 million respectively, in comparison to just over 31 percent currently. Together with Syria and Turkey, more than 60 percent of the region's populations will be dependent upon the Nile, Euphrates and Tigris river basins by 2100, compared with 48 percent today. This increased dependence on international rivers, often as downstream riparians, will have significant implications for the viability of supporting the likely increases in agricultural, industrial and municipal water demands, impacting transboundary governance, rural livelihoods and regional food security. Within these absolute increases in population, transitions are also anticipated in the sex ratio and age-specific ratios, which will further influence the implications of these increases.

By the end of the century, therefore, there will be more people in the MENA region than in China

Exploring total populations by sex reveals that the female population of 54 million in 1950 rose to 277 million by 2017, and is expected to increase further to 504 million by 2100. The male population has increased from 55 million in 1950 to 292 million by 2017, reaching 514 million males by 2100. The male population is thus marginally higher, with a gender ratio of roughly 51 percent male and 49 percent female, more than would naturally occur. (...) Economic migration to the oil-producing Gulf states has had a discernible impact on gender ratios within the sub-region, especially from the late 1970s and with a significant increase since the oil boom of the 2000s.

Return migration from outside the region has also been identified as one of the plausible factors contributing to this trend. In addition to the economic opportunities presented by the oil boom of the 2000s, greater travel restrictions from the region to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries following the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York are understood to have been fol-

lowed by native Arabs returning to the MENA region. Projections beyond 2017 would indicate a decline in the male skewed sex ratio between 2010 and 2100 as inward migration of expatriate male labour force is expected to slow. In part, this downturn in male migration workers bound for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and the subsequent impact on the sex ratio, is understood to be a consequence of lower oil prices and the associated economic impacts. Combined with this, the increased effort to diversify GCC economies away from petro-chemical and industrial to service sectors, and national programmes focusing on encouraging native labour force growth, are expected to further dampen rates of inward migration.

Despite these higher ratios among mostly GCC countries, across the region as a whole, the birth rates of female and male populations between 1950 and 2016 reflected those of the total population. The ratio of male survivors to females above the age of retirement for the region has continued to decrease since 1980, partly owing to the high male death tolls of the Iran–Iraq War (1980–8), the First Gulf War and other conflicts across the region. While age-specific sex ratios appear relatively stable below twenty-five years of age, for age groups above sixty-nine years old these ratios diverge sharply. The recent conflict in Syria, however, has seen an eight-year reduction in life expectancy for men relative to a reduction of just over one year for women. This trend of fewer men surviving to older age than women implies that greater numbers of women are likely to be widowed or simply have proportionally higher levels of dependency among the older age categories than men. (...)

YOUTH BULGES AND LABOUR MARKET

With the rapid increase in total populations since the 1950s, the MENA region has experienced an exceptional "youth bulge". As a result of declining fertility, the youth bulge peaked in North Africa in the 1970s and in the Middle East in the 1990s, still the relative size of youth in the overall population remains high for the foreseeable future. The Arab Human Development Report of 2016 was specifically devoted to the role of youth in current Arab societies.

It concluded that the current Arab youth population is "the largest, the most well educated and the most highly urbanised in the history of the Arab region". In 2015, almost half of the total population were under the age of twenty-four, and more than 60 percent under thirty years old. Despite this trend, large youth populations present particular challenges in developing countries. Correlations between youth unemployment rates, conflict and civil unrest have been drawn, particularly in developing countries where the capacity to generate educational and employment opportunities and

avenues for political participation are limited. Education rates improve the potential for inclusion in "legitimate" labour market activity, whilst "incapacitating" youth from engaging in unlawful activity. (...) However, of those under thirty involved in the Arab uprisings that swept across the region in 2011, better educated youth were more likely to participate in protests than the unemployed, as feelings of relative deprivation were particularly prevalent in this demographic subset. Youth unemployment, youth bulges and education were identified as critical contributing factors leading to the Arab uprisings. Conflict-stricken countries in the region, such as Yemen, Syria and Iraq, are expected to continue to hold large youth populations. Iran, Turkey, Tunisia, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Egypt will instead see their youth as a share of total populations decline at a faster rate, not least owing to faster-ageing populations.

Poorly functioning labour markets and the absence of lawful economic opportunities are likely to make illicit, informal economic activities more attractive. While youth unemployment rates are universally higher than the average unemployment rates of many world regions, the MENA region has significantly higher and indeed widening levels of youth unemployment rates. Similarly, whereas education is seen to contribute positively to the likelihood of employment the world over, the MENA region is distinguished in that those who have obtained higher levels of education face similar levels of unemployment as less-educated people. Effectively mobilizing the increased size of this rapidly expanding labour force is a critical component in determining the broader social implications of population growth across the region, and capturing the potential demographic dividend. Issues of youth unemployment may also more significantly affect countries already afflicted by social conflicts. The character of youth transitions from education to employment, from dependants to heads of households, will be determined by government capacities to provide relevant, quality education and vocational training, health and reproductive health services, and social protection products such as unemployment insurance schemes and income support. And as youth proportions begin to decline across the region, the successful engagement of the youth population in gainful employment will become increasingly important in preparation for demographic ageing. (...)

TRANSITIONAL ANALYSIS

It is important to understand that the MENA region is undergoing highly significant population transitions. The dynamics of demographic transition under way across the region vary, in part owing to changing fertility, mortality and migration statistics – in turn all influenced by the range of social factors that are discussed in this section.

As mentioned previously, despite continued growth in absolute population size, the number of child births per fertile woman have in fact transitioned to a downward trend since the midtwentieth century. Display this downward trend as experienced across the different sub-regions of MENA countries. Iraq, Palestine, Sudan, Yemen and Mauritania still have high TFRs, relative to other MENA states. There are several social factors influencing fertility rates, to varying degrees across different parts of the region. Of these factors, access to education (particularly for women), contraception and urbanisation are considered to have played key roles in informing TFRs. Increased equal access to education for women correlates with declining fertility rates by increasingly delaying the age many women are married and thus shortening the number of childbearing years and total births.

It has traditionally been understood that greater education and cultural awareness of issues surrounding reproductive health and contraception has been hindered across the region owing to a reluctance towards state intervention in family planning, and social taboos and values. The variegated success of local policymakers in attending to public concerns through community outreach and public discourse has affected the rate of demographic transition of MENA countries differently. The example of Tunisia, for instance, which has shown a greater openness towards providing family planning services for unmarried couples, differs from the case of Iran and Egypt.

In addition to family planning campaigns, fertility rates have also been affected in countries in the region as a result of increased public awareness around reproductive health and infection rates of communicable diseases. In Iran and other Gulf states, the HIV/AIDS pandemic that has increasingly begun to affect communities across the region since 2001 has helped shift public receptiveness to reproductive health issues featuring in public policy.

Such transitions accompanied the increased success of international organisations in delivering effective support, training and family planning services across the region. With greater support and funding for female outreach workers, birth control and rural health clinics and education, rates of fertility have continued to slow across the core population centres of the region.

The regrowth of fertility rates across several MENA countries has been influenced by divergent factors. In Egypt, a strong commitment to the expansion of family planning services to rural areas and educational programmes around reproductive health led to a dramatic decline in TFRs, from five children per woman in 1982, to 3.5 in the 1990s, and further still to just over three by 2002. Since 2005, however, fertility rates increased to more than 3.5 births per woman in 2016, attributable to the deterioration

of national family planning efforts of the 1990s. In Israel, government has long supported population growth, not only through incentivizing inbound Jewish migration and Israeli emigrant repatriation, and offering state benefits to mothers, such as free education and child allowances, but also by heavily funding fertility treatment. Such support has been influenced by, amongst other things, debates around religious imperatives and concerns over high fertility rates among the local Arab population. Iran and Turkey are also actively promoting pro-natal policies, after recognizing the future implications of dramatically declining TFRs for ageing populations and the shrinking labour market available to support them, although these policy efforts are yet to reflect in national TFRs. Rather than reflecting transitions in fertility, absolute population increases in Lebanon and Jordan are more a result of forced migration due to regional conflict. The TFRs of Yemen and Palestine have begun to decline much later than fertility transitions experienced across the rest of the region, at rates reflecting broader regional trends from 1950.

Environmental factors in the MENA region: A SWOT analysis

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TRENDS

CLIMATE

The climate of the MENARA study area is highly spatially and temporally variable with climate systems ranging from tropical humid through hyper-arid and from aseasonal to highly seasonal. Temperature and precipitation for the region indicate mean annual temperature from 16 °C in the north to 31 °C in the south and east, and total annual precipitation from close to zero up to 2000mm.

Precipitation in the region is clearly extremely seasonal in the Sahara and Nile basin and through much of the MENA, whereas parts of North Africa and Turkey are only marginally seasonal. These climate conditions produce some heat constraints, clear water constraints and strong seasonality, which fundamentally affect economy, society and resource security, with potential implications for conflict to occur where and when resources are in scarce supply relative to demand – and where alternative local livelihoods are also not available, triggering migration and conflict over the remaining resources. The strong climatic and economic resource gradient across the region is clearly a driver for migration where that is possible.

LAND USE

Much of the MENARA study area is dominated by non-forest natural land use (semi-arid scrubland to hyper-arid desert), though there are some intensive pastures, forests and water bodies in the upper Nile and some mosaic croplands and intensive pastures in the north-east, especially Turkey, north-west Iran and the Nile valley. Large tracts of the MENARA study area are thus essentially agriculturally barren. Importantly there are seasonal changes to climate and thus vegetation productivity, and this enables some livestock production in these otherwise barren areas. There are also subtle local factors, particularly with respect to slope gradient, elevation and groundwater, that provide other agricultural opportunities in otherwise unsuitable areas.

WATER

Water Demand: As with most parts of the world, the greatest consumptive use of water for the MENARA study area is by evaporation through natural vegetation (99.996 percent), followed by crops (0.002 percent) and pastures (0.003 percent), though this varies from country to country. Parts of the MENARA study area are, however, extensively urbanized, especially Turkey and Iran, with others such as Egypt having significant concentrations of population in a few urban areas. Urban areas create a domestic demand for water, though this does not represent a consumptive water use. They do, however, lead to non-consumptive water use through contamination of water with organic and inorganic contaminants, though the footprint of such water is small relative to that of agricultural non-consumptive (pollution) and consumptive (evaporative) use. Contamination does not consume the water (preventing other uses in the current hydrological cycle) as evaporation by crops does; rather, contaminated water can be used downstream in the current hydrological cycle but may need decontamination (water treatment) for certain uses. Urban demand, through small relative to agriculture, is much more spatially concentrated than water demand for agriculture. (…) Croplands and pastures have complementary distributions, but are both confined to the wetter parts of the region. Agricultural water use is thus highest in the wetter north and east of the region and in the extreme south. Much of the MENARA study area is unsuitable for agriculture and agricultural land resources are thus concentrated, driving a similar concentration of population pressure.

Water Supply and Infrastructure: Water balance is the water remaining once evapotranspiration is taken from rainfall. It is thus the amount of water available for the generation of streamflow and all non-evaporative water uses (domestic, industrial, hydropower). According to WaterWorld, the annual water balance in the study area varies from >1600mm to -1600mm locally, with a number of countries with negative local water balances (i.e. more evaporation than rainfall and thus sustained by flows from upstream), for example Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Algeria and Oman. Those with positive water balances at the national scale include Turkey, Lebanon and the contributing areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia. There are many water bodies (both reservoirs and lakes) in the East (especially Turkey and Iran). Groundwater reserves are important in North Africa. According to WaterWorld, snow and ice are significant (>5 percent runoff) only in Morocco, Turkey, Iran, Lebanon and the contributing areas of peripheral countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bulgaria and Georgia.

Transboundary Water: Many of the basins in the MENARA study area are transboundary, with some like the Nile including as many as fifteen states (including disputed territories). This means that many states are depen-

dent on careful water management in upstream states for their own water supply. This is a potential source of resource conflict, especially within the context of changing flows as a result of climate change or of mega-dam projects that may significantly affect transboundary flows to downstream countries. (…) The Nile clearly stands out, but many other basins in the MENA are also transboundary.

These countries have climatic regimes and territory sizes in relation to the major river basins that they occupy, and they thus have very different contributions to flow (…). The same is true of the Tigris at Baghdad: some 52 percent of the flow comes from Turkey with much of the remainder (44 percent) produced in Iraq. The country in which the water resource is realized (used) is thus sometimes not the country in which that resource is produced. Egypt generates significant benefit from water resources that flow from upstream countries that are able to gain little from the resources that leave their state boundary. These contributions may also change with climate variability and change.

Water Infrastructure: Built water infrastructure includes many small, medium and large dams throughout the region, especially in Coastal North Africa, Turkey and parts of the Gulf. Dams mitigate against seasonal rainfall by allowing the storage of water produced in the wet season for consumption (irrigation, domestic, hydropower) in the dry season. There is clearly significant development of this mitigating infrastructure for water supply in some areas but very poor development in others (reflecting lack of investment and/or lack of rainfall or terraincontrolled suitability for damming). Whilst dams are clearly an important built infrastructure for agricultural, domestic and energy purposes, they can concentrate resource conflict both within and between states, particularly for some of the highly transboundary basins identified above. They are also an unworkable development or policy option for many parts of the MENA region that have insufficient water balance in the wet season to produce viable reservoirs for dry season use. (…)

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHOKE POINTS FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

CONCENTRATION OF PRESSURE AND LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE AS A THREAT TO GOVERNANCE

The MENA countries have significant population growth and concentration in a largely challenging environment both physically and in terms of infrastructure and socio-economic development. This means that in many places there is an excess of water food and energy demand over supply. This is particularly the case in areas of extreme population concentration,

along rivers and coasts for example, in otherwise dry and climatically challenging environments. This concentration of pressure is a characteristic of these environments and is shown to be more significant in some countries than others. Dense populations in a few areas surrounded by vast expanses of virtually uninhabited land create pressures in the concentrated spaces and challenges in governance over the more remote areas.

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By examining the spatial concentration of SWOT indices we can better understand multi-variable drivers that are spatially concentrated. A high concentration index for strength indicates that strength is highly focused on a few areas with little strength in the surrounding hinterland. This is true for all North African and most Middle Eastern countries, though strength is more widely distributed in Turkey and the South and East Mediterranean. Opportunity is much less clustered overall, but its highest clustering is in Egypt and the South and East Mediterranean.

A low concentration of weakness and threat indicates a weak hinterland and can be seen particularly clearly for weakness in Turkey and the southern Nile countries. A weak hinterland is to be avoided if countries are to develop economically, socially and politically. Weakness is more concentrated in the Gulf countries since they seem not to have this weak hinterland. Threat is most concentrated in Algeria and Iraq and least concentrated (most dispersed) in the southern Nile and north-west African countries. A concentration of threat is more easily managed than a dispersed threat, though of course the magnitude of threat is as important as its dispersion. Both weakness and threat are much less concentrated overall than strength and opportunity, further defining a key challenge of managing the very distinct challenges to urban versus rural populations. Governance and development for concentrated populations and infrastructures is much easier than for highly dispersed populations and infrastructures.

KEY STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS, WITH THEIR IMPLICATIONS

Choke Points: Population Growth: The full SWOT analysis (…) for the country of Syria indicates that the periphery of most urban areas has a positive prognosis with opportunity + strength greater than weakness + threat. The urban areas themselves have a lower prognosis largely because of the challenges provided from population growth. A good example is Egypt and the Nile Delta in particular, in which the prognosis index shows

a value of around 0.2. Cairo has a positive prognosis with values of 0.6, but it is periurban areas west of the Nile Delta that currently show great promise as do other periurban areas in the region, though growth in these will clearly create greater pressure over time and may thus undermine their positive prognosis, if not carefully managed.

Choke Points: Climate Variability and Climate Amelioration: Though some of the region is expected to become drier under climate change, IPCC multi-model ensembles in the most recent CMIP5 climate simulations show that much of the region will become wetter, and this makes a significant difference to the future opportunities variable as shown in Appendix 1 where Figure 24 shows large desert areas in the Arabian Peninsula and the western part of sub-Saharan Africa with opportunities as a result of projected increases in rainfall. Indeed, at a national scale, these are the greatest of all opportunities for countries including Algeria and Saudi Arabia.

Choke Points: Transboundary Water Conflict: In a global context, many of the MENARA basins and rivers are some of the most transboundary rivers in the world, sometimes with more than ten nation states sharing an individual watershed. In an environment of significant water shortage and drought, the building of dams and the development of irrigation projects throughout the region provides significant opportunity for growth and development. But, at the same time, this creates the potential for conflict with neighbouring countries, particularly those downstream of large dam projects. The Nile River includes some sixteen states and disputed territories. The Danube includes twenty and the Tigris-Euphrates eight states. This is certainly at the high end globally, with most global basins having fewer than fi ve states within their watershed and many having just one or two.

Choke Points: Food Balance: Given the lack of water resources, agricultural expansion is unlikely over much of the region, and where agriculture is viable a careful balance between farming and nature conservation is important for the continued provision of important ecosystem services. Thus, the most viable approach to achieving food security in the MENA region in the short term will be a trade-based approach. This means the MENA region will further increase its dependence on world markets for the import of food to feed the increasing populations. This will require the MENA region to earn enough foreign exchange to procure food from the global market. There are risks in relying on global markets for food security, as became clear in the food crisis of 2008, so these risks need to be carefully managed. Longer-term climate wetting and improvements in agricultural and irrigation technology or of renewable energy available for groundwater pumping and/or desalination may provide new non-renewable or renewable water resources for food production.

The governance of migration and border controls in the European-North African context

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With the substantive growth of migration from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to Europe after the Arab uprisings, the issues of refugees, migration and border controls have moved to the top of the agenda of European policy-makers (and publics), as well as of the international community at large. A number of studies have highlighted the leverage, or the potential leverage, that MENA states have been acquiring vis-à-vis European states on the issue of migration over the last decade. Considering the high degree of interdependence between the two sides, the leverage held by MENA countries mainly results from Europe's attempts to co-opt MENA governments in the management of migration flows to Europe and thus to "socialize" MENA states. After the Arab uprisings, Europe's incapacity or inability to manage the influx of refugees and migrants internally, together with the threat and urgency ascribed to the "migration crisis" in Europe, only added to the power of MENA states to impose conditions on Europe.

Against this backdrop, this paper identifies a number of trends in the responses of MENA states to the issues of migration and border controls, particularly vis-à-vis Europe, by focusing on two interrelated aspects. First, it highlights the rather usual approach of states to "localize" international norms and practices in the realm of migration management, that is, to adapt and modify these norms according to domestic preferences and conditions. Examples are provided here from the western Mediterranean, especially North African countries. Second, we discuss the ever-growing tendency to criminalize migration and the ever-diminishing attention paid to human rights that have characterized the international governance of migration in recent years. In the light of these major trends, the paper concludes by assessing the embeddedness of the region in the international governance of migration.

LOCALIZING NORMS

The socialization of non-Western countries has often been sought by the Western community in order to claim the universalism and "ef-

fectiveness" of liberal values. There is a growing literature which sets out to uncover the rationale behind this claim as well as the mechanisms aimed at exporting rules and practices in various regional settings. The main contribution of this very diverse body of literature is to draw attention to the fact that there is no stable point from which to observe international systems and analyse socialization, because we are dealing with dynamics of communication and multiple meanings for the actors involved. Various scholars have thus examined the ways in which socialization has been biased towards a predominantly Western structure-oriented approach, which discards the identity and the agency of those who are meant to be socialized. This biased approach also dismisses the voices of the socializees, treating them as "resistant" or "defective". Epstein rightly remarks that, once the socialization process takes place, change in the "adopter population" is simply depoliticized by conventional constructivist scholarship. Rejection of certain norms by the socializee is all too often "infantilized" or dismissed as a form of unmotivated "resistance" or defection. However, it may well result from a domestically localized and historically specific set of values that policy-makers should consider.

In other words, not only do socializees have a clear vision about what they want to attain through cooperation, they also turn out to be active borrowers able to reshape the reception of global norms. Here, the notion of congruence introduced by Acharya when dealing with norm localization is of paramount importance to realize that transferred norms may be re-adapted to local conditions. Localization makes "an outside norm congruent with a pre-existing local normative order". This process thus is not necessarily a response to demands for new norms imposed from the outside. Rather, it is a proactive strategy aimed at accommodating foreign norms and ideas to local sensitivities. Under certain conditions, local norms and administrative traditions are strong enough to ensure the selective reception of global norms, with a view to limiting their domestic social and political costs. Local norms and traditions may also be sufficiently robust to integrate the global norms into existing local systems, with a view to buttressing their authority and command.

It is important to realize that the agency of socializees and their "cognitive priors" have usually been "ignored or assumed away with simplifying assumptions", and a growing body of literature has started to pay attention to these flaws. Indeed, despite their permeability to external influences, non-Western countries have never been passive recipients. Nor can their varied capacity for "local" readjustment when faced with external pressures from their foreign "partners" be dismissed. Norm localization thus invites us to rethink a host of assumptions in international relations. Firstly, instead of detecting signs of "resistance", we may hy-

pothesize that socializees are motivated by cost minimization because of their "cognitive priors". Secondly, local structures and beliefs may be used as domestic sources of legitimation for the selective borrowing and modification of international norms. Thirdly, localization sets out to analyse the extent to which, and the conditions under which, external ideas may be "simultaneously adapted to meet local practices". Finally, by shedding light on local practices and political structures, a focus on localization processes of international norms uncovers a new investigative area beyond the mere assumption that international norms are, or ought to be, internalized.

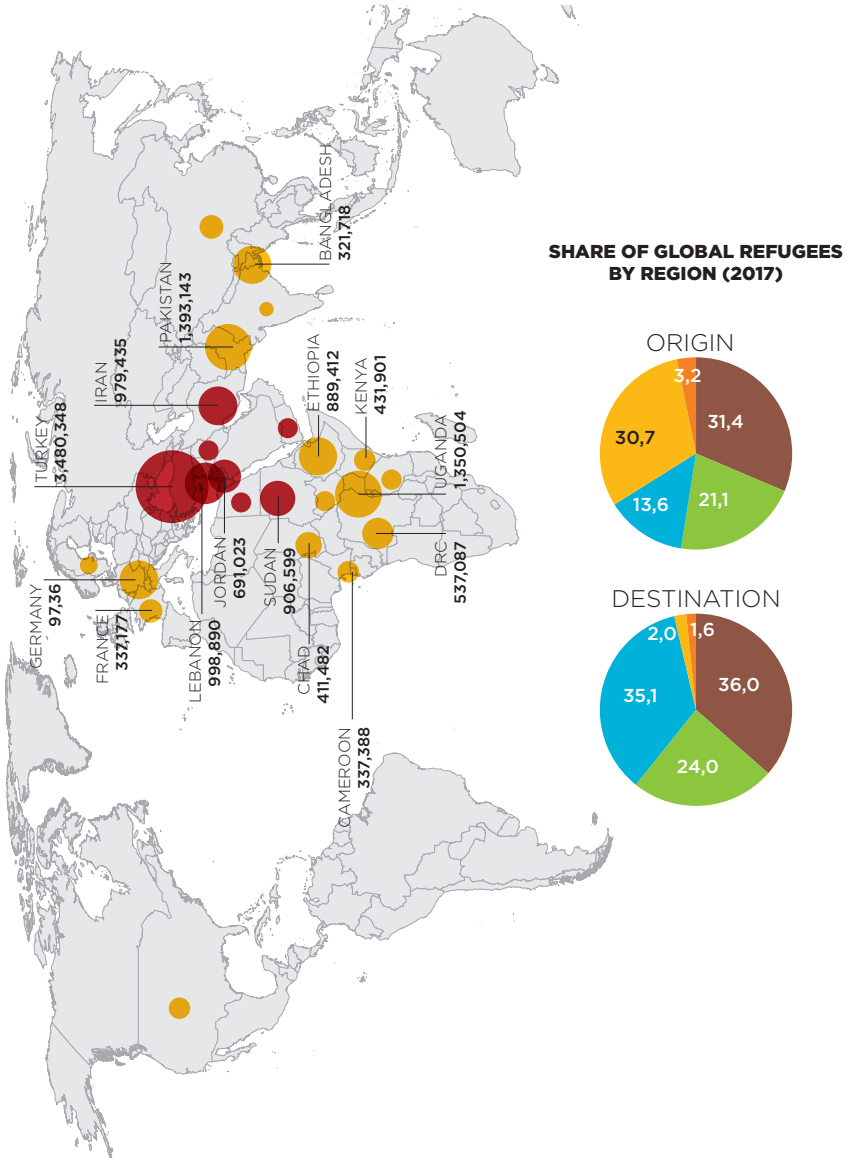
This local readjustment involves two interrelated dimensions. The first relates to the ability of the norm-recipient country to locally readjust the effects and scope of external norms transfers. The second pertains to the desire of norm-making countries and institutions to demonstrate that a transfer has effectively taken place through incentives, pressure, learning or emulation, even if each actor knows that acceptance does not always lead to implementation. Therefore, it is not so much a matter of resisting external influences or rules, as of trying to understand why normmaking countries accept local readjustments. This double-edged effect is illustrated in the next chapter with reference to the gradual involvement of some MENA countries in the international and European management of borders and migration. (...)

MIGRATION MANAGEMENT RE-APPROPRIATED

Playing the efficiency card in border control, and renewing or strengthening strategic alliances with major Western powers, have been key factors motivating MENA countries' involvement in the abovementioned regional consultative processes. For example, the managerial centrality of the state, which constitutes the cornerstone of the IAMM, has enabled the Tunisian leadership to reinforce existing forms of control exercised by the authorities over society in general and over Tunisian nationals living abroad. Indeed, the concepts of "management" and "control", as defined in the IAMM, were consistent with the desire of the former regime to discipline any form of dissent, both in Tunisia and abroad. The fight against so-called "illegal" migration allowed the regime to conceal the real causes of migration from Tunisia and to silence those who had been excluded from the Tunisian "economic miracle". The latter were generally described in the media as individuals attracted by the dream of the European El Dorado. This paternalistic and infantilizing vision, which was repeatedly adopted in Europe, made it possible to divert public attention from the real motives driving migrants' departure, namely underemployment, poverty, social discontent and political violence.

GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS - WHERE DOES THE MENA REGION STAND?

Circles depicted account for 85% of the total refugee population in the world. Country name and are shown for the top 15 recipients.



Note: the data for the chart is provided by UNHCR and does not include Palestinian refugees under UNRWA mandate.
Source: UNHCR, Global Trends 2017.
Created by CIDOB.

The constant reference to European pull factors also served as a rationale for the implementation of a system of control and domination over Tunisian society, with the backing of Europe and its member states. For example, Tunisian Law 2004-06, dated 3 February 2004, clearly illustrated the ambivalent use by the Tunisian authorities of the managerial discourse in the field of migration control. Strongly supported by the European Union following the adoption of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the establishment of action plans and a road map, this law punished "those who have provided information for, planned, facilitated, assisted, acted as intermediary in or organized the smuggling of a person in and out of Tunisian territory by land, sea or air, even if no payment was received". On the one hand, it reflected the willingness of the Tunisian government to tackle the "clandestine exits" of its citizens while responding to European calls for enhanced cooperation on the matter. On the other hand, and more ambiguously, its scope encompassed not only irregular Tunisian migrants, but also those who remained in the country and who would have been aware of clandestine exits without reporting them to the authorities.

As noted by Hamza Meddeb, by adopting Law 2004-06, the Tunisian authorities "create deviance by extending the scope of the law to social categories living on the margins of legality. [...] The adoption of this law allows the regime to ensure at low cost its domination and to reinforce its authority with fear". While it is true that this skilful readjustment of policy transfers from the Europe Union to Tunisia existed in other policy areas, such as trade liberalization, economic reforms, the promotion of civil society and democratization, the support that Law 2004-06 received from Europe, to the detriment of fundamental freedoms, reflected the strength of an image which the regime was able to disseminate abroad, especially with reference to the fight against religious extremism and international terrorism. As long as it could capitalize on this image, the regime knew that attempts to readjust locally policy transfers and practices from abroad would be tolerated by the EU and by its member states, either explicitly or tacitly.

Territoriality remains a key explanatory notion of past and current policy developments in North African countries. It not only refers to the space where legitimate power and legal rules are applied by the state and its law enforcement authorities. It also pertains to an area where state–society relationships can be reconfigured, altered, if not reinvigorated to overcome domestic social and political divisions.

It could even be argued that claims for territorial integrity in North Africa have been used by the sovereign as an asset to embolden its own political and symbolic centrality in a context marked by the perceptible retrenchment of the state from the economy, especially when domestic political land social tensions loom large. For example, in Morocco, domestic politics,

territoriality, identity and regime stability have become closely intertwined to forge a nationalistic sense of unity among "previously hostile forces behind the monarchy". From the mid-2000s up to the early 2010s, Morocco's reinforced cooperation on border controls and deportation with Spain alienated the country from its traditional sub-Saharan African partners (especially Senegal, Mali, Niger and Côte-d'Ivoire). Subsequently, the collapse of the regime of Muammar Gaddafi and the declining influence of Libya in sub-Saharan Africa opened a new window of opportunity. Morocco reactivated its "African strategy" based on a form of soft power which, incidentally, turned out to be consonant with its desire to co-opt some sub-Saharan countries with a view to narrowing Algeria's African playground and to buttressing the territorial claims of Morocco on Western Sahara.

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Moreover, while the reinforced militarization of Algeria's borders with Morocco and Libya has been presented as an attempt to counter cross-border arms-trafficking and people-smuggling, it has invariably been conducive to the centrality of military power in Algeria's domestic political apparatus (the Sula) and to opaque foreign alliances with strategic European countries, especially France, Belgium and Italy, against jihadist movements encroaching on the whole North African region. Border management implies not only a logic of inclusion and exclusion. It also engineers a sense of allegiance to the ruling authority (be it a king or a head of government), especially when territorial integrity is presented as being threatened.

In a similar vein, the former Tunisian regime of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali was quick to understand that appearing to be an efficient player in the field of border management would not only increase its international legitimacy in the West but also reinforce the power of the ruling party while concealing mounting social discontent and repression at the domestic level.

North African states' involvement in the reinforced control of migration and of their national borders has often been tantamount to an attempt to harness domestic territorial, societal and political challenges. In this connection, the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed on 2 February 2017 between Italy and the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) headed by Prime Minister Fayez Al-Sarraj is no exception. The MoU has been officially presented as an attempt to stem migration flows en route to the EU and to reinforce the control of Libya's southern borders with tech-

nological material and financial support from Italy and the EU. That being said, one is entitled to view the hasty signature of the MoU as an attempt by the GNA to buttress its international legitimacy in the West at a time when Al-Sarraj's leadership is being increasingly challenged domestically. It could even be argued that the quest for international legitimacy and military support from the West has been the major driver for the signing of the MoU despite the overt reticence of local municipal officials, who are wary of its disruptive implications for the country's deepening civil war.

The above examples demonstrate that reinforced cooperation on migration and border controls implies the re-codification of external relations. Moreover, it invariably brings about a reformulation of the relations between the parties involved. Today, unprecedented patterns of interconnectedness among countries located in the western Mediterranean have consolidated so dramatically that any unilateral form of conditionality (be it soft or coercive) must be carefully evaluated lest a whole framework of cooperation be jeopardized. In their bilateral interactions with MENA countries, Western countries have learned that conditionalities cannot be equated with pressures when it comes to cooperating with empowered "partner" countries, which MENA countries certainly are. Using an oxymoron, it is possible to argue that, in recent decades, cooperation on border and migration controls has become a central priority in MENA–EU relations. While being central, this priority has however remained peripheral to other strategic issue areas including the fight against international terrorism and the reinforced control of land and maritime borders. Among many others, these are critical priorities on which some North African countries have managed to capitalize to varying degrees.

There is no question that the responsiveness of North African countries to the securitization of migration policies, including the adoption of legal provisions criminalizing irregular migration and border crossing, has been shaped by their respective domestic and regional concerns. Far from adopting passively the guidelines and rules transferred from the West, they adaptively and selectively transposed them to buttress their own position domestically and internationally.

Moreover, the perceptible militarization of the region has fed into the criminalization of migration policies, just as the criminalization of the "unmanaged" mobility of people (be they citizens or foreigners) has fed into the centrality of states and their law enforcement agencies. To date, the establishment of transgovernmental channels (linking MENA officials from the ministries of the Interior and Defence with their European counterparts) has resulted in the conclusion of various bilateral security agreements and arrangements and in the provision of technological and logistical military equipment. Exchanges of information and technical cooperation in the field of identification – for example, using the Automated

Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) – constitute key elements. While it is true that identification constitutes a challenge when it comes to accelerating the removal of undocumented migrants who are found in an irregular situation in Western countries, in MENA countries, as elsewhere, cooperation on identification not only raises a host of legitimate questions about the potential use of computerized personal data, it also calls into question the various factors that motivated it and justified it. To be sure, transgovernmentalism and its modus operandi contribute to making the long-sought reform of MENA countries' security sectors a daunting challenge, especially in Tunisia.

The implications of the Syrian War for new regional orders in the Middle East

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It is not surprising that the land of Syria, which was a pivotal international and regional battleground a century ago both during and after the First World War I, today is again a regional and international battleground: literally a field of active military battles among a much wider range of warring parties. As political and military leaders from Alexander the Great and Napoleon to King Faisal up through to Vladimir Putin have all understood, this reflects Syria's historical geopolitical position as a strategic pivot around which regional and international powers have routinely competed for influence or hegemonic control of the Levant region and wider Western Asia. The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War and the assertion of British and French colonial control in the Levant gave Syria new strategic relevance a century ago, which it has maintained until today, occasionally adjusting its alliances and priorities as regional geostrategic and military conditions required.

Syria's history in its modern Middle Eastern setting reflects a pendulum-like legacy, in which Syria and the Middle East in turn shape and reshape each other within the context of international interventions. For instance, on the one hand, Western colonial interests and regional power intrigue in the Middle East shaped Syria a century ago and carved out its modern borders. On the other hand, during the postcolonial period, Syrian sovereign policies reshaped regional relations for half a century, until regional and foreign forces quickly exploited the indigenous non-violent Syrian uprising that challenged the state starting in early 2011. Syria was then reshaped by these dynamics, particularly when these forces physically entered the picture militarily and politically to generate all-out war and the fracturing of the Syrian state.

The main focus of this paper, then, is to analyse how, in particular, events in Syria during 2011–18 have helped shape new regional dynamics and orders in the Middle East. The consequences of the seven-year-long Syrian war will now become clearer and are likely to have an impact in different ways across the region for years to come. Syria represents one of the

sharpest recent examples of the interplay among local, regional and international powers whose strategic interests are constantly evolving. Syria has been at the receiving end of those dynamics since 2011, and in the imminent post-war period, the legacy and lessons of what occurred in Syria will once again reshape other parts of the Middle East. (…)

KEY DYNAMICS

Syria is not unique in most respects of its recent history, as it captures the past century of erratic state-building within individual Arab countries. Half a dozen other Arab states have also fractured in recent years, and others face serious internal and regional stresses in the political, economic, environmental and security realms. The Syrian war, however, seems to reflect some important new geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East that are likely to ripple across the region for years to come. Four in particular are noteworthy:

1) The direct, long-term intervention simultaneously of regional and foreign powers in Arab internal affairs, using military, political and economic means, which led to the reconfiguration of the role of such powers across the region, that is, the emergence of a more influential Russia, the expansion of direct Turkish and Iranian influence in Arab affairs, and the apparent downgrading of US intervention in Syria and Iraq in favour of focusing on confronting Iran.

2) The critical role of non-state actors in the form of militias and paramilitary groups that represent domestic as well as foreign interests. In some cases the lines between domestic and foreign were blurred, such as the many foreign fighters that joined the Free Syrian Army, which also enjoyed foreign state support, as well as the People's Protection Forces (YPG) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northern Syria that included Syrian, Kurdish and occasionally other non-Syrian elements among their fighters or supporters.

3) The sheer number of foreign fighting forces that simultaneously fought on the ground or in the air, or did so indirectly by arming, financing and training fighting forces in Syria since 2012: we can count at least twenty different states and major NSAs (e.g., Hezbollah, Free Syrian Army, Islamic State, al Qaeda, Ahrar el-Sham, YPG, SDF), and the number reaches into the several hundreds if the many smaller tribal, Islamist and secular rebel groups are counted. The transformation of an important Arab country into a virtual open international battleground where any state or NSA could join the fight to defeat or save the ruling government sets a precedent that could reverberate across the entire Middle East in forms that have appeared in Syria, or in new ones that we may not yet recognize today.

4) The fierce, often gruesome ways in which most local and foreign actors on both sides fought. These included using chemical weapons, ethnic cleansing, civilian massacres, barbaric torture and killing methods, starvation sieges and other acts that some international human rights organizations have called war crimes. The prolonged ferocity of the fighting signalled the unacceptably high cost of losing for key protagonists, especially the Syrian government, Iran and Hezbollah, whose tripartite alliance revealed a determination to prevail at any cost over the forces that sought to weaken them. Russia intervened fiercely because of what it saw as the imperative of maintaining the Assad government in power, given the pivotal role of Syria in Moscow's reassertion and expansion of its strategic interests across the Middle East. The international community reacted for the most part with a few intermittent practical responses to the sustained military brutality against both armed elements and civilians. It remains to be seen if these patterns will define the future acceptable behaviour of governments and rebels within states, as well as of foreign forces that join the fray.

Syria's history in its modern Middle Eastern setting reflects a pendulum-like legacy, in which Syria and the Middle East in turn shape and reshape each other within the context of international interventions

THE GAME-CHANGER: NEW TRANSNATIONAL ALLIANCES

An overarching new development that largely determined the outcome of Syria's war, and which is likely to impact the region for years, was the formation of coalitions among many different kinds of actors. These included big and medium-sized regional powers, local state and non-state actors and international powers. The key regional powers are Turkey, Iran, Israel, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia and Hezbollah; local actors include the Syrian state, assorted militant or moderate Islamist/jihadi forces, Kurdish groups, local and transnational paramilitary groups, and the states of Jordan and Lebanon, whose actions are very localized, unlike, for example, the regional impact of Hezbollah; and the international powers are mainly Russia, the United States, Great Britain and France.

The most important such alliances were the Russia–Syria–Iran–Hezbollah collaboration that preserved Assad's rule, and the counter-alliance against Assad and his allies that comprised fluctuating combinations of the USA, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkey, Qatar, Israel, the UK and France, most importantly. Different members of the anti-Assad alliance aimed to overthrow the Damascus government for varying reasons, but nevertheless they collectively supported the anti- Assad forces. Some supported opposition

groups in order to overthrow the autocratic Damascus regime and support populist democratic aspirations. Others did so to promote their direct national interests, or to weaken the regional reach of Iran and Hezbollah by breaking up their tripartite alliance with Syria. The Russia–Turkey–Iran collaboration was a new alliance among states that created a new negotiating process in Astana and Sochi that paralleled the Syrian Geneva negotiations; sometimes other states joined in, such as Jordan did when these four countries established short-lived "de-escalation zones" in 2018 that helped wind down the war. If the war experience is any guide, the post-war years will continue to see large and small states working together with NSAs in both enduring and temporary alliances in order to improve their strategic positions and national interests, rather than acting on their own.

The legacy of the Syrian war is likely to prod external powers that seek to intervene to achieve certain desired goals in the future to use direct, sustained, military intervention inside Arab states, in close coordination with NSAs, while staying the course on the ground for years. Russia–Iran–Hezbollah did this very successfully in Syria, though obviously at great cost to Syria and themselves. Merely sending arms and offering training and indirect support to the rebels, as the anti-Assad coalition did, would now appear to be a more questionable strategy in the face of a decisive grouping such as the one that supported Assad. The poor track record of the USA, European countries including the UK and France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar in supporting the anti-Assad rebellion might resonate with them in future instances in which they might contemplate supporting anti-government rebels in other countries. Such rebels themselves who might seek support from abroad are likely, in turn, to ask their foreign backers for a long-term commitment of substantive support, including a sustained on-the-ground presence, in view of the Syrian experience.

LESSONS FROM TURKISH AND AMERICAN POLICIES

The Syrian Kurdish experience, in particular, will resonate for years in the minds of political actors across the region, due to the policies pursued by the USA and Turkey. The erratic track record of American support to Kurdish groups – such as the SDF, which is led by the YPG and its parent Democratic Union Party (PYD) – reflects how the United States' short- and medium-term goals changed in the face of heightened direct Turkish intervention in northern Syria. The outcome of the jockeying for power in northern Syria among the Damascus government, Kurdish groups (notably the YPG-dominated and US-backed SDF) and Turkey proved less significant for direct American national interests, it seems, which is why Washington adjusted its support to the PYD/YPG Kurds in order to balance its more important ties with Turkey.

For its part, Turkey proved to be a strong regional power that could intervene when it saw the need to do so. In this case, its national interest was to prevent the creation of an autonomous Kurdish proto-state in northern Syria. Turkey also showed that strong regional powers could evolve and change their positions as circumstances required. As Syrian Kurdish groups such as the YPG in 2017 defeated Islamic State and others in parts of northern Syria, and expanded the areas under PYD/Kurdish control, Turkey did not hesitate to change its previously harshly anti-Assad tone; it spoke less about removing Assad from power and entered into northern Syria militarily to prevent the formation of a single large contiguous Syrian–Kurdish region. During talks with Iran and Russia, Ankara also agreed to the definition of de-escalation zones in strategically important Idlib in the north-west and elsewhere around the country. Turkey's national interest was more sharply clarified, with less focus on removing Assad from power and more emphasis on preventing PYD-dominated Syrian Kurds from controlling the entire north. By mid-2018 it was evident that predominantly Kurdish groups in the north such as the SDF were exploring negotiations with the Assad government to end the war and prevent permanent Turkish control of lands in the northwest of the country. (…)

PRAGMATISM AMONG REGIONAL ACTORS

Some states exhibited bold pragmatism during the Syrian war years as they adjusted and even reversed some of their policies in the light of events on the ground. Caught between the two main camps of states that broadly pursue pro-Iranian or pro-Saudi positions, several small and large states have pursued more pragmatic policies that have allowed them to navigate among these groupings and pursue their own strategic interests. Countries such as Egypt, Turkey, Qatar, Jordan and even Russia sometimes have taken strong actions to support or to weaken Syria's government; yet they have also negotiated, or even reached, military, commercial, technological or logistical transport arrangements with a range of countries in both camps. Russian and Turkish hot-and-cold ties with Israel are a good example of this, as is the complex matrix of multi-sectoral relations and interests that link Russia, Turkey, Iran and Israel. As the war was winding down in mid-2018, Syrian government forces with Russian support were attacking rebel positions in the south near Deraa – at the same time as the Russians were negotiating with rebels and with the Jordanian government to achieve an end of hostilities and allow refugees to return to their home regions. Simultaneously, Russian officials were in touch with Israeli and Iranian officials to discuss those states' interests in the situation in southern Syria.

This aspect of the Syrian war, which might resonate across the region for years to come, is that a foreign power's sustained military presence on the ground coupled with decisive diplomatic contacts with all concerned parties has allowed it to assume a pivotal role in the unfolding events as Russia has just shown the world. The contrast with Washington's unsuccessful policies in Syria and the Arab–Israeli conflict is striking, and hints to regional powers how they might more effectively combine their military and political assets in forging successful foreign policies.

The poor track record of the USA, European countries including the UK and France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar in supporting the anti-Assad rebellion might resonate with them in future instances in which they might contemplate supporting anti-government rebels in other countries

Turkey and Qatar also both supported anti-Assad efforts during the early years of the war in Syria, then eventually accommodated themselves to the continuity of the Damascus government when it was clear that Assad would remain in power; and Turkey indirectly coordinated with the Syrian government when the Russia–Turkey–Iran group established de-escalation zones in several parts of Syria in 2017–18. Turkey and Qatar seem to have expected that the government that would replace the Assad regime would be dominated by less extremist rebels with whom they have long been friendly. When their anticipations did not materialize, they stopped actively supporting rebel groups, and in Turkey's case turned their attention to direct and proxy military campaigns in northern Syria to block the formation of a PYD-dominated Kurdish proto-state.

A corollary to Russia's growing impact in the region due to the Syrian war has been the emergence of Russia–Turkey–Iran as a powerful grouping of countries that can impact some key issues in the region; these include future constitutional arrangements in Syria and Iraq, the status of Kurdish groups within Arab states, energy policy coordination in volatile times, Israeli–Iranian tensions and Middle Eastern states' procurement of nuclear and defensive missile technologies, to mention only the most obvious ones.

An intriguing development in the Syrian war that could reverberate globally in the future was the Russia–Iran–Turkey group's ability to establish a parallel track of diplomacy towards the end of the Syrian war, alongside and linked to the track managed by the UN Security Council (UNSC) and its successive mediators since the Geneva I talks in June 2012. In May 2015, Russia–Turkey–Iran launched in Astana, Kazakhstan, a series of consultations and negotiations that would continue to meet in Moscow, Geneva, Vienna, Sochi and other locations. This effort shifted the centre of gravity of the peace negotiations from the UNSC to the Moscow-led camp,

at a time when Russia's military was actively attacking anti-Assad targets throughout Syria. The Astana talks eventually led to agreement on four de-escalation zones in Syria that temporarily reduced the fighting, while Moscow also took the lead in moving the negotiators towards creating a reconciliatory draft constitution for the post-war years.

The Astana process and the United Nations both repeatedly affirmed that the two tracks complemented each other, yet neither achieved its aims of ending the war and creating a political agreement for post-war transition and governance in Syria. The significant residue from this experience is that strong alliances of powerful and decisive actors that put their troops on the ground can create negotiating structures that achieve two aims: they temporarily bypass existing talks and forums in the UN or elsewhere, and they remove the constraints of UNSC vetoes that diplomacy often encounters. It will not be lost on anyone that the three decisive actors who managed the Astana process diplomacy were all directly involved in the fighting on several fronts.

DEEP STATES WILL PERSIST

Middle Eastern states with strong, decisive and usually authoritarian governments – such as Egypt and Algeria, for example – might conclude from the Syrian war that they can emulate Assad's use of brutal force against his own people and cities in the assault against local and foreign rebels. Egypt's harsh military measures, curfews, arrests and demolitions of entire neighbourhoods in Sinai is an example where a deeply entrenched, authoritarian Arab state is using immense and disproportionate force against home-grown rebels, with two notable results: the rebel threat does not seem to be disappearing in the face of persistent military attacks against it, and the rest of the world does not seem to care much about what is taking place inside Egypt in this respect. The war in Yemen is another example of Arab states (Saudi Arabia and the UAE) with foreign support (the USA and UK) using disproportionate military force against a much poorer, weaker target for years on end, without any significant objection from the rest of the world, beyond the occasional arms sales embargo by some European states including Norway and Germany; others in Europe may join the embargo, following a pan-European parliamentary vote to do so.

Not only did most of the world respond in a low-key manner to Syria's hardline military response to rebels and civilians alike; some countries, including the USA and Russia, directly participated in the fighting that assumed brutal proportions in Raqqa, Aleppo, Eastern Ghouta and other places. This raises an issue that only started to be seriously considered globally and regionally in early 2018: what forms of reconstruction will take place in Syria after the fighting ends? Who will provide most of the financ-

ing? Who will manage the process of planning the rebuilding and distributing lucrative contracts? The lesson from the war again suggests that those countries whose troops fight on the ground for years on end will control the post-war process in all its political and commercial dimensions.

We will need many years to discern the nature of the future Syria. Specifically, will post-war reconciliation and agreement on a new constitutional transitional process lead to a Syria whose political governance will perpetuate the top-heavy, centralized state model of the last fifty years of Assad family rule? Or will it open a path towards more participatory and accountable governance? Most indicators to date suggest that the world broadly accepts President Assad remaining in power – if the war ends, and Syria's 12 million refugees and internally displaced nationals can resume a normal life. This conclusion derives from foreign states' behaviour during the war years, the governance and power trends in areas that were under state control in 2018, and the prevalent international indifference to how Syria emerges from its war. In other words, the message that will be heard clearly across the Middle East is that the world will not care or intervene if you brutally attack your own people or weaker neighbours, as long as you do not use chemical weapons, carry out localized genocides against minorities or threaten the world with terrorism or refugees.

This highlights a bigger issue that permeates most Arab countries (with the exception of wealthy energy producers) with top-heavy central governments that monopolize power: they suffer the same vulnerabilities that surfaced to drive the 2011 Arab uprisings and that hardline Islamists and foreign countries exploited in Syria to generate a full-blown war. These vulnerabilities comprise disenchanted citizens who suffer increasingly difficult life conditions in the socio-economic, political and material realms, and who eventually rebel against the state's policies. The uprisings, including Syria's, have generated discussions across the region since 2011 about whether top-heavy Arab autocratic systems might respond to their citizens' stirrings. The common issues that defined most uprisings, including Syria's, still prevail across the region and have deteriorated in most cases; these include vulnerabilities in socio-economic disparities, state legitimacy, citizen dignity, coherent national identity, environmental viability and sustainable economic development.

Syria's war experience suggests that hardline military responses to citizen political activism are a viable, if costly, option for Arab states that must decide whether to address their weaknesses through structural reforms in the direction of good governance or through repression anchored in "security" imperatives. Syria's recent experience (along with that of Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Yemen) indicates that most foreign countries will support harsh clampdowns on citizen rights across the Arab region if these are contextualized in the wider context of the "war on terror" or the battle to roll back Iranian influence.

UNCERTAINTY FUTURE FOR ISLAMISTS

The Syrian war was the most important recent laboratory in the Arab region for the conduct of Islamist groups and their acceptance among Syrian society. Syria tested both militants such as al Qaeda and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and more pragmatic and non-violent "moderates" such as the Muslim Brotherhood and dozens of smaller local and national groups. How the full range of Islamists fared in Syria should impact how they are perceived by populations and governments across the Middle East. The war years have resulted in double-edged consequences for Islamists of all kinds, whose anti-government activism, like that of secular opposition forces, seems likely to end in failure. Tens of thousands of hardline jihadists in the al Qaeda or ISIS would had five to six years in Syria to organize, train, coordinate and plan for the future, and some remain openly or covertly active there in pockets in the north-west and the south-east – though these will almost certainly be wiped out by state action by 2019.

Post-war Syria presents massive new constraints to new attempts by such groups that may seek to repeat the recent attempts to carve out territorial domains where they effectively enjoy sovereignty, as witnessed in the case of ISIS and, to a lesser extent, al Qaeda and its local Syrian offshoots including Jabhat al-Nusra and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham. The Syrian experience suggests that for regional and global powers, countering growing threats from militant jihadists anchored in self-proclaimed statelets will remain a higher priority than addressing the threats that emanate from vicious states or collapsing socio-economic orders.

Beyond the fate of the hardline jihadi Islamists, the Syrian war also leaves unclear the fate of the "moderate" and more pragmatic Islamists, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, that have usually been willing to engage in political activity according to rules set by the state (Morocco, Kuwait, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan are good examples in recent decades). These have faced harsh crackdowns since 2013 in Egypt and the UAE in particular, while their support from Turkey and Qatar remains erratic. Their failure to make headway as elements in the Syrian opposition leaves them as a future unknown quantity in Arab political life. This might portend new rivalries within Sunni Arab communities across the region, where different political Islamists that will emerge in these countries might try to gain legitimacy and ruling authority, which would reflect in part the Islamists' poor showing in Syria.

Turkey's response to and management of the Syrian refugee crisis"

SABIHA SENYÜCEL & GÜLŞAH DARK

In Makdisi, Karim (coord.) et al., "Exploring refugee movements in the Middle East regional context: Responses to the Syrian crisis in Lebanon and Turkey",
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When the civil war broke out in Syria, Turkey maintained an "open door policy" for Syrians who were fleeing the country, immediately housing them in well-equipped refugee camps, and providing generous humanitarian aid, primarily through the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), along with other state-led humanitarian institutions and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the international community. Turkey has spent over 30 billion US dollars to date in its efforts to address the flow of Syrian migrants. The main feature of Turkey's mass-migration management in the early years of the conflict was its references to the displaced Syrians as "guests", primarily made to highlight the temporary aspect of the situation. (...)

The Syrian conflict, followed by a mass influx of refugees primarily to neighbouring countries as well as to Europe, led to reforms in Turkey's migration and asylum framework, including two important legislative developments: the adoption of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) in 2013, and the establishment of the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) in 2014. Defining the provisions for the entry and exit procedures of foreigners, the LFIP identifies four international protection categories: refugees, conditional refugees, subsidiary protection and temporary protection. Accordingly, Syrians have not been granted official refugee status but have been offered temporary protection status, in line with Turkey's geographical limitation to the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, meaning that only those fleeing as a consequence of "events occurring in Europe" can be given refugee status.

Given that this was the first time Turkey had experienced a refugee flow of such magnitude and duration, a thorough social integration plan for Syrians, most of whom have gradually moved to urban areas from the accommodation camps, and improved social interaction with the local com-

munity became urgent issues that had to be addressed by means of an effective policy mechanism. To ensure decent living conditions for Syrians, their access to social services, social aid and the labour market has been specified in the temporary protection regime. In 2016, another regulation was passed to grant work permits to Syrians under certain conditions and with some limitations.

In the same year, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey announced that Syrians living in Turkey could be granted citizenship. Based on figures provided by the Ministry of Interior, more than 12,000 Syrians had been given Turkish citizenship as of September 2017, and the number is expected to reach 50,000. The selection criteria for citizenship include having professional skills that will contribute to the country.

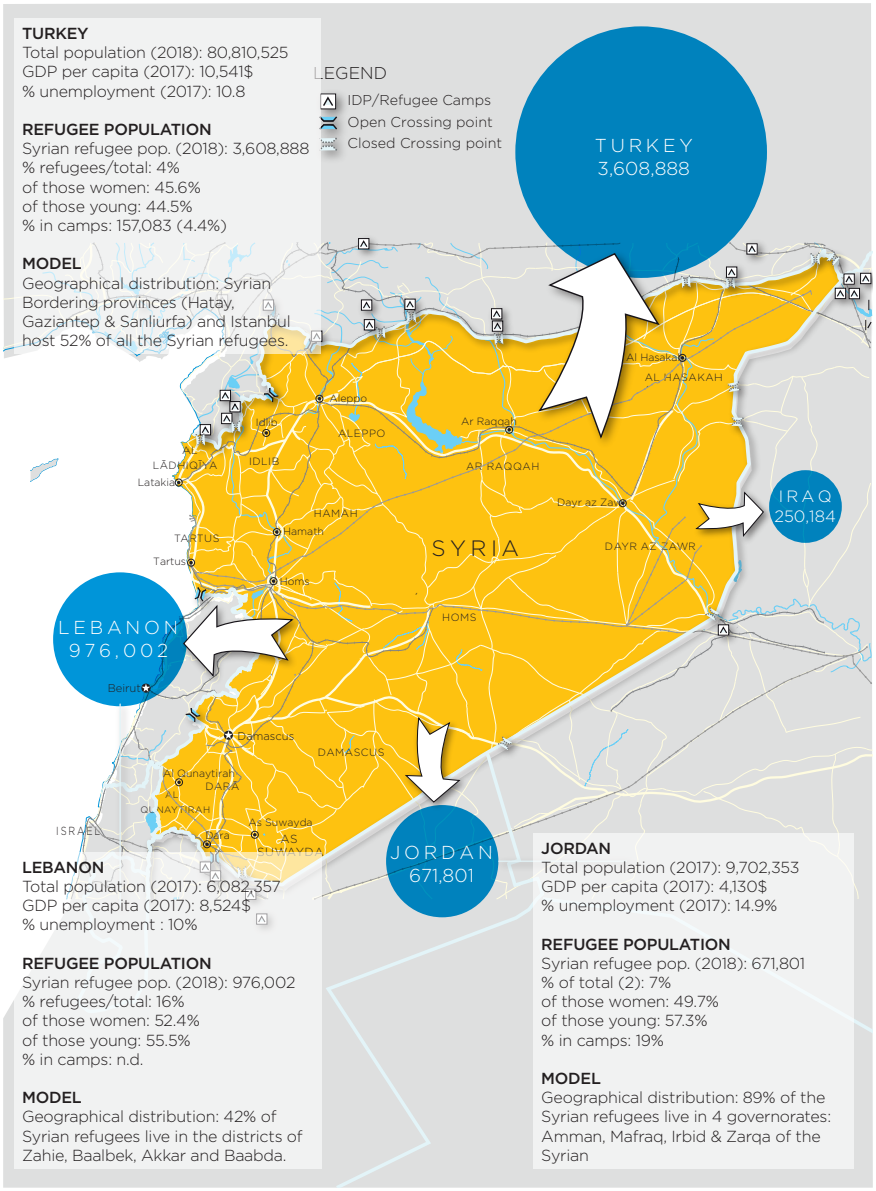
TURKEY'S RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS: DISCOURSE, PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES

Despite the enormity of the challenges posed by the protracted refugee influx, the discourse of hospitality adopted by the authorities in Turkey has remained an important aspect of the policy approach towards Syrians. An expert at a Gaziantep-based development agency pointed out that political language greatly affects how much Syrians trust the country in which they have taken shelter:

> *The evolution of political discourse towards the Syrians in Turkey has three main stages; these are (1) the rhetoric on the relationship between "muhacir" and "ensar"; (2) being a "guest"; and (3) "temporary protection". Turkey's initial response eased the fear of rejection among the Syrians. (Interviewee 1)*

It is also possible to trace this welcoming discourse in the statements of officials in the parliamentarian debates: "The number of refugees in the camps as well as outside of them was rising steadily [...] Refugees are called in Turkey 'guests'. Moreover, multiple services are provided by Turkey in the camps, such as health services at polyclinic standard". Although authority over refugee policy is relatively centralized in Turkey, the direction of political discourse, which is not independent from regional developments, shapes the perception of and the debates about Syrians. The security narrative on migration has become visible within political circles since 2015 owing to the growing tension in Syria, the heightened terrorist threats and the migrant crisis reaching Europe. A Syrian civil society organization (CSO) expert in Gaziantep noted that the Syrians appear to have mixed feelings about Turkey's involvement in the Syrian war, but claimed that political discourse was not a source of tension between Syrians and the host community (Interviewee 2).

MAIN DESTINATIONS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES



Notes: (1) Lebanon's Households Budget survey 2012.
The indicators on display in this visualization are being updated permanently and it may refer to different time periods.
Sources: World Bank Databank, Food Program, UNHCR and Directorate General of Migration Management, Turkey (DGMM). Created by CIDOB.

Most recently, statements by political parties ahead of the June 2018 presidential elections, in which Turkey was transformed from a parliamentary regime to an executive presidency, further illustrate how the refugee issue has become entwined with Turkey's foreign policy agenda in the region. Incumbent President Erdoğan, leader of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), mentioned in a statement that Turkey's military efforts in Syria's Afrin and Idlib areas will allow Syrian refugees in Turkey to return home safe and sound.

On the other side, the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) presidential nominee promised to improve the living conditions of Syrians in Turkey, but also to send them back to Syria after first establishing a relationship with the Syrian regime and assigning an ambassador to Damascus. Addressing the refugee issue as a "national security problem", the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) focused attention on the new waves of refugees that were the result of the regime's attacks in Syria.

The Syrian population in Turkey appears to be divided over the issue of returning home, as shown in a recent study that highlights the "generational differences on perceptions of returning to Syria": "When we look at the youth or women, they are willing to stay in Turkey and be granted citizenship. The elderly or adult men hope to return home while some favor dual citizenship. The age and sex appear to play a greater role" (Interviewee 1).

Finally, at a public level, social cohesion appears to be a primary factor in determining the discourse towards Syrians as well as perceptions of them. The cultural affinity between Syrians and the Turkish community is generally highlighted in previous studies and the Syrians in Turkey appreciate the sincere support and empathy that is shown to them by local communities. Local communities' perceptions, however, can be negatively influenced by stereotypes that appear in various media outlets as well as Syrians' prolonged stays that are a result of the ongoing conflict. The experts interviewed primarily stressed the role of CSOs (both Turkish and Syrian) in acting as a bridge to foster communication and interaction between the two communities (Interviewees 1, 2). (...)

As far as the social aspects of integration are concerned, the role of and initiatives taken by local bodies were highlighted during the interviews. Community centres set up by the municipalities in a number of cities provide invaluable support to Syrians, offering among other things legal advice psycho-social care, translation services and professional training. These centres also host events that aim to improve relations between the refugees and the host community. Some municipalities have also formed special assemblies to allow Syrians to participate in decision-making processes, where they can gather to express their problems and expectations, or have assigned Syrian "muhktars" (i.e. the head of a neighbourhood or village) to neighbourhoods in order to coordinate communication with the host community (Interviewee 2).

Fulfilling the educational needs of Syrian school-age children and youth remains a priority, and initiatives in this area are mostly welcomed among the Syrian community. Certain challenges voiced by the Syrians include the quality of education at temporary education centres, the need for experienced teachers who are able to support traumatized students and the lack of awareness among school administrations about the need to establish good communication with Syrian parents and students. Moreover, in terms of employment opportunities, further action is needed to ensure access to jobs and fair working conditions as well as recognition of previous professional qualifications, and to encourage Syrian entrepreneurs to establish businesses in Turkey.

On civil society's role in integration, there is a general need to enhance the capacity of local CSOs supporting the Syrian community and to strengthen ties with Syrian CSOs (Interviewee 2). It was also noted that international CSOs could be given more opportunity to actively address the refugee issue (Interviewee 1). Improving the capacity of local bodies, including the provincial migration management offices, was among the steps considered necessary to render better service to the Syrians.

DOES EU-TURKEY COOPERATION ON MIGRATION MATTER?

The Syrian refugee crisis became a critical issue for Europe when large numbers of Syrians began trying to cross the Aegean Sea to reach Europe through illegal trafficking. The EU was able to distance itself from the refugee crisis until mid-2015, mainly because Turkey successfully undertook the initial emergency hosting measures. However, as the civil war in Syria grew more complicated and refugees' hopes of "going home" faded, Syrians started to look for alternative options.

In 2015, the number of migrants (not only Syrians) who had reached Europe illegally was around 1 million, while official reports counted 4,000 deaths among those attempting the journey. It is estimated that by the end of 2016 80 per cent of the illegal crossings started in Turkey and ended in Greece or Bulgaria. Applications for asylum in Europe also increased dramatically in 2015 when compared with 2011 figures EU regulations stipulate that third-country nationals need to make their asylum application to the country of arrival, indicating that Greece, Bulgaria and Italy will bear most of the burden associated with the Syrian refugees. The miserable scenes of refugees held in temporary centres with deplorable living conditions and the harsh criticism targeted at the EU forced it to take action. The first EU response was a policy to share the burden of refugees by replacement. However, that plan did not prove successful, and the EU's image was tarnished when refugees were ruthlessly pushed back from the borders of Central Europe.

The EU–Turkey refugee deal of 18 March 2016 was the result of the EU's response to these challenges. This deal is not only concerned with refugees but is also aimed at advancing negotiations between Turkey and the EU, especially on visa liberalization for Turkish citizens. It was intended to rejuvenate the bilateral relations between the EU and Turkey, and thus drew criticism for adding a political dimension to a humanitarian issue. In terms of the refugee issue, the deal is labelled a "swap policy" by many experts. The core of the deal is that Turkey will accept back the illegal migrants from Greece, and for every Syrian Turkey gets back the EU will receive one Syrian from Turkey according to their criteria. In addition, Turkey will exert greater effort to stop illegal crossings, and the EU will contribute 3 billion euro to Turkey, which could be followed by another 3 billion euro in the coming years.

This deal is not only concerned with refugees but is also aimed at advancing negotiations between Turkey and the EU, especially on visa liberalization for Turkish citizens

The deal was immediately criticized by human rights groups and a number of political groups across Europe. Human rights groups focused on the agreement's lack of a long-term safety plan for the refugees. It was seen as a desperate effort by the EU to stop migrants reaching its borders, with no regard for the refugees' lives. The dire conditions of the detention centres have not been remedied, especially in Greek ports, and the smuggling across land borders continues. Moreover, the deal relies on a bilateral readmission agreement between Turkey and Greece, which makes the consensus more fragile. Although the EU may have been aiming at creating a model for Mediterranean refugee management, the criticism it has received may prevent such agreements in the future.

Certain members of political groups, meanwhile, criticized the leaders who were supporting the deal for giving concessions to Turkey in accession negotiations, thus instrumentalizing the Syrian refugees for a political cause.

On the other side, the deal was not without its positives. The main aim of the deal was to stop people risking their lives in attempting to cross the Aegean Sea to illegally land in Europe, and it partly managed to do so:

- In 2015, around 870,000 refugees (not only Syrians) crossed the Aegean; this number dropped to 170,000 in 2016 and to around 30,000 in 2017.
- The number of people dying while trying to cross has been considerably reduced.
- Around 18,000 Syrian refugees from Turkey have been resettled in the EU (mostly in Germany and the Netherlands).

The outcome of the EU–Turkey deal should be seen as improvements in the lives of Syrians making a life in Turkey. However, as of mid-2018, the value added of the deal is questionable. The release of the promised funds to be used in Turkey is subject to a long bargaining process that will define how the funding will be used. The funding is distributed via projects in Turkey, not in a direct aid format, and this adds more bureaucracy to an already slow mechanism. During the March 2018 Varna Summit, the EU approved the second allocation of 3 billion euro to Turkey, but the controversy over the first allocation is ongoing. The government of Turkey has announced that only 1.85 billion euro of the first allocation has been spent so far.

While it is necessary to acknowledge the efforts of the EU to help the most vulnerable refugees in Turkey through a number of programmes and partnerships, such as the World Food Fund, the Turkish Red Crescent and the UN, it is questionable whether the EU is taking an equal share of the burden to improve the lives of the Syrians in Turkey. It is again the Turkish government that is responsible for ensuring the future of Syrians living in the country.

The Syrians in Turkey are critical of the EU's response to their plight. A Syrian lawyer working to help the newcomers in Gaziantep complained about EU aid, saying, "Some of their funding already goes to their own bureaucracy created to monitor; this is just a face saving show at the end" (Interviewee 4). Another Syrian said, "It is their visibility that matters, not us". A Syrian female NGO professional in Gaziantep further stated, "Europe does not care about us, they just want to keep us out" (Interviewee 5).

Another dimension of the problem is that EU leaders have overtly securitized the refugee issue in their rhetoric, often referring to migration and terrorism within the same framework. This has been evident in the internal discussions about refugees that have taken place in many European countries. The language used by European leaders has helped to create an impression among the public that "migration brings terrorism". The Syrians in Turkey often mention that "We very well know that we will be treated as potential criminals in Europe, but some still want to go to Europe for the future of their children".

Two years after the deal was signed, it is neither a failure nor a success. Besides the deal, the overall reaction of the EU to the Syrian refugee crisis was insufficient. The EU was late to acknowledge the humanitarian tragedy at its borders, and when it finally decided to do something, its response was (and still is) national security-oriented rather than prioritizing a humanitarian responsibility. This is not to underestimate the efforts of the EU and UNHCR to improve the lives of Syrians in Turkey; however, in the light of the EU's capacity and defining principles, the support it has provided has been limited and falls short of meeting its own human rights criteria.

Critique of the Syrian refugee crisis response: The case of Lebanon

RABIH SHIBLI & CARMEN GEHA

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The war in Syria has triggered the largest refugee and displacement crisis of our time. More than 5.6 million Syrians have fled the country as refugees, and there are 6.1 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in the country. Neighbouring Lebanon is host to approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees who have fled conflict and violence since 2011. Lebanon, which hosts the highest number of refugees per capita worldwide, is not a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention. But despite a tumultuous political and security situation, the UN has lauded Lebanon for its resilient response, hailing it as a major international pillar and a model of generous hospitality. In 2014, then UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, who is now UN Secretary-General, stated that "Lebanon is a key pillar in the international framework for the protection of Syrian refugees, and without it, that entire system would collapse".

This article explores Lebanon's response to the refugee crisis since 2012. We argue that the resilience paradigm has masked a troubling political reality manifested in the absence of a rightsbased policy framework to handle the refugee crisis. Syrian refugees in Lebanon are stuck amid the polarized politics of the March 8 Alliance (pro-Assad regime) and the March 14 Alliance (anti-Assad regime). These divergent views on the Syrian regime and the revolution in Syria were a major cause of the prolonged political deadlock in Lebanon between 2013 and 2016. After the election of President Michel Aoun in 2016 and the 2018 parliamentary elections, the stance of the Lebanese government on the crisis became more solid. But Lebanon may have been lucky in its ability to absorb the shocks from the crisis thus far. We contend, however, that as calls for the return of refugees intensify the Lebanese government will need to take measures to develop a clear national strategy. This article is based on a qualitative study of semi-structured interviews with senior politicians, advisers, municipal councillors, ministry personnel and civil society representatives.

A WEAK AND INCONSISTENT RESPONSE

During the first four years of the crisis, Lebanon had an open-border strategy with Syria, accommodating a massive influx of refugees. In 2012, the Baabda Declaration announced Lebanon's policy of neutrality, stating its aim to "eschew block politics and regional and international conflicts", and interpreting the refugee crisis as a "humanitarian cause, not a political one". By the end of 2013, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had registered over 1 million Syrian refugees in its database. Within less than a year, however, the Baabda Declaration had been breached as Hezbollah, a major party in the Lebanese government, declared that it was actively fighting inside Syria alongside the Assad regime. This occurred in tandem with the first postponement of parliamentary elections in Lebanon in 2013, followed by a two-year vacancy in the Lebanese presidency.

Initially, the minister of Social Affairs was assigned as the government's liaison with the UNHCR, and it took until late 2014 to put the first Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) in place. The consecutive LCRPs detailed the needs of refugees and host communities, and established road maps for the government's response. According to a Ministry of Social Affairs representative, "Until 2015 things were chaotic and government wasn't present; but the updated 2018 version of the LCRP 2017–2020 (compared to the 2014 document) gave more sovereignty to the state" (Interviewee 7). However, the LCRP does not provide adequate operational mechanisms that define specific roles and responsibilities for national and local government authorities within the coordination mechanisms set by international institutions and donor governments.

The Syrians' status remained vulnerable to the whims of Lebanese politicians and to the decentralized response of municipalities in already impoverished communities. Lebanon's policy of non-encampment meant that refugees were settled in informal locations with no regulatory oversight. Decentralizing the crisis to local-level councils meant that some municipalities imposed haphazard curfews and searches on Syrians with no governmental oversight. A massive wave of donor aid kept municipalities functioning and enabled them to undertake some activities that were far from a rights-based response. "We feel that the Syrian presence in the village is a burden; they have taken everything. They opened their own shops, the labour force, such as plumbing, mechanical repair and such jobs," explained one municipal councillor (Interviewee 3).

A number of reports demonstrate that municipalities were able to alleviate tensions, provide housing and shelter and coordinate with civil society organizations to address the needs of both refugees and host communities. But such reports leave out the sentiments of tension and frustration on the part of the Lebanese authorities. According to one municipal councillor:

Foreign donors have funded public gardens in our town but they demanded through the funding that the main labour force should be Syrian refugees. On the other hand, there is no help at all from the government, the drinking water of the town is suffering, and we only have electricity for six hours. (Interviewee 4)

The decision to decentralize the response to the local level without providing support to municipalities also meant that accountability and transparency in this process were completely lacking. The LCRPs also fell short on mapping out other types of initiatives, funding and programming, and this meant among other things that Islamic faith-based organizations were excluded from sector working groups' meetings. "Our school was first established with the support of Kuwait; for the second year, we had to secure funds from local donors", explained the head of a local organization in Saida, who stated that this group was not part of the network with UNHCR but resorted to coordination only when necessary (Interviewee 5).

Chaired by a former prime minister, Tammam Salam, a Crisis Cell that included the Ministry of Social Affairs as well as the ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs was set up and mandated to "follow up on the refugees' conditions and adopt procedures to deal with the influx of Syrians in cooperation with concerned administrative bodies". The Ministry of State for Refugee Affairs was later added to the Crisis Cell, which never even achieved a quorum to convene and declare a unified response strategy. In effect this ministry "does not have, neither an executive body, nor a budget; it is just an office for the minister of state for refugee affairs", explained a representative (Interviewee 7). In practice, the members of the Crisis Cell held divergent views about the nature of the conflict in Syria and what needed to be done to institutionalize a response plan.

As the crisis evolved, in 2015, the government closed the borders and requested that UNHCR stop registering refugees. As a UNHCR spokesperson said:

This is a big challenge for us since those who approach don't necessarily have the capacity to afterwards verify if they are still or not since we do not register them. This is why now more than before we are advocating with the Lebanese government to allow us to resume registration. (Interviewee 6).

The discourse of Lebanese politicians regarding the Syrian refugees changed drastically in 2016 and in the lead-up to the 2018 parliamentary elections, fuelling rising tensions and framing refugees as the cause of unemployment and instability. In April 2018, Prime Minister Saad Hariri represented Lebanon at the international donor conferences CEDRE3 and Brussels II, declaring to the international community that Lebanon would continue to accommodate Syrian refugees in exchange for adequate international fund-

ing for both refugee and host community needs. Only two months later, this stance was challenged by Minister of Foreign Affairs Gebran Bassil, who ordered a freeze on residency permits for UNHCR staff and threatened to take further measures against the organization, accusing it of impeding the return of refugees to Syria. Bassil's position was buttressed when President Aoun (his father-in-law) accused the UN and the EU of advocating for "a disguised settlement (of refugees in Lebanon) that contradicts our constitution and sovereignty". While the "safe and dignified return" slogan is often repeated in Prime Minster Hariri's statements, President Aoun's references to an "existential threat" and "immediate return" point to an upheaval in the country's fragile demographic and sectarian composition, which is being caused by the protracted stay of Syrian refugees.

PROBLEMATIZING REPATRIATION

The biggest challenge facing the incoming government is to manage the process of refugee repatriation. According to a UNHCR representative, "we need to make sure that people are not involuntarily forced to go back. We have to respect the choice of individuals. It is very important that everyone abides by this principle" (Interviewee 6). "We need to keep the memories of Syrians positive on how [the] host country treated them", explained one adviser to the prime minister (Interviewee 1). But the current debate addressing the right of Syrian refugees to return home is quite complex. Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system has historically allowed its politicians to pursue contradictory versions of a foreign policy. Understanding the politics behind repatriation options in Lebanon is central to problematizing this issue and making sure that any option will ensure a safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees. Three main political issues have emerged as influential in any decision by the incoming Lebanese government.

First, there needs to be a nuanced understanding of who the Syrian refugees are in Lebanon. In the absence of any data on registration since 2015, UN officials and Lebanese politicians cannot accurately assess the status and location of refugees. Moreover, refugees are not a single unified entity. "We cannot only look at them as numbers. These are children, women, men, whose lives have suddenly changed," explained one adviser to the president (Interviewee 2). Among Syrian refugees there are stark socio-economic and political differences. Any strategy should also specifically address the needs of refugees who cannot return to Syria because of the likelihood that their lives will be threatened. It was recently reported that hundreds of Syrians had been tortured to death in the regime's prisons. The Lebanese government at present lacks any strategy to address this issue. "We do not know what will happen if some refugees will have to stay," explained a senior governmental adviser (Interviewee 8).

Secondly, the government should aim for consistency in the current options for return. At present, Syrians have three options for return: (i) general security has begun facilitating the return of hundreds of Syrians in coordination with UNHCR; (ii) Hezbollah has opened centres to organize refugee return in coordination with the Syrian regime; and (iii) plans have surfaced for a USA– Russia deal to facilitate the return of a sizeable number of refugees without direct negotiation between the Lebanese government and the Assad regime. But diverging political views are already surfacing regarding these options. According to an adviser to the president, "Only the Lebanese Government can handle this matter. Hezbollah might be able to achieve something in the areas under its control in Syria but cannot do anything in other areas" (Interviewee 2). Another adviser to the prime minister stated that political parties cannot be trusted to handle the process of return: "When 3,000 daily will need to return, these small political party offices cannot handle this burden" (Interviewee 1). But having three different tracks to manage the return process is illogical. While Hezbollah and the Free Patriotic Movement are in favour of formal diplomatic ties, Future Movement and other groups are opposed to normalizing relations with what they consider a murderous regime.

Lastly, the government should work towards reframing the image of refugees as only being a burden. As explained one municipal councillor:

> *The Lebanese community is benefiting a lot from the Syrian community, the rent of the land is much more than it used to be, if we want to take into consideration that the land was used for agriculture before now and now it's being used for rent which yields a much higher profit. (Interviewee 4)*

Syrian refugees are considered an existential threat to sectarian demographics in Lebanon. But continuing to blame refugees for Lebanon's weak infrastructure and public services will only fuel more tension. Lebanese politicians should act as opinion leaders and highlight the need for refugee protection as a prerequisite for the stability of the country. A discourse that frames the crisis as an opportunity, for example economically, is neither accurate nor useful in this case. But a discourse that links refugee protection to Lebanon's internal civil peace is increasingly needed.

Inconsistent policy frameworks are not new to Lebanon, but the next phase in the case of the Syrian refugees will require a re-examination of Lebanon's positioning vis-à-vis the crisis. The refugees may have survived against all odds, and Lebanon may have been proved to be resilient, but this has been despite the absence of a clear policy position and not because of it. The question of return, or of resettlement, of refugees cannot be left to the whims of politicians, but political dynamics should be considered in the design of any policy, as long as the basic premises of a safe, dignified and sustainable return are at the heart of such a policy.

Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict: 100 years of regional relevance and international failure

KARIM MAKDISI

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REGIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT: SOUTHERN LEBANON

South Lebanon arguably became the main active battleground of the Arab–Israeli conflict after the 1973 war and in particular following the subsequent Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty. As the country was plunged into a civil war, pan-Arab and leftist Lebanese factions joined in the Palestinian liberation struggle while right-wing Christian factions allied with Israel and the Lebanese Army split apart, with one part becoming the "South Lebanese Army", which acted as a proxy militia for Israel to patrol southern Lebanon. Israel's first major invasion of Lebanon in 1978 resulted in the deployment of UN peacekeepers (UNIFIL) that continue to operate in southern Lebanon four decades later.

Its second invasion in 1982, including a siege of Beirut, ultimately yielded two major results that continue to reverberate around the region. Firstly, the US-mediated departure of the PLO fighters from Lebanon and subsequent large-scale Israeli occupation (which was to last until the year 2000) produced various indigenous resistance movements that helped drive Israel from Beirut into southern Lebanon. This initially included the Communist and secular Syrian Social Nationalist parties, but Hizbullah – influenced by the 1979 Iranian revolution – gradually took over, and by the 1990s it had basically cemented its place as the leading resistance group, legitimized by all post-civil war Lebanese governments that supported the liberation of southern Lebanese territory.

The second major result of Israel's 1982 invasion was the weakening of the PLO, which had set up its headquarters in faraway Tunisia, and the resulting increased agency and resistance of Palestinians on the ground in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza. The intifada of the late 1980s, and its use of non-violent mass protests, was seminal in the transformation of the Palestinian movement for self-determination in both developing local institutions and in re-igniting the question of Palestine on the regional and international

levels. It precipitated the Palestinian National Assembly's own 1988 seminal meeting in Algiers spelling out the PLO's acceptance of a two-state solution and official recognition of Israel, a move which in turn resulted in the US-led Madrid peace talks and ultimately the Oslo process.

South Lebanon remains an active battleground in the Arab–Israeli conflict, with both regional and international implications. The July 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and war against Hizbullah was crucial in exposing Israeli military limitations against a non-conventional army and creating a de facto "balance of power" along the Lebanese–Israeli border. It further showcased to Hizbullah the importance of Syria as an ally in that it served as an outlet for weapons, humanitarian relief and territory for those displaced from their villages. The UN resolution that ended the war after thirty-three days has since provided a delicate balance both between Israel and Hizbullah – there has been calm and even military coordination when tension has arisen via UNIFIL – and between the main Lebanese political divide of the so-called "March 8" (pro-Resistance and Syria, anti-US) and "March 14" (pro-Saudi and West, anti-Hizbullah and Syria) alliances.

The current Israeli–Iranian/Hizbullah confrontation, particularly after the Saudi/Emirati rapprochement with Israel, is arguably the single biggest threat to regional stability

This balance afforded some stability in Lebanon as the regional order began to unravel with the Arab uprisings in late 2010, but it has merely "paused" the larger conflict with Israel rather than solved it. Over the past few years, Lebanon – and the larger region – has been braced for a broad based war with Israel, and by all accounts such a war would have far-reaching implications for the regional order, not just for internal Lebanese or Israeli politics. Hizbullah's position has grown hugely in the region, and its intervention in Syria has been explicitly justified by its narrative that Israel (and the USA) is behind the plan to remove of Bashar al-Assad given Assad's support for the Resistance Axis led by Iran. The current Israeli–Iranian/Hizbullah confrontation, particularly after the Saudi/Emirati rapprochement with Israel, is arguably the single biggest threat to regional stability. At least part of its roots lay in the unresolved problem of southern Lebanon.

REGIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT: GOLAN HEIGHTS

The second major regional problem stemming from the Arab–Israeli conflict is the unresolved situation of the Syrian Golan Heights, which Israel occupied in 1967 (forcing the entire indigenous Syrian population – except for a portion of the Druze community – northwards) in defiance of UN Resolution 242. Further conflict during and after the 1973 Arab–Israeli

war eventually produced Resolution 338 (calling for the implementation of 242) and the subsequent 1974 disengagement plan. The latter led to Israel's partial withdrawal from occupied Golan territory up to the town of Qunaitra and the deployment of UN observers (UNTSO) in the buffer zone between Israeli occupied Golan and the rest of Syria.

From the start, however, for Israelis the "notion of a full-fledged agreement with Syria was not considered a realistic option" given the Golan's strategic position. Indeed, under the Likud leadership of Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon, Israel even formally annexed the Golan in 1981, though the UN quickly declared this illegal. The intention was to "pacify" the Israeli right wing and "stop the momentum toward a comprehensive Arab–Israeli peace" that US President Jimmy Carter had initiated, and that had led to the 1979 Israeli–Egyptian treaty and limited withdrawal from the Sinai. UN unanimity on the issue, Syrian government threats and Syrian (and larger Arab) popular demands calling on Israel to withdraw all failed. Indeed, the Israeli de facto success in getting away with the annexation encouraged Begin and Sharon to further pursue, as Avi Shlaim explains, what came to be known as the "big plan" for "using Israel's military power to establish political hegemony in the Middle East". This led directly to their plans to invade Lebanon in 1982 in order to install a friendly government, break the PLO to allow the incorporation of the West Bank into "Greater Israel", and expel Palestinians from both Lebanon and the West Bank into Jordan and turn the latter into a Palestinian state.

After the 1991 Madrid peace conference, for the first time serious discussions were held (largely via third-party mediators such as the USA) between Syria and Israel (under a Labour government) to reach an agreement. Itamar Rabinovich, the chief Israeli negotiator with Syria during this period, argued that a deal was close, but Syrian President Hafiz Assad would not accept then Israeli Prime Minister Rabin's terms of partial withdrawal followed by a long period of normalization along the lines of the Israeli–Egyptian deal. Following Rabin's assassination, as a newspaper interview with Israeli negotiator Uri Savir claimed, Shimon Peres "missed the chance" to conclude a peace treaty with Syria in 1996 by "not making a decision" and instead calling for a general election, which Netanyahu would win. Netanyahu's first official statement made clear that "retaining Israeli sovereignty over the Golan will be the basis for an arrangement with Syria".

One further attempt at a peace agreement failed in Geneva in 2000 when Israeli Labour Prime Minister Ehud Barak equivocated on full withdrawal from the Golan as per long-standing Syrian demands: the chance for a comprehensive peace plan was lost as the US "war on terror" interventions sought to overthrow the Syrian regime and impose a regime friendly to Israel. Over a decade later, during US President Obama's first term in office, Netanyahu, once again in power, oversaw a parliamentary bill in 2010 requiring a national referendum before withdrawing from any

occupied Syrian territory to further stall a peace treaty with Syria and to bind the hands of other Israeli politicians.

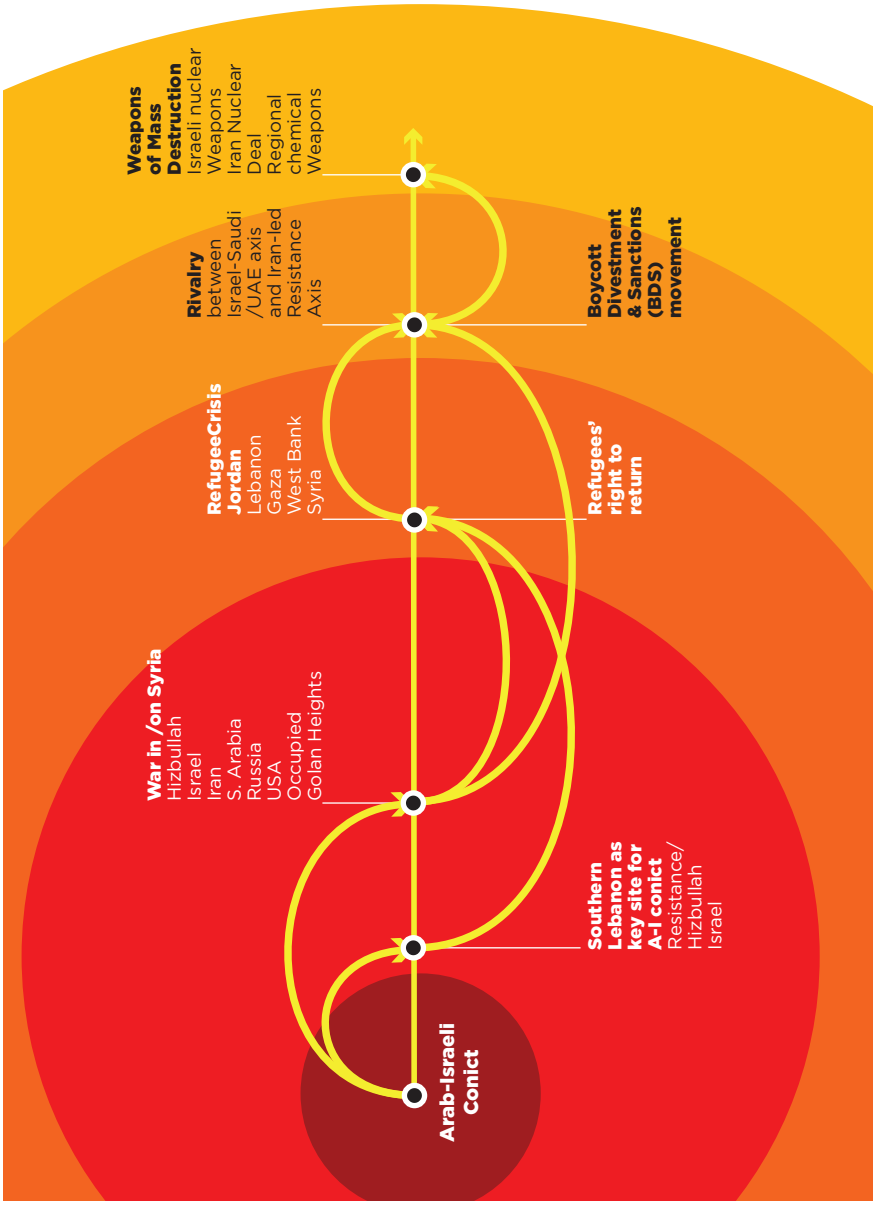
The start of the Syrian uprisings in 2011 led to tension not seen since the 1974 disengagement. Israel encouraged radicalized forces fighting the Syrian Army around the Golan, and by 2014 al- Nusra forces had taken over Qunaitra and UNDOF positions there were eventually abandoned as their positions came under fire. During this period, Israeli on-the-ground strategy regarding southern Syria focused on building a "safe zone" both to push the Syrian army – and its Iranian and Lebanese allies – as far away from Israel's border as possible and to fortify Israel's control over the Golan. As the investigative reporter Nour Samaha has suggested, Israel first gained access to opposition-held areas in southern Syria via humanitarian organizations and military personnel, and its goal was to establish a 40 kilometre, Israeli-monitored buffer zone beyond the Golan Heights, ideally with a "Syrian border police force armed and trained by Israel, and greater involvement in civil administration in opposition-controlled areas".

As the tide of the Syrian war shifted decisively to the advantage of the Syrian army and its Hizbullah allies, the Golan (and overall southern Syria) was restored to its pre-2011 situation and most rebels were expelled. The question of the contours of an eventual post-war agreement, including the role of Hizbullah, remains uncertain, and there are fears that US President Trump will accede to long-standing Israeli requests for US recognition of Israel's annexation of the Golan. Such a scenario would lead to destabilization and possible war not just in the Golan and southern Syria, but the larger Middle East.

REGIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT: PALESTINE REFUGEES

One of the most important and intractable consequences of the Arab–Israeli conflict, and in particular the failure to resolve the Palestine question, has been the fate of Palestinian refugees. During the 1947–8 wars, Zionist/Israeli armed forces forced the vast majority of indigenous Palestinians to become refugees overnight. Roughly two-thirds of them ended up (and remain) in the West Bank and Gaza, while the rest were scattered across Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. The UN General Assembly in 1948 passed the seminal Resolution 194 that recognized the refugees' right of return, and two years later it created an agency providing relief and works for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). For Palestinians, UNRWA has from its inception embodied the international community's responsibility and commitment to implement the right of return. Moreover, by ensuring that UNRWA's mandate was linked to Resolution 194, Arab countries also "wanted to reassure the refugees and their own citizens, who were then hugely supportive of the Palestinian cause, about their commitment to the 'right of return'".

THE REGIONAL DIMENSION OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT



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UNRWA's limited mandate (largely health and education) and ad hoc financing reflected the notion, or at least the hope, that the Palestine refugee problem would be resolved in line with the UN resolutions soon after its establishment. This proved to be wildly optimistic given the subsequent evolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict, and indeed the influx of additional refugees following the 1967 war. During the Oslo negotiations of the 1990s, the refugee issue was one of the final status agreements that were to be negotiated, but as with the other similar negotiations, it ended abruptly and without resolution. The renewed contestation over UNRWA as an exclusively relief-type agency for refugees, or in combination with its function as embodying Resolution 194, has significant bearing not only on Palestine but on the wider Middle East.

Western nations have, by and large, funded UNRWA in recent decades primarily to support regional stability and the ability of host nations to cope with large numbers of refugees, but also to reduce what they see as the challenge of "radicalism" and "extremism" within the camps. Most Israeli governments have officially also supported the donor countries' pragmatism in using UNRWA to "muddle through" the refugee problem while limiting the humanitarian impact of occupation policies and the siege in Gaza.

However, the USA, the leading UNRWA donor, plunged the agency into an unprecedented crisis after President Trump's abrupt decision to defund it in early 2018 following the Palestinian refusal to accept Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Moreover, key members of Trump's team are actively pushing for the termination of UNRWA and the stripping of Palestinians of their "refugee" status. As the scholar and expert on Palestinian refugees Mick Dumper has argued, the impact of all these "dramatic, sudden, and unplanned" cuts on the political stability of the Middle East "is incalculable": it would "produce instability affecting some of the key strategic allies of the US, the EU and the UK in the Middle East". UNRWA services are crucial and currently irreplaceable in Jordan (which now hosts 2 million registered refugees), Lebanon (half a million), and Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem (together comprising 3 million). In war-ravaged Syria, UNRWA services still officially cover half a million Palestinian refugees, a portion of whom have become double refugees by moving to neighbouring Lebanon or Jordan.

The battle over UNRWA, both in terms of defunding it and severely curtailing the crucial services it provides, and in terms of stripping it of its de facto political function as an advocate for refugee rights and protection, will have a significant effect on the stability of host countries and of Gaza and the West Bank, as well as on the larger Arab–Israeli conflict's prospects for peace.

REGIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT: WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

The impact of the Arab–Israeli conflict also has significant bearing on the issue of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Middle East. Currently, only Israel is a nuclear weapons possessor, though it has never officially recognized this and has refused to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or submit to international inspections. This asymmetry between Israel and the Arab states and Iran, in terms of nuclear weapons and other WMDs (biological and chemical weapons), has created regional insecurity. To address this insecurity and to prevent an arms race, Arab states have long supported the creation of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) – a proposal made by Egypt and Iran in 1974 and which Egypt in 1990 expanded to include a WMD-free zone, under the purview of NPT multilateral diplomacy and UN supervision. In 1995, the NPT officially adopted this proposal, but since then, despite some progress in developing the idea, it has been shelved due to strong Israeli opposition (with steadfast US support).

Israel's nuclear programme was created with strong French support during the 1960s, and since then Europe and particularly the USA have supported Israel's position and worked to prevent other Middle Eastern states from acquiring such weapons. The failure to support a regional WMD-free zone form its inception thus led various Arab states to seek WMDs to counter Israel's strategic advantage. Egypt is suspected to have chemical weapons, and has refused to sign the NPT or the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) until Israel has done so. Iraq, and later Libya and Syria, built up their own chemical weapons stockpiles during the Cold War, explicitly using Israeli WMD possession as their justification.

Following the 1990 Gulf War, and given that it had earlier used chemical weapons to attack Iranian and later Kurdish areas, Iraq was subjected to various UN disarmament resolutions and a stringent inspection regime to ensure the destruction of such weapons and the dismantling of its nascent nuclear programme. Indeed, the Western-supported sanctions regime produced a humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq. Worse still, the USA used the false accusation of Iraq's continued possession of WMDs, and the threat this posed to Israel, as a key justification to invade and occupy Iraq in 2003. This, in turn, caused untold hardship in Iraq and led to an unprecedented cycle of war, regional conflict and the rise of Al-Qaeda and later ISIS armed groups. In the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, both Libya and Syria were compelled to join the CWC and destroy their respective chemical stockpiles.

With Iraq, Libya and Syria stripped of their chemical weapons, and still no meaningful Western pressure on Israel to join the NPT or at least

declare their WMD programmes, Israel's asymmetric strategic position has been strengthened. Currently only Iran poses a threat, and the decade-long problem of Iran's nuclear programme has thus been the central focus of Western, and especially US, threats, sanctions and negotiations. In 2005, the UN Security Council passed a resolution under Chapter VII to coerce Iran to stop its uranium enrichment programme, and the resulting sanctions politically isolated Iran and led to intense social and humanitarian consequences. When negotiations finally achieved a breakthrough in the form of the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1, then US President Obama came under stinging attack from Israel and its US supporters who accused Obama of selling Israel out. After becoming president Trump quickly reversed Obama's pledge to work with Iran, unilaterally pulling the USA out of the deal. There seems little doubt that Israeli pressure and interest in remaining the only WMD possessor state will cause further tension and instability in the Middle East.

The Gaza equation: The regional dimension of a local conflict

Andrea Dessì & Lorenzo Kamel

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WHOSE STABILITY?

For decades, the unresolved Arab–Israeli and Israeli–Palestinian conflict was recognized as a major – if not the major – faultline within the region and between the region and the outside world. Seventy years since the formation of the State of Israel, and fifty-one years since the 1967 War that heralded the beginnings of Israel's control of what the International Court of Justice, the UN, the EU, the US State Department and virtually all relevant international organizations refer to as the "occupied Palestinian territories" or "occupied territories", the unresolved conflict retains much of its centrality.

This stems not so much from concerted efforts to resolve the issue or out of a sense of solidarity with the Palestinian people and their rights. Rather, the conflict is important for broader regional and international equilibria, a dimension that will continue over the coming years, and yet is not likely to result in sustainable and long-term solutions. A continuation of band-aid approaches that aim to buy time while not addressing the root causes of the problem can in fact be expected, starting with the worsening humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. Ultimately, such approaches will only result in a postponement of the impending crisis, ensuring that the conflict will remain a central and defining element, or irritant, for the regional ecosystem for the foreseeable future, and the subject of continued competition among regional and international actors alike.

With the Middle East reeling from multiple crises, a growing chorus of opinion has argued that the Arab–Israeli and Israeli–Palestinian conflict no longer represents the fulcrum of instability and radicalization in the region. Overshadowed by the human suffering in Syria, Yemen and Iraq, the appearance of the "Islamic state", and the mounting regional animosities between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and between Turkey and Qatar on the one hand and Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt (and Israel) on the other, the issue has indeed been side-lined by broader regional and international developments since 2011.

Yet, what it is often defined as the "longest conflict since the end of the Second World War" will still make its familiar, often tragic, return to centre stage in the region as a result of protests, killings and concerns over an impending humanitarian disaster or economic meltdown. All of these factors are now materializing in quick succession, and it is thus no coincidence that a flurry of activity has been taking place with respect to the Gaza Strip and the broader Palestinian question. In the wake of the Trump administration's unilateral recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the heavy toll paid by many (mainly civilians) during demonstrations in Gaza, international actors are again looking at Palestine with a mixed sense of urgency and helplessness.

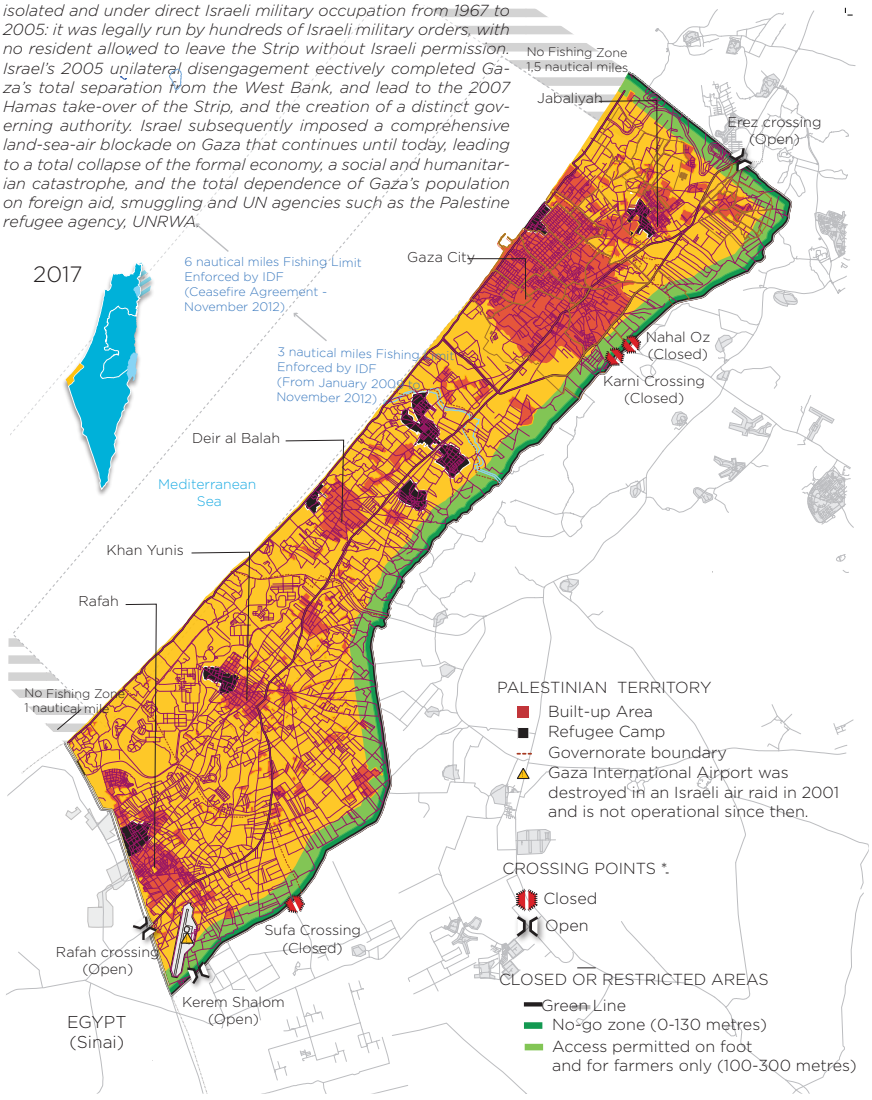
With the Middle East reeling from multiple crises, a growing chorus of opinion has argued that the Arab–Israeli and Israeli–Palestinian conflict no longer represents the fulcrum of instability and radicalization in the region

The dire humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the significant budget shortfalls facing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) since the Trump administration's decision to slash US funding and wage what amounts to diplomatic warfare against the UN agency and the Palestinians have both heightened and driven these concerns. The EU and the USA have both sponsored donor conferences to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and, most recently, the USA has announced (new) efforts to raise 1 billion dollars in funds from Arab Gulf states for development projects in the Strip. Multiple plans have been presented, including those for desalination plants and new electricity stations, solar plants, a port and gas pipelines that are key to any socio-economic revival of Gaza. Such ideas are not new and ultimately cannot hope to address the immediate humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. More short-term and people centred initiatives are needed, including increased export permits, expanded fishing rights and a loosening of worker visas for vetted Gaza residents wishing to work in Israel.

A renewed focus on the Gaza Strip does not stem solely from the outbreak of protests or the "Great March of Return". It rather revolves around familiar concerns that worsening living conditions and the complete lack of political horizon will lead to yet another outbreak of hostilities, in what would be the ninth Israeli military "operation" in Gaza since 2004. Concern has increased recently, with renewed rocket fire and Israeli bombing raids in Gaza in June and early August 2018, albeit such tensions have since subsided somewhat with reports of continued contacts – mediated by Qatar – between Hamas and Israel for the establishment of a long-term truce.

GAZA STRIP: THE LONG-STANDING ISRAELI POLICY OF ISOLATION, SEPARATION AND SIEGE OF GAZA

The Gaza Strip has one of the highest population densities in the world, with almost 2 million people living in only 365 km2. Two-thirds of the residents are refugees—evicted from their villages and land during the 1948 war—unemployment rates are over 40%, and nearly half are below the age of 14. Gaza was increasingly isolated and under direct Israeli military occupation from 1967 to 2005: it was legally run by hundreds of Israeli military orders, with no resident allowed to leave the Strip without Israeli permission. Israel's 2005 unilateral disengagement eectively completed Gaza's total separation from the West Bank, and lead to the 2007 Hamas take-over of the Strip, and the creation of a distinct governing authority. Israel subsequently imposed a comprehensive land-sea-air blockade on Gaza that continues until today, leading to a total collapse of the formal economy, a social and humanitarian catastrophe, and the total dependence of Gaza's population on foreign aid, smuggling and UN agencies such as the Palestine refugee agency, UNRWA.



** As of September 2018, according to OCHA's Monthly Report: "Gaza Strip - Conflict Related Casualties".*
Created by CIDOB, based on OCHA/ReliefWeb

However, there may be more to this growing focus on Gaza. There are increasing signs that Trump's "ultimate deal" will have a significant dimension for the Gaza Strip, even perhaps granting it precedence over the West Bank and thereby potentially further solidifying internal divisions between the two main Palestinian factions. Uncorroborated reports have pointed to a plan that would see Egypt cooperate in the construction of energy infrastructure projects in the Egyptian Sinai bordering the Strip to help with the economic recovery of the area. Rejected by the PNA on the grounds that it would deepen the division between the West Bank and Gaza, even Egypt has recently come out to clarify that such development projects cannot be a substitute for a diplomatic deal to end the conflict.

Ordinary Palestinians will, once more, likely emerge as the losers in these regional and international machinations, sacrificed on the altar of the short-term interests of authoritarian regimes, while continuing to be exploited and pressured from all sides

This latter point should serve as an indication of the constraints facing Egypt when it comes to the issue of Palestine and of the emergence of divisions within the anti-Iran Arab nexus on this topic. Indeed, and particularly for Egypt and Jordan, there is much concern regarding the fallout from Trump's "ultimate deal", particularly if it contains such explosive concessions regarding Jerusalem, the right of return and "status" of Palestinian refugees, and potentially even a weakening of Jordan's sole responsibility as the custodian of Jerusalem's holy sites.

Moreover, there have been recent reports of some tension between Egypt and Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabia and Jordan regarding the future status of East Jerusalem, with both Arab states (Egypt and Jordan) reiterating their insistence that it be recognized as the future capital of a Palestinian state. While some of this is likely to be tactical, a means to not excessively alienate public opinion at a time of domestic duress, the mere fact that such statements are being made reinforces the point about the continued significance (and potential threat) that the Israeli–Palestinian question poses to Arab regimes and elites.

While immediate efforts are now being directed towards Gaza's worsening humanitarian situation, and with speculation growing about the contents of the Trump administration's "ultimate deal", the next months are likely to witness a flurry of diplomatic activity, or rhetoric, regarding the Gaza Strip and the wider Palestinian issue. Much of this reflects the delicacy of the situation and its continued significance for regional equilibrium and the ongoing struggle for legitimacy and influence between competing regional and international centres of power. The conflict will therefore remain a major object of competition between opposing camps and allianc-

es in the region and beyond. While some push for stabilization and conflict management, others will find benefit in fomenting crises and confrontations. Given that a direct conflict between regional powers is unlikely in the immediate future, recent developments can be expected to continue along familiar lines of skirmishes and proxy warfare, with opposing camps channeling their efforts to weaken rivals in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Palestine instead of vying for an all-out confrontation. It is for this reason, and in an effort to further strengthening the emerging US-Saudi-Emirati-Egyptian and Israeli axis, that the main focus is presently returning to Gaza and the issue of Palestine.

Ordinary Palestinians will, once more, likely emerge as the losers in these regional and international machinations, sacrificed on the altar of the short-term interests of authoritarian regimes, while continuing to be exploited and pressured from all sides in the ongoing battle to redefine the regional order in the Middle East. Weak, divided and repressed, Palestinians do still retain agency – and moral leverage – which could be employed to change the current trajectory of the conflict. Regional and international actors will ignore these players at their own peril. Looking beyond the two main groups of Hamas and Fatah, other political movements and a galaxy of local NGOs, activists and grassroots actors are active in Palestine. These deserve attention and support by international actors, particularly those still interested in supporting diplomacy and the goal of a two-state framework in Israel/Palestine. Increasingly repressed by both Israel and the PNA's security forces, new generations of Palestinians will not abandon their struggle, nor will they be enticed into complying with "external agendas".

Ultimately, there can be no shortcuts in addressing the festering Arab–Israeli and Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Purely economic approaches to Gaza will not be enough; the same goes for the traditional security-first approach applied to Israel. A political horizon, including a clear roadmap for intra- Palestinian reconciliation, an end to the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip and binding assurances by Israel and Egypt for long-term access of humanitarian aid and reconstruction materials, as well as the potential for gas exploration and development tenders off the coast of Gaza, are the minimum requirements to begin addressing, and hopefully finally resolving, the Strip's dire socioeconomic standing. Israeli security needs, on the other hand, must be addressed and provided for through appropriate international mechanisms, including the potential revival and expansion of EUBAM Rafah, and other assurances.

Yet, the starting point must remain that of approaching the Occupied Palestinian Territories as a single unit, including the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem, avoiding measures that may further the internal Palestinian divide under the guise of humanitarian relief and short-term stabilization. The West Bank and Gaza Strip are integral parts ("one territorial

unit", according to the Oslo Accords) of a future Palestinian state. Engaging the PNA and seeking to soften the requirements for intra-Palestinian reconciliation, while laying the groundwork for the revival of the PLO and the Palestine National Congress (PNC) through the holding of new elections and the inclusion of Hamas in the PLO, are fundamental stepping stones towards a revival of Palestinian politics and the emergence of a new, more legitimate Palestinian leadership.

While cynics, or "realists", might point out that a resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian dispute will not magically resolve the Middle East's many crises, beginning (or continuing) to address the conflict through appropriate historical and contemporary contexts is a fundamental precondition for the emergence of a more stable and prosperous Middle East.

Jihadist groups in North Africa and the Sahel: Between disintegration, reconfiguration and resilence

Djalil Lounnas

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THE SAHEL: THE ENDURING JIHADI THREAT

The jihadi scene in the Sahel presents a major contrast with the situation in North Africa. Indeed, in Morocco jihadi organizations have not been able to deploy themselves at all, with scores of jihadi cells dismantled, while the numbers of the Moroccan foreign fighters were high between 2011 and 2014 with an estimation of there being close to 2,000. The situation has shifted since then. Indeed, there has been almost no departure to the Middle East since 2015, while over 500 have returned to Morocco and been galled. In Algeria, jihadi organizations have been almost suppressed. While they may continue to conduct attacks, these have become very rare and do not represent a major threat to the security of the country. Furthermore, the numbers of Algerian foreign fighters have been very low and are estimated to be no more than 150, and so they are not considered to be much of a threat. The jihadi organizations in Tunisia have also been contained and isolated, and, although some are still able to mount attacks against the Tunisian security forces, many consider that the worst is over. Libya represents a contrast. The jihadi organizations in the northern parts of the country were defeated in 2017; however, they have retreated to the south, especially in the region of Fezzan, where they have established new strongholds. In the Sahel they have proved to be extremely resilient. In spite of international and regional cooperation to fight jihadi organizations, and despite the French-led military Operation Serval and then Operation Barkhane, these groups have not only been able to absorb heavy losses both material and in terms of fighters but, worse, to strengthen themselves. Indeed, while jihadi violence was more or less limited to Northern Mali and the immediate border region of Niger in 2013 – when the French launched Serval – the jihadists have now been striking in all the Sahel countries and in those never touched by jihadi violence before, such as Burkina Faso or Ivory Coast.

Indeed, the jihadi organizations in the Sahel were considerably weakened in the immediate aftermath of operations Serval and then Barkhane in 2013–2014 in Northern Mali, which led to the death of several hundred jihadists, including several important leaders. Therefore, in order to evade destruction AQIM and Ansar al-Din retreated from the major urban centres and spread across the whole Sahel or regrouped in Libya. In that regard, Serge Daniel posits that "the French operations did not solve the problems that led to the 2011–2012 crisis and the collapse of the Malian State, these operations simply stopped the jihadi advances, Northern Mali was reconquered, however most of the jihadi fighters simply retreated to Southern Libya" (Interview C). However, by 2014, sensing that disaffection had returned to the populations in Northern Mali, a region where the state remains endemically weak, and which is plagued by extreme poverty and unsolved social and economic issues, with enduring tensions between the different political factions and ethnic groups, the jihadi organizations started gradually to return. They began increasing attacks in Northern Mali, then expanded to the centre of the country (Macina) and by 2016 had managed to infiltrate the neighbouring countries, which until then had never been touched by jihadi terrorism. This in turn allowed Yahya Abu Hammam, supreme leader of AQIM in the Sahel to declare that "the French operations in Mali have totally failed and today, we are present everywhere, from the Mauritanian border in the west all the way to Burkina Faso in the east".

Nevertheless, one of the characteristics of the Sahelian jihadi movement until March 2017 was its fragmentation, with several different movements in existence. By 2015, jihadi groups in the Sahel were dominated by four powerful organizations. The first, led by Yahya Abu Hammam, was AQIM in the Sahel. Present there since the early 2000s, AQIM had participated in the takeover of Northern Mali in 2012. Following operations Serval and Barkhane, AQIM suffered heavy losses and saw the death of several key figures in its Sahelian brigades, including Abdelhamid Abu Zeid and Abdelkrim al-Targui. Next to AQIM and closely allied with it, was Ansar al-Din, led by Iyad Ag Ghali. A local hero and a major figure of the Tuareg uprisings in the 1990s and early 2000s, Ghali had since abandoned his separatist goals and from the mid-2000s became a radical Salafi Islamist. Ghali very clearly stated to other Tuareg leaders in late 2011, shortly after the creation of his organization Ansar al-Din: "As from now, I want to tell everyone that our goal is the implementation of the Sharia in all Mali. We don't want to hear anymore of autonomy or independence". It is worthy of note that since the mid-2000s Ghali had developed close relations with AQIM leaders, including Abu Zeid and Abu Hammam. Moreover, Abdelkrim al-Targui, one of the most important AQIM brigade leaders, was his nephew. Thus, sharing strong personal relations with AQIM in addition to ideologically converging with them, the alliance between Ansar al-Din and AQIM was a natural conclusion of this comradeship which

had started in the 2000s. Talking about the nature of the relationship between AQIM and Ansar al-Din, Abu Hammam explained that "Ansar al-Din is an Islamist organization for the way of the jihad in the name of God, and in spite of some difference, we see eye to eye on several issues". The third faction closely allied with Ansar al-Din and AQIM is the Macina brigade, sometimes referred to as the Macina Liberation Front, led by the charismatic Salafi preacher Amadou Koufa. Close to Ghali in 2010–2012 and very popular in central Mali, the Macina region, he has important support from the Fulas, being from this community himself.

Rival to those three organizations was the powerful Al-Mourabitoun, led by the charismatic Mokhtar Belmokhtar. Present in the Sahel since 1994, regional emir for the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) until 2005, when he was demoted by Droukdel to a simple brigade leader role, although formally a member of AQIM until 2012, since then Belmokhtar had acted with total independence from the regional AQIM leadership as well as from Droukdel. Indeed, Belmokhtar wanted to become supreme emir of the GSPC in 2004, after the death of its previous leader Nabil Sahraoui. However, he was caught off guard by Droukdel, who managed to become emir instead. Since then the two men had had very difficult relations. This was aggravated by the demoting of Belmokhtar in 2005 and his rivalry with Abu Zeid over a wide range of issues, including links between Belmokhtar and local mafias condemned by Abu Zeid and the refusal of Belmokhtar to share the money he was receiving from western hostage takings. The tensions between Belmokhtar and the AQIM leadership continued to rise over the years, furthering the rift between him and the other brigade leaders. This was illustrated when Belmokhtar discreetly encouraged the formation of the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), a splinter from AQIM. Finally, in late 2012 Belmokhtar was removed from the command of his brigade by Droukdel. This led him and his brigade to directly split from AQIM and in mid-2013 he merged with MUJWA and gave birth to Al-Mourabitoun, one of the strongest jihadi organizations in the region. Al-Mourabitoun immediately pledged its allegiance to Al-Qaeda and Ayman al-Zawahiri, thus becoming the direct competitor of AQIM in the Sahel. Having said that, one must note here that while Al-Mourabitoun was the rival of AQIM, this was due essentially to bad personal relations between Belmokhtar on the one hand and Droukdel and Abu Zeid on the other. Otherwise, Belmokhtar maintained very good relations with most of the other AQIM leaders in the Sahel, in addition to the leader of Ansar al-Din. Ideologically, there was a total convergence between him and AQIM. Finally, at no point was there any confrontation between AQIM and Al-Mourabitoun. On the contrary, the men in the field continued to entertain very cordial and good relations. Lastly, Al-Mourabitoun was also the target of operations Serval and Barkhane, suffering

heavy losses in 2014 and 2015, including the death of several of its leaders – especially Omar Ould Hamaha, number two in the organization.

Worse for Belmokhtar, tensions rose between his organization and IS in Libya, a country in which he had established a strong presence after the fall of Gaddafi. In late 2014 he is said to have refused to merge with IS in Libya and apparently his group fought against IS during the battle of Derna. This led IS to condemn him to death in August 2015 and launch a warrant against him. Belmokhtar was by then being hunted by France and the United States as well. These nations conducted several airstrikes against him and his associates in 2015 and 2016. In November 2016, a French air strike in Libya is suspected to have either killed or at least badly injured him. While no information has circulated since on his whereabouts, as Belmokhtar has neither appeared in public nor released any statement, it has led many to question whether he is still alive or at least to suspect that he has been incapacitated.

In late 2012 Belmokhtar was removed from the command of his brigade by Droukdel. This led him and his brigade to directly split from AQIM

In May 2015, amid tensions and divisions among Al-Qaeda's Sahelian affiliates, Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, the number two man in Al-Mourabitoun announced that this organization was "pledging its allegiance to the Caliph of the Muslims, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, thus banishing all divisions within the community of the Muslims". Done without authorization and against the wishes of Belmokhtar, his declaration was immediately rejected by the Al-Mourabitoun leadership. Belmokhtar released an announcement shortly afterwards in which he explained that the Sahrawi declaration had been done without respecting Shura (consultation) procedures and therefore the statement did not represent Al-Mourabitoun, which according to Belmokhtar remained loyal to Al-Qaeda. Nonetheless, close to 100 men followed Abu Walid Al-Sahrawi, who created his own organization, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), and entered in competition with all the other Sahelian organizations.

As a result, from late 2015 a process of rapprochement between the various jihadi organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda started, including conducting attacks in common. This process culminated in March 2017 when AQIM, Ansar al-Din, the Macina brigade and Al-Mourabitoun merged into a single organization: Jama'a Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimin' (JNIM), also known as Group in Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM), whose leader is Iyad Ag Ghali. This merger ended all competition and rivalries between Al-Qaeda affiliates in the region and the GSIM has since emerged as the most powerful jihadi organization in the Sahel, with an estimated 1,200 men fighting under its banner. One should note that the GSIM pledged allegiance to Droukdel and Zawahiri, and thus presented itself as an AQIM

affiliate in the Sahel and confirmed its affiliation with Al-Qaeda. However, and this was a first, GSIM also pledged allegiance to the Taliban Emir Hibatullah Akhundzada – recognizing him as commander of the faithful. This was a clear message to ISIS and the other jihadists that as long as Al-Qaeda existed, there was already a commander of the faithful and therefore ISIS caliph was not legitimate. Since then, GSIM has ramped-up attacks all over the region, emerging as the most powerful organization in the Sahel.

The ISGS, for its part, has so far proved to be a marginal organization, active in the region of Gao and the south-eastern parts of Mali and its immediate neighbour Niger. It has been involved in just a few attacks, the most important being the Tongo Tongo ambush in Niger during which four American soldiers were killed. Finally, while the ISGS was created in May 2015, it was only recognized by IS as an affiliate in October 2016, which shows that Al-Sahrawi was not taken seriously by IS leadership. Moreover, while ISGS has formally stated its allegiance to IS, we have not observed the use of extreme and excessive violence against civilian populations that IS has been exercising in the Middle East. Indeed, when an organization pledges allegiance to another, this usually means that it automatically adopts the other's methods of warfare and ideological stance. However, so far ISGS has not released any document that could officially link it ideologically to IS. Its patterns of behaviour seem to be a continuation of the methods used by the other jihadi organizations in the Sahel, albeit more violent. A possible rapprochement and cooperation between ISGS and GSIM cannot be excluded. In that regard, a certain Amar, the ISGS spokesman, gave an interview to the Agence France-Presse in January 2018 in which he explained that "we will do everything we can to prevent the G5 Sahel from deploying itself in the Sahel. […] Our brother Iyad Ag Ghali and the other mujahideens like us defend Islam. […] To defend Islam we give help to each other and will continue to do so". Other rumours indicate that a meeting has already taken place between Sahrawi and Ghali. However, so far those jihadi organizations have proved to be extremely resilient and are far from any collapse. The attacks of 2018 in the Sahel region have now spread to almost all the countries, and these states have proved unable to check them. (…)

This comparative analysis between jihadi organizations in North Africa and the Sahel leads us to conclude that they have been able to rise and maintain themselves only in countries where state structures and apparatus were extremely weak, allowing these organizations to take control of what one may qualify as "ungoverned spaces". Thus, Morocco, Algeria and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Tunisia after it restored its state apparatus, have managed to considerably reduce the terrorist threat. On the other hand, Libya, Mali, Niger and the other Sahelian countries have been unable to do so, given the weakness of their state structures. The North

African–Sahelian regional system is fragmented along these lines, which in turn considerably affects the ability of jihadi organizations to deploy themselves. Indeed, when we look at the figures for jihadists in the Sahel, not exceeding 1,200 men, we may conclude that their power comes from the weakness of the states of the region, rather their own intrinsic strength. Consequently, the persisting weakness of Libya and the Sahelian states is perceived by the Tunisian-Algerian-Moroccan authorities as constituting the most dangerous threat to their stability.

Furthermore, we should note the major differences between the Middle Eastern jihadi and the North African–Sahelian organizations. In the Middle East, the jihadi organizations are absorbed in extremely violent and bloody civil wars that often take precedence over fighting the regimes in place and have claimed the lives of several thousand of their fighters, whether Al-Qaeda or IS. Moreover, they (especially IS) are known for their extremely violent behaviour towards the local civilian populations and minorities. In Algeria and Tunisia and the Sahel on the other hand, there are almost no records of infighting between the jihadi organizations over the past fifteen years, except one significant skirmish in Gao in 2015 between AQIM and IS fighters. The situation of Libya and the different trajectory of Libyan jihadi organizations there makes it a specific case, in the sense that these organizations did engage in violent confrontations with each other, especially IS versus Al-Qaeda loyalists – although here again, it does not seem to have equalled the internecine strife observed in in the Middle East. Finally, again no large-scale massacre or extreme violence has been observed against civilians in the North Africa and Sahel region. When such events occur, they are exceptional, showing that while those organizations claim affiliation with their Middle Eastern counterparts, they usually remain local organizations following their own objectives and strategies.

ANNEX 1

Analysis of the MENARA fact-finding missions (2018)

Mustafa Kaymaz, Anna Busquest & Eduard Soler i Lecha

This report aims to provide an analysis of the interviews conducted under the scope of the MENARA Fact-Finding Missions. Three questions were asked to each respondent: (1) Which are the traditional or new actors that will shape the future of the Middle East and North Africa? Why? (2) Which are according to you the three main risks and the three main opportunities that the MENA region is facing? (3) Do you envisage a more or a less active European Union in the MENA region in the years to come? And what would you expect from it? This report was produced to make quantifiable and analyzable the responses given to these three open-ended questions. (...)

THE SAMPLE

There are 269 respondents in the sample. In addition to their responses to the said three questions, the dataset contains information on gender, country where the interview was conducted, region of origin, age and professional category. The distribution of respondents is as follows:

Gender: Although respondents are not representative of the population, it reflects the male-dominated elite class. Nevertheless, the number of female respondents in the sample will allow us to make comparisons. This variable will enable us to see if there are gender differences in perceptions regarding influential actors, risks and opportunities, and the role of and expectations from the EU.

Gender	Frequency	%
Female	53	19.70
Male	191	71.00
Missing	25	9.29
Total	**269**	**100**

Country: The country data shown in Table 2 represents where the interviews were conducted. This variable will help us identify the effect of geography on one's perceptions. We've grouped them in sub-regions when relevant.

Country	Frequency	%
Egypt	24	8.92
External (UK, Hungary, Russia, Canada, India, Switzerland, USA, China, Italy, Spain, Belgium, France)	66	24.54
Gulf (Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Oman)	27	10.04
Iran	15	5.58
Levant (Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Israel)	51	18.96
Maghreb (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya)	54	20.07
Sahel (Mali)	21	7.81
Turkey	11	4.09
Total	**269**	**100.00**

Region of origin: This indicates whether a respondent is originally from the MENA or other regions (Non-MENA). This variable will help us understand differences, if any, between people of the region and external observers (e.g. diplomats).

Region	Frequency	%
MENA	173	64.31
Non-MENA	84	31.23
Missing	12	4.46
Total	**269**	**100.00**

Age Group: Despite not representing the predominantly young demography of the region, the sample is representative of the age group of the decision-makers both in and out of the region. Nevertheless, it contains a significant number of young people which data will provide us if any, the generational gaps and differences of perceptions and expectations.

Age Group	Frequency	%
18-35	75	27.88
35-65	182	67.66
Over 65	12	4.46
Total	**269**	**100.00**

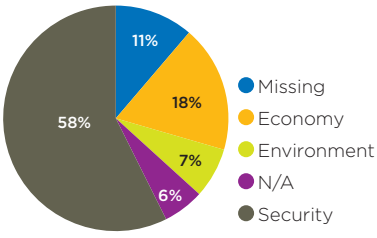
Professional Category: Next table indicates the professional categories of the respondents. It includes close numbers of the civil and public sectors. This variable will provide insights into the differences, if any, among people of various areas such as public officials, private sectors, and members of civil society, intellectuals, opinion makers, and activists.

Professional Category	Frequency	%
CSO, Intellectuals and Opinion-Makers, and Activists	115	42.75
Private Sector	22	8.18
State and Government Officials	130	48.33
Others	2	0.74
Total	**269**	**100.00**

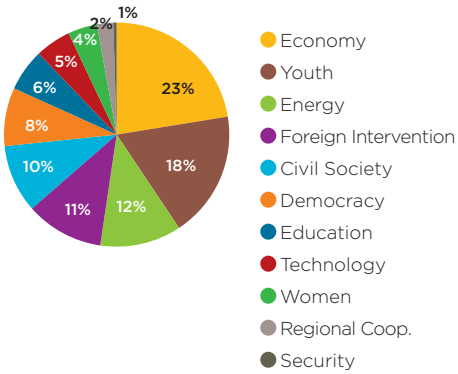
WHICH ARE ACCORDING TO YOU THE THREE MAIN RISKS AND THE THREE MAIN OPPORTUNITIES THAT THE MENA REGION IS FACING?

We first categorized the risks provided by the respondents into three groups: economy (such as to poverty, income inequality, lack of diversification, decreasing oil prices, etc.), environment (such as while climate change, water scarcity, etc.), and security conflicts and wars, nuclear power competition, foreign intervention, armed non-state actors, etc.). In case the respondent did not provide any risks or opportunities, the answer was coded as N/A. We then codified the opportunities in their order provided by each respondent. Then, we followed the same procedure as we did in the first question to combine the risks and opportunities under separate variables. After removing empty cells, as some respondents provide only one or two risks and/or opportunities, our sample increased from 269 to 373. Missing cases occurred due to the respondents who provided only opportunities or risks.

RISKS MENTIONED

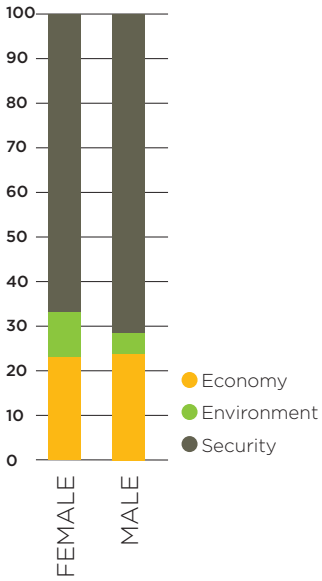


OPPORTUNITIES MENTIONED

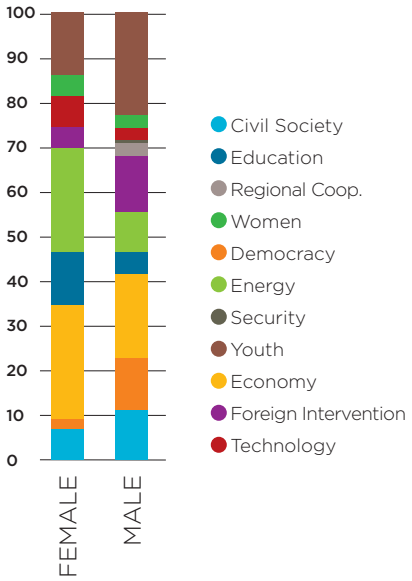


a. **Gender and risk/opportunities**: The proportion of environmental concerns is slightly higher among female respondents than that among males. Democracy's and youth's proportions are higher among males compared than that among females while economic opportunities, education, and energy have higher percentages among females.
b. **Location of interviews and risk/opportunities**: Environmental concerns are absent in interviews conducted in Turkey and less mentioned in Gulf countries and Iran while their proportion is the highest in Egypt. civil society as an opportunity has a higher proportion in the interviews conducted in Iran, Turkey, Maghreb, and External countries while having a lower proportion in the Gulf, Levant, and Egypt. Democracy also has a higher percentage in Iran, Turkey, and the Sahel but a lower percentage in Egypt, the Maghreb, and Levant. Economic opportunities have higher proportions in Egypt, the Levant, and Gulf and lower proportions in the Sahel and Turkey. Energy, on the other hand, has higher percentages in the External, Maghreb and Sahel, countries but lower percentages in Iran and the Gulf and is completely absent in Egypt. While women's proportion is higher in Egypt, they are not mentioned in the Levant, Iran, and Turkey.
c. **Age group and risk/opportunities**: The risk distributions are almost identical among age groups 18-35 and 35-65 while the percentages of economic and environmental risks are slightly higher among those over 65. Compared to the age groups 18-35 and 35-65, the proportions of economic opportunities are lower among those over 65. Education, on the other hand, has a lower percentage among the age group 35-65. Another interesting finding is that foreign intervention is mentioned as not perceived as opportunity by younger and older respondents. Regional cooperation's percentage is higher among the age group 35-65 but lower among the age group 18-35 while being absent among those over 65. Finally, it is interesting that youth has a higher proportion among the age group 35-65 than both age groups 18-35 and over 65.
d. **Professional category and risk/opportunities**: The 'CSO members, intellectuals, opinion-makers, and activists' and 'state and government officials' have similar risk distributions while the private sector category has a slightly higher percentage of security risks at the expense of environmental risks. Civil society is absent in the private sector category while the economy has a higher proportion in the same group. Compared to the other two groups, the 'state and government officials' category as a lower percentage for democracy as an opportunity. Foreign intervention, on the other hand, is absent in the private sector category. Finally, compared to the other two groups, the CSO members, intellectuals, opinion-makers, and activists have lower percentages for women and youth.

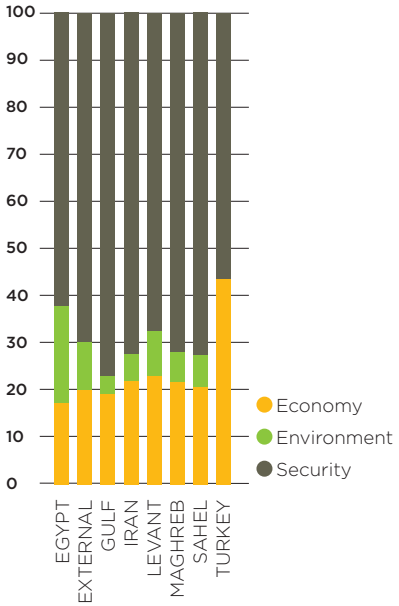
RISKS BY GENDER



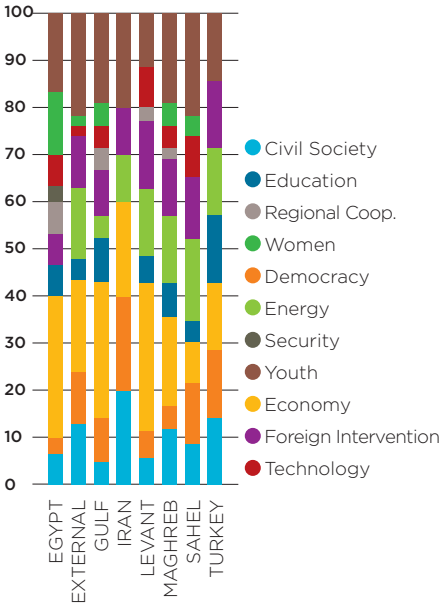
OPPORTUNITIES BY GENDER



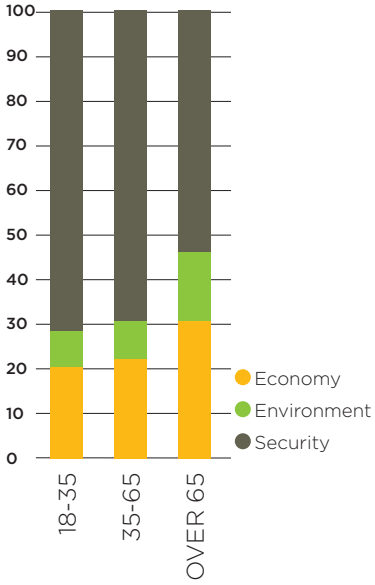
RISKS BY COUNTRY



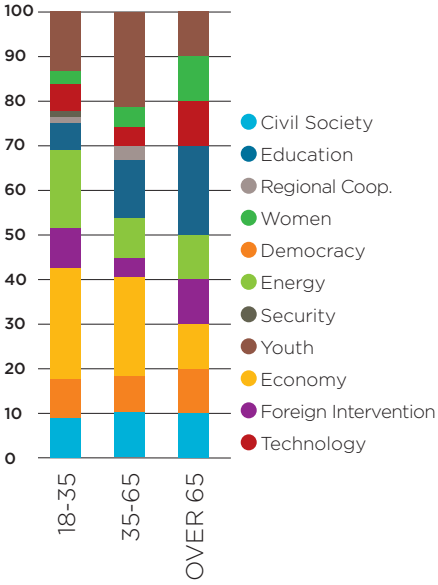
OPPORTUNITIES BY COUNTRY



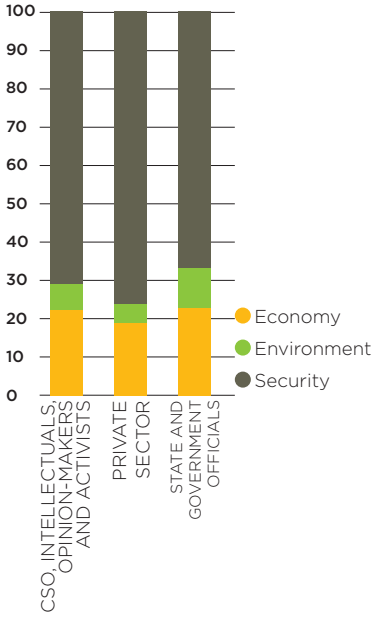
RISKS BY AGE GROUP



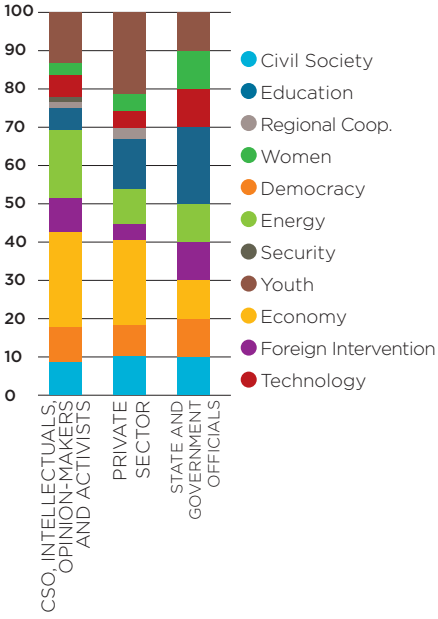
OPPORTUNITIES BY AGE GROUP



RISKS BY PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY



OPPORTUNITIES BY PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY



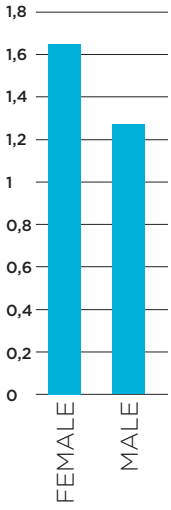
WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF HOPE ON THE FUTURE OF THE MENA REGION?

This section provides the level of hope observed among the participants as to the future of the MENA region. We codified the responses that either mentions that "there is no opportunity" or list risks without mentioning opportunities as "0". If the number of risks provided is higher than that of opportunities, the code is "1". Code "2" means that the respondent listed equal numbers of risks and opportunities. The responses containing a higher number of opportunities than risks were given "3" while those mentioning only opportunities but no risks were coded as "4." Finally "N/A" means the respondent did not give an answer to the question.

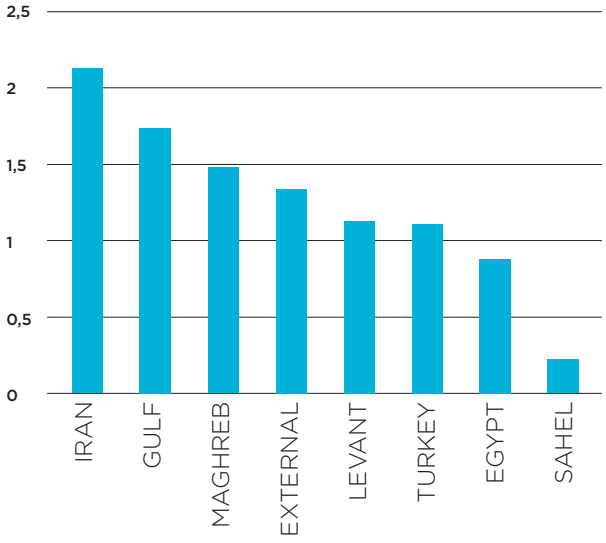
The average level of hope in our sample is 1.29 that is a view closer to pessimism but still containing elements of hope. The following tables and figures show the average level of hope among subgroups of responses based on the gender, region of origin, age group, and professional category of respondents as well as the country where the interview was conducted.

a. Gender and average level of hope: The level of hope among female respondents was above the general average while being lower among males.
b. Location of interview and average level of hope: The level of hope was highest in interviews conducted in Iran and the Gulf while it was lowest in Egypt and the Sahel.
c. Region of origin and average level of hope: The levels of hope among those of MENA origins and external observers were close to the general average while it was slightly higher among the former and lower the latter.
d. Age group and average level of hope: The level of hope among those over 65 was lower than the general average while it was slightly higher than the average among the age group 35-65.
e. Professional category and average level of hope: There is a more hopeful private sector and a less optimistic state and government sector.

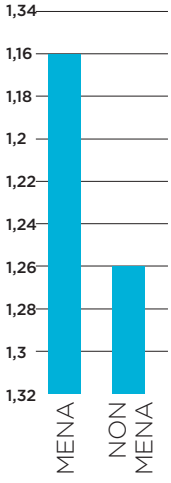
LEVEL OF HOPE BY GENDER



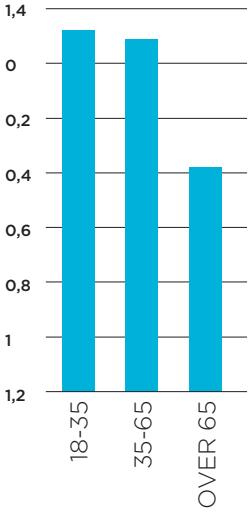
LEVEL OF HOPE BY COUNTRY



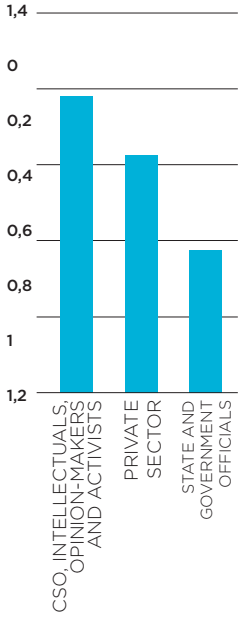
LEVEL OF HOPE BY REGION



LEVEL OF HOPE BY AGE GROUP



LEVEL OF HOPE BY PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY



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.

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