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# THE EU, RESILIENCE AND THE MENA REGION

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# **THE EU, RESILIENCE AND THE MENA REGION**

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Published by

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With the financial support of the European Parliament  
The present study does not represent the European Parliament's views.

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Cover image: Annabella Cuomo  
Page layout: Luca Mozzicarelli – Nuova Cultura, Rome, Italy



Printed by Edizioni Nuova Cultura, Rome



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ISBN 9788868129712

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## FOREWORD

ERNST STETTER AND NATHALIE TOCCI

Resilience has become somewhat of a bumper sticker in international relations discourse and EU foreign policy in particular. It is one of the priority goals of the European Union's Global Strategy (EUGS) unveiled in June 2016, and certainly the one that has attracted most academic and policy attention since then. The 2016 EUGS contains significant changes compared to the previous 2003 EU Security Strategy and can be described as a post-neoliberal document, driven by recent developments occurring within the EU and at the global level. Moving away from the previous emphasis on the EU's normative power exercised primarily through enlargement and neighbourhood policies, the EUGS represents an attempt to both reckon with a deteriorated strategic environment while living up to the Union's principles. It reflects an acceptance of both the Union's declining leverage and influence and the non-linearity of changes occurring at the local, regional and international levels. Against this backdrop, the EUGS's strategic approach to resilience turns out to be useful as this concept enshrines the necessary but non-sufficient conditions for non-linear change. Like the willow that bends but does not break, states and societies need to be able to withstand the manifold crises, disruptions and shocks that are out there and likely to manifest in the future. These notions are encapsulated in the EUGS's reference to "principled pragmatism" as the general organizing principle guiding the EU's foreign and security policy in this new era of conflictual multipolarity, both in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and at the international level as a whole.

A further important novelty of the EUGS relates to its multidimensional approach and efforts to overcome what amounts to a "silo mentality" in the EU's policy approaches and discussions. In order to break away from the previous compartment-

talization of individual EU policies, the EUGS sets out on an ambitious effort to enhance the coherence, coordination and inclusivity among different EU actions – whether these be of a developmental, energy, security, humanitarian aid, infrastructure, climate or politico-diplomatic nature. This also helps to avoid the risk of one-size-fits-all approaches, while acknowledging that states and societies have different needs and priorities depending on their contexts and historical processes of development. Nowhere is this truer than in the MENA region. Finally, this strategic approach to resilience can ultimately and only be correctly understood in light of the EU's reflexivity. Noting that there exists no universal definition of resilience and that each context will necessarily develop its own specificities and challenges, the EU has taken a step back from “teaching” and “preaching” to others as it is no longer itself in the position to play such a role (if it ever was). Instead of pursuing democracy promotion in its own right, fostering resilience means encouraging those homegrown dynamics that go in the direction of more accountability, legitimacy and political participation. Instead of promoting free market blueprints as the solution to the region's many socio-economic challenges, the EUGS places sectors such as job creation, youth inclusion and the promotion of a rules-based political economy at the core of its external action. Eventually, such modes of representation and participation would not only prove beneficial to the specific state and society in question but also and ultimately to the EU, as it is on the basis of more resilient states and societies, as well as the establishment of “cooperative regional orders”, both within and outside Europe, that the EUGS seeks to promote the EU's own interests and values.

To reflect on all this and much more, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) have designed and implemented a research project that explores and assesses different understandings of resilience on the basis of six MENA state and societal contexts, mapping out the challenges but also the potentially positive reform actors and dynamics within them as a first step towards operationalizing resilience. It also offers some key policy-ori-



ented recommendations as to how the EU's role in the region should be revised when pursuing a strategic approach to resilience. Through research, outreach and publications, an authoritative and diverse group of scholars and practitioners from the MENA and Europe aim to contribute to the drafting of a new page in the EU's engagement with the MENA region in the years to come.

Brussels – Rome, December 2017



# INTRODUCTION

## FRAMING RESILIENCE: A NEW PATHWAY FOR EU-MENA RELATIONS

SILVIA COLOMBO AND VASSILIS NTOUSAS

Resilience is one of the key concepts introduced in the European Union's foreign and security lexicon, especially following its inclusion as the main *leitmotif* of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS).<sup>1</sup> Unveiled by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini in late June 2016, the EUGS sets out a roadmap to redefine the EU's international role and vision. Aimed at demonstrating a practical yet ambitious policy pathway to make EU decision-making more coherent and therefore more efficient in fostering reforms, resilience has been subject to a plethora of analyses and critiques since its appearance in a variety of EU documents. It is therefore necessary to clarify what the concept denotes and what it does not, as well as what it aims to do and not do. Following a concise delineation of the various strands of thought around this concept and its use in the EUGS, this introductory chapter will take an in-depth look at how the concept is to be operationalized when moving from the theoretical to the practical level. This will be accomplished by framing it in the context of the EU's policy goals in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, a key terrain to test the concept's practical value.

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1. European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/339>.

## 1. The re-emergence of an old concept

Deriving from the present participle of the Latin verb *resilire*, meaning “to jump back” or “to recoil”,<sup>2</sup> the basic notion of resilience refers to the capacity to withstand and bounce back from pressures, shocks, grievances or crises. Even a cursory perusal of the relevant bibliography can indicate that resilience constitutes a term embraced and employed in diverse study areas, from organizational policy analysis to psychology, psychiatry and biological research, and from developmental literature and archaeology to sociology and ecology, to name just a few. This width of theoretical application has effectively meant that resilience has been incorporated in a similarly vast array of policy areas. Academic references to resilience can be traced back many decades, with physics and materials science being prominent in this regard. The emerging body of literature dealing with the construct of resilience has been growing steadily since the 1970s, and two of the main fields where use of the concept has been particularly pronounced have been ecology and psychology.<sup>3</sup> Resilience has been used with increasing fervour in the realm of environmental activism since the 1980s and more recently in public policies concerning crisis or disaster management. In the past decade or so, the concept has also been incorporated into official reports of several influential international organizations.<sup>4</sup>

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2. See Merriam-Webster dictionary: *Resilience*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/resilience>.

3. With regard to ecology, one of the most influential and widely cited articles focusing on resilience was published by Holling in 1973. Differentiating the concept from that of stability, which was defined as “the ability of a system to return to an equilibrium state after a temporary disturbance”, resilience was described by Holling as determining “the persistence of relationships within a system” and as being “a measure of the ability of these systems to absorb changes of state variables, driving variables, and parameters, and still persist”. See C.S. Holling, “Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems”, *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, Vol. 4, No.1 (1973), p. 14 and 17.

4. See for example World Bank, *Resilience, Equity, and Opportunity. The World Bank 2012–2022 Social Protection and Labor Strategy*, Washington, World Bank, 2012, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/12648>; Martin Parry, Osvaldo Canziani and Jean Palutikof, “Technical Summary”, in Martin Parry et al., eds., *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Work-*

In light of its wide-ranging use, reaching a common definition of resilience has never been an easy task. Understanding resilience as “a dynamic property not just of ecosystems, but others as well, including the social-ecological, the economic, and the social” helps shed light on some of its core features.<sup>5</sup> Offering an overview of how the term has been used in social-ecological systems analyses, Folke indicates the concept’s value in challenging the dominant stable equilibrium view and in understanding the dynamics of these systems.<sup>6</sup> Assessing this link between social and ecological aspects, resilience is described as being

related to (i) the magnitude of shock that the system can absorb and remain within a given state; (ii) the degree to which the system is capable of self-organization; and (iii) the degree to which the system can build capacity for learning and adaptation.<sup>7</sup>

In the field of psychology, the original uses of the concept of resilience lay in the need to study the condition of children or adolescents who were considered to be “invulnerable” or “invincible”<sup>8</sup> in the face of adversity, stress or challenges (for example, in the case of parental mental illness and inter-parental conflict). Within this field and as work in the area evolved, research gradually shifted from an exclusive focus on the personal qualities that determine an individual’s adaptive capacity to adversity to studying the wider social and family environ-

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*ing Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 24-78, [http://www.ipcc.ch/publications\\_and\\_data/ar4/wg2/en/contents.html](http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg2/en/contents.html).

5. Henrik Thorén, “Resilience as a Unifying Concept”, in *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2014), p. 306, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02698595.2014.953343>.
6. Carl Folke, “Resilience: The Emergence of a Perspective for Social-Ecological Systems Analyses”, in *Global Environmental Change*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (August 2006), p. 253-267.
7. Carl Folke et al., “Resilience and Sustainable Development: Building Adaptive Capacity in a World of Transformations”, in *Ambio*, Vol. 31, No. 5 (August 2002), p. 438, <http://era-mx.org/biblio/Resilience.pdf>.
8. See for example Emmy E. Werner and Ruth S. Smith, *Vulnerable but Invincible. A Longitudinal Study of Resilient Children and Youth*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1982.

ment as factors that affect resilience, as well as the processes through which these factors can have a positive impact.

A review of the resilience literature will demonstrate that such a wide and diverse uptake in the use of this concept has led the term to become the focal point of several heated debates, not least regarding its application, usefulness and relevance. In assessing this diverse field, Manyena explains that

the examination of resilience with respect to its definition, its relationship with vulnerability, and whether it applies to people or structures or both, reveals the need to tackle the philosophical questions that continue to blur the concept.<sup>9</sup>

What varies in the concept's different treatments and applications is not only the scope and specificities of its definition, but also a number of reference points qualifying the concept: notably but not exclusively, resilience of whom (or what) and resilience to whom (or what). This latter point has led researchers to search for resilience (f)actors *inter alia* at the national, community, household, family, individual, institutional or even value chain level, depending on each discipline's focal point or prioritization. All these differences illustrate the considerable variation that exists not only in how the concept is theoretically and practically understood, but also in the ways in which it is epistemologically and methodologically treated.

This breadth of interest and application of the concept of resilience might make the prospect of establishing a common research agenda an extremely difficult undertaking, but it is important to underline that it also demonstrates some of the concept's analytical strengths as well as its flexibility and its conceptual appeal. Indeed, regardless of the starting point, many academic treatments of the concept have centred on this very important link between the concept of resilience and the idea of withstanding, responding to, or recovering from a

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9. Siambabala Bernard Manyena, "The Concept of Resilience Revisited", in *Disasters*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (December 2006), p. 445.

set of (domestic or external) vulnerabilities, grievances, shocks or pressures. In many cases, another common denominator of this allusion to responsiveness has been the requirement of malleability. This central idea of positively responding to adversity implies the capacity of materials, environments, systems, individuals or countries to be elastic enough in the face of shocks and crises: either by finding the strength to return to their pre-existing state and/or by successfully adapting to the new circumstances.

## **2. Resilience and the ambition behind its use in the EU's external action discourses and practices**

Importing its conceptual vitality from other disciplines, and based on the obvious attraction this combination of flexibility and responsiveness has in the realm of foreign policy, the concept of resilience has also emerged as one of the most popular concepts in EU foreign policy analysis over the past years. Its emergence as the *leitmotif* in the EUGS is certainly one of the most, if not *the* most, illustrative aspect of this meteoric rise in significance.

One of the primary reasons behind this choice was the intention to provide a clear integrative framework bridging fragmentation and injecting coherence into of the various components of the EU's external action, from peace-building to aid policy and from humanitarian to development work. In this respect, there is no lack of ambition in the EUGS as this would in itself be a potentially groundbreaking contribution, namely the effort to combat the excessive compartmentalization of EU policies and approaches. Seeking to break free from what has been described as the EU's "silo mentality" to allow for a more holistic and comprehensive pooling of EU resources and leverage from different policy sectors is a necessary step to ensure that the EU's external action is made effective in the current circumstances. Confronted with an international environment where the division between internal and external policies becomes murkier by the day and where the provision of effective

policy answers to the challenges is also becoming increasingly complex, the EUGS has introduced resilience as a means of mitigating these risks and challenges in the most coherent way possible through the use of various tools the EU has at its disposal. It is designed to do so by offering an all-encompassing lens of sorts, a kind of a litmus test for all EU policies and tools, whereby all EU actions must be shown to support rather than weaken elements of resilience – both internally and externally.

Aiming to inject coherence into the design and implementation of the Union's policies is important, but undeniably not enough: if the ambition behind the concept's use was constrained to this goal, resilience would necessarily become too narrow a concept and too small a tent to serve any actionable purpose of fostering resilience on the ground. In this light, a second important reason for the emergence of resilience as one of the key concepts of the EUGS was the intention to employ the concept as a constructive pathway through which some seemingly contradictory elements in EU policy making could be reconciled. This might seem arduous given the concept's polysemous nature in many policy domains, considering also the level of difficulty involved in finding an ideal balance between what is conceptually possible (wider) and what is practically achievable (narrower). Nonetheless, it was deemed an objective worth pursuing on the basis of how resilience, with its conceptual *gravitas* and agility, could help achieve this coherence, and therefore be of benefit to the EU's decision making.

One of the most enduring, if not gruelling, debates in EU policy making has been between the typically more idealist/normative voices that believe in the primacy of values as the guiding principle of EU foreign policy and those propagating that the Union's interests should be given precedence in a pragmatic fashion. Putting aside the *problematique* that this is oftentimes a somewhat misleading dichotomy as a confident EU can and should find creative and constructive ways of internalizing both elements in its policy design and implementation, the use of resilience was chosen precisely on the basis of its added value in bridging the gap between these two elements. This is



enshrined in the notion of “principled pragmatism” that underpins the EUGS and the EU’s external action at the global level.

Moving from the acknowledgement of the limitations of the EU’s transformative power in its external relations as stipulated in previous EU strategic documents, such as the 2003 European Security Strategy, the EUGS does away with some of the loftiest, but often empty and unrealistic, expectations and ambitions of the EU being ever-present *and* omnipotent.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the multi-faceted nature of resilience by definition contains fragments both of the *realpolitik* and the more normative-centred elements that are necessary for the EU’s policy making. For reasons that will be explored below, resilience therefore offers a working framework through which these two elements can be continuously assessed, weighed upon and ultimately reconciled in the policy output of the Union. In this sense, resilience is not a new policy *per se*, but rather a framework designed for informing how choices are made and assisting both the EU and member states to craft and implement better policies that promote the Union’s values and interests more efficiently. It calls for the EU to develop perhaps narrower, but surely more targeted, tailor-made strategies, based on a careful analysis of strengths and weaknesses in each state or society.

### **3. Resilience at the heart of the EU Global Strategy: From theory to practice**

The use of resilience in the EUGS is not its first inclusion in official EU documents. Examples of this concept can be traced in a number of previous documents, including the 2012 Communication titled *The EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises*,<sup>11</sup> where resilience is defined as “the abil-

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10. European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 12 December 2003, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/13>.

11. European Commission, *The EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises* (COM/2012/586), 3 October 2012, p. 5, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52012DC0586>.

ity of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks”; the 2013 Council conclusions on the EU approach to resilience;<sup>12</sup> the *2013 Commission Staff Working Document on an Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013–2020*;<sup>13</sup> as well as the *2015 Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*,<sup>14</sup> amongst many. What the EUGS does, though, is to use this concept more comprehensively, elevating it to a sort of overarching framework, method and approach to be firmly embedded in the way the Union designs and conducts its multi-layered external policies.

Described as “the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises”,<sup>15</sup> resilience is indeed afforded a ubiquitous presence in the EUGS. Fostering “state and societal resilience to our East and South” is recognized as one of five key priorities for the EU’s external action, and the terms *resilience* or *resilient* appear several dozen times throughout the document. These include references in connection to the EU’s neighbourhood, enlargement, migration, cybersecurity policy and “the resilience of critical infrastructure, networks and services”,<sup>16</sup> the transatlantic partnership and even the resilience of the EU’s own democracies.

Concerned with and being considered as essential to such a wide palette of policies, the concept’s elevation to become the central organizing principle of the EU’s external action strategy

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12. Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on EU Approach to Resilience*, 3241st Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 28 May 2013, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137319.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137319.pdf).

13. European Commission, *Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013–2020* (SWD/2013/227), 19 June 2013, [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/com\\_2013\\_227\\_ap\\_crisis\\_prone\\_countries\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/com_2013_227_ap_crisis_prone_countries_en.pdf).

14. European Commission and EEAS, *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy* (JOIN/2015/50), 18 November 2015, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52015JC0050>.

15. EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, cit., p. 23.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

is impressive and, as a consequence, has not unfolded without contention and critique. One repeated criticism has focused precisely on the concept's broad scope of application. The concept's extensive use in the EUGS combined with the lack of a clear definition have led a number of commentators to criticize it as the latest, empty moniker used to disguise the internal deficiencies and inadequacies of EU decision making in this domain. Or, that it simply constitutes a catchy but superficial buzzword to conceal the lack of innovative thinking around the Union's foreign policy.<sup>17</sup>

Responding to this, but also to other similar lines of argumentation, a second important document presented by the EU and focusing on resilience was the Joint Communication of the European External Action Service and the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: *A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action*,<sup>18</sup> published in June 2017, a year after the presentation of the EUGS. In itself the result of intense consultations both at the supra-national institutional level and involving the member states and the EU's external partners, the EUGS was the object of a new period of reflection aimed at moving "from shared vision to common action".<sup>19</sup> To this end, the Joint Communication provided a clearer delineation of the various aspects of the concept, and thus a clearer direction as to how the concept can be implemented and integrated into existing EU policy tools and approaches.

17. For a critical perspective on the concept of resilience in the context of the EUGS, see Sven Biscop, "A Strategy for Europe's Neighbourhood: Keep Resilient and Carry On?", in *Analyses of the Elcano Royal Institute (ARI)*, No. 4/2017 (16 January 2017), <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/?p=21357>; Ana E. Juncos, "Resilience as the New EU Foreign Policy Paradigm: A Pragmatist Turn?", in *European Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2017), p. 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2016.1247809>; Annegret Bendiek, "A Paradigm Shift in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy: From Transformation to Resilience", in *SWP Research Papers*, No. 2017/11 (October 2017), <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/eus-common-foreign-and-security-policy>.
18. European Commission and EEAS, *A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action* (JOIN/2017/21), 7 June 2017, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52017JC0021>.
19. EEAS, *From Shared Vision to Common Action: Implementing the EU Global Strategy Year 1*, June 2017, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/576>.

By providing a more nuanced and more polished version of the concept's definition, the Joint Communication also succeeded in better shielding the concept of resilience from the specific criticisms of being too general or abstract. Clearly, making resilience a more "resilient" term in academic and policy-oriented debates would have limited value if not accompanied by a more concrete discussion of the concept's operationalization; in this respect the Joint Communication also offers important qualifiers. Among these, the Joint Communication clarifies the EU's strategic approach to resilience, noting that the EU will seek to foster it by strengthening:

- the adaptability of states, societies, communities and individuals to political, economic, environmental, demographic or societal pressures, in order to sustain progress towards national development goals;
- the capacity of a state – in the face of significant pressures to build, maintain or restore its core functions, and basic social and political cohesion, in a manner that ensures respect for democracy, rule of law, human and fundamental rights and fosters inclusive long-term security and progress;
- the capacity of societies, communities and individuals to manage opportunities and risks in a peaceful and stable manner, and to build, maintain or restore livelihoods in the face of major pressures.<sup>20</sup>

Taken together, the EUGS and the Joint Communication provide a conceptual framework that aims to direct *and* clarify the EU's external action with the incorporation of resilience as an integral component. In particular, the Joint Communication offers greater clues and guidance about the EU's intention and ambition behind resorting to resilience as the *core leitmotif* of its external action. It does so by mentioning a host of concrete examples of contexts and situations in which fostering resilience at both the state and societal levels would help achieve effective results. These examples range from the promotion of resilience as a conflict-prevention tool to economic resilience,

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20. European Commission and EEAS, *A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action*, cit., p. 3.

from the mainstreaming of a gender dimension into all the EU's external policies to tackling the climate change–environmental degradation–migration nexus.<sup>21</sup> In spite of this important contribution towards adding practical definitions of this concept, the task of operationalizing resilience remains a complex endeavour in light of the manifold challenges confronting the EU at its doorstep and globally as well as of the current uncertainties and disequilibriums gripping the Union itself. A better understanding of the concept's practical value should take the following key points into account.

*Fostering resilience needs differentiating between state and societal dynamics.* Moving from the conceptual level to the practical implementation of resilience reveals that there is necessarily more than one understanding of the concept, and that competing logics of resilience (or challenges to it) are constantly at play.<sup>22</sup> One of the most important distinctions to be made in order to fully grasp the practical use of this concept is that between state and societal resilience. This means addressing the question, resilience of whom? An answer to this is provided by the EUGS, with its central focus on fostering the resilience of states and societies. However, it should be emphasized that fostering the resilience of the state and its institutions might not be equal to fostering societal resilience as, particularly in some regions of the world, states and societies have often been on opposing ends regarding some key issues. An example of this drawn directly from the empirical contributions presented and discussed in the following chapters has to do with instances of popular mobilization that can represent an example and engine of societal resilience but also and simultaneously a challenge to state resilience.

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21. Ibid.

22. Wolfgang Wagner and Rosanne Anholt, "Resilience as the EU Global Strategy's New Leitmotif: Pragmatic, Problematic or Promising?", in *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2016), p. 414-430, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2016.1228034>.

Following from the above, the EU's attempts to foster resilience need to start from a clear prioritization of the work to be done. Given the sheer amount of challenges and the often competing logics of resilience uncovered above, this means that, in the short term, fostering resilience in one domain might undermine it elsewhere, while giving rise to a self-sustaining virtuous cycle of resilience in the long term. Although state and society should not be regarded as a dichotomy, but rather as parts of a continuum as far as the promotion of resilience is concerned, when looking at the actors that are recipients or agents of resilience, one has to go beyond "the usual suspects", namely key state institutions and the authorities, and cover a broad range of state and societal stakeholders that sometimes need to be dug out from the unknown. The following chapters delve into this question extensively by highlighting in particular the role of the micro, bottom-up actors and dynamics in fostering resilience (or the lack thereof) from the local level up to the macro institutions at the state level. Examples of the former are religious leaders, professional groups, civil society organizations and epistemic communities.

*Fostering resilience needs to be context-specific and time-bound.* As recalled above, the EUGS itself does not provide an all-encompassing definition of resilience as "there is no single recipe to becoming resilient".<sup>23</sup> This means that there is no ideal, certifiable status of resilience that a country can ever achieve and then retain forever. State and societal resilience will necessarily have different definitions, benchmarks and variables depending on the specific context or sub-context addressed. Translating this into practice means that the implementation of any strategic approach to resilience would need to start from an assessment of the specific challenges confronting states and societies as a means to better tailor EU policies and tools to specific circumstances in each context and given time period. This calls for unpacking and understanding the different dimensions of resilience, which range from securi-

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23. EEAS, *From Shared Vision to Common Action: Implementing the EU Global Strategy Year 1*, cit., p. 15.

ty to socio-economic prosperity, trust in institutions, sustainable development, energy and environmental good governance, as well as civil society engagement and public consultation or oversight. The question is how to construct and pursue a comprehensive approach to resilience that takes into account its different dimensions as well as their interconnections, all of which tend to be context-specific and time-bound.

Not only is the resilience approach not equal to a one-size-fits-all set of policies and tools or a blueprint to be implemented mechanically at each occasion, it also has to take into account past historical, institutional and socio-political experiences at the state and societal levels, which form the basis for the current legacy of challenges to and opportunities for achieving resilience. All in all, resilience (re)directs attention to local resources and practices and away from ready-made blueprints that are parachuted from above, thus laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and legitimate approach on the part of the EU.

*Fostering resilience is not an end in itself but rather a process.*

The two points above have made clear that it is important to look at (locally driven) dynamics and actors. The attainment of resilience, at both state and societal levels, corresponds to the unfolding of a process whereby actors adapt to political, economic, environmental, demographic or societal pressures. This adaptation amounts to the ability to reform in the direction of greater cohesion, the respect of fundamental rights, long-term security, progress and peace. This is a long-term process that has many virtues in itself. First of all, thinking about and acting upon resilience as a process allows making use of the flexibility, adaptability, responsiveness, holistic nature and multi-disciplinarity of the concept as a basis for policy action. Second, it means countering the risk of conceiving resilience as a static concept, i.e., as a synonym of stability and not, as in the intentions of those who drafted the EUGS, as the ability of states and societies to reform. For example, it should be made clear that fostering resilience does not include among its desired outcomes the strengthening of the capacities of states and societies that remain deeply authoritarian or underdeveloped.

In light of the above, fostering resilience means creating flexible, non-linear pathways that encompass both progress and downturns. Emphasizing the processual nature of resilience is important for another set of reasons that has to do with the EU's need not to be regarded as imposing goals and targets on its partners. It is not up to the EU to be telling a state or a society what kind of resilience they have to achieve or what they have to do in order to be considered as resilient by others. On the contrary, the EU should show humility and encourage the positive dynamics and actors at the national and local levels that can only be strengthened when a positive, home-grown self-sustaining virtuous cycle of resilience kicks in.

#### **4. The EU, resilience and the MENA region: An agenda for research and policy-making**

Framing resilience according to the three points mentioned above is a good starting point to counteract a certain dose of ambiguity and to build more responsive, inclusive and effective external policies and tools on the part of the EU. To a great extent the future of the EUGS will depend on the actual policies, concrete instruments and tangible effects that the promotion of state and societal resilience will entail. Moving from the conceptualization to the operationalization of resilience, the following step is to devise an agenda for research that provides key inputs and recommendations as to the implementation of the EUGS. The goal of this research endeavour is exactly to serve as a basis for scholars, researchers and, above all, policy-makers at the EU institutions and member states level to translate the new strategic approach to resilience into an actionable policy agenda.

In accordance with the EUGS's declaration to want to target those countries "where we can make a meaningful difference",<sup>24</sup> the MENA region appears as the perfect terrain to undertake

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24. EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, cit., p. 25.



this exercise. In light of its geographic proximity to Europe and of the intense historical, political and economic relations that exist between some MENA countries and the European ones, the stability and prosperity of the MENA region has always been of great strategic importance to the EU. Today this region is undergoing a phase of protracted turmoil, and fresh new thinking is badly needed – both from within and outside the MENA – to address the manifold and interrelated challenges confronting countries in the region at multiple levels (local, domestic and regional) and in different domains. Hard and human security challenges ranging from ongoing inter-state conflicts and civil wars to radicalization and terrorism have been proliferating against the backdrop of unstable political circumstances, demographic and socio-economic challenges, migration and climate change, to name but a few. If past bilateral and multilateral cooperation frameworks and policies have largely been unsuccessful in promoting the EU's key values (democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights) while helping MENA states and societies achieve more sustainable and inclusive forms of socio-economic and political development, today the EUGS and its new strategic approach to resilience is meant to symbolize a new point of departure for EU policy to advance these objectives.

In seeking to foster resilience in the MENA, the EU ultimately aims to support states and societies in the long-term goal of embarking on a locally driven process of socio-economic and political reform towards greater forms of participatory representation based on the rule of law and a more equitable distribution of power and opportunities. As a result, the EUGS proposes an innovative, sensible and smart vision for the EU's foreign and security policy centred on resilience and away from the worn out dichotomy between democracy and stability that has tended to bedevil the EU's external approach. Nowhere has this ill-fated dichotomy been more prominent in past EU frameworks of cooperation than the MENA region.<sup>25</sup>

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25. Michael E. Smith, "Implementing the Global Strategy Where It Matters Most: The EU's Credibility Deficit and the European Neighbourhood", in *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2016), p. 446-460.

In addition to an often incoherent implementation of conditionality, this has impacted the Union's credibility and leverage in the region, particularly weakened since the Arab uprisings of 2011. The fact that the EU's new approach no longer aims to promote democracy *per se* but rather to equip states and societies with the ability to carry out the necessary reforms that will ultimately lead to a more democratic system in the long run, does not diminish the EU's commitment to key values and principles. Indeed, this new strategic approach opens up the course to a comprehensive and joined-up approach that includes humanitarian, development, migration, trade, investment, infrastructure, education, culture, youth, health and research policies to foster state and societal resilience. Sectoral reforms should be given precedence over empty slogans for democracy promotion as a basis to realize a more resilient and democratic system in the MENA ("sowing the seeds for sustainable growth and vibrant societies",<sup>26</sup> in the words of the EUGS itself).

To build a solid research agenda on resilience, it is imperative to carry out a two-pronged exercise: on the one hand, to narrow down the concept of resilience and operationalize it by devising indicators and benchmarks in different dimensions that take the complexities of the stakes and the malleability and multi-dimensionality of the concept of resilience into account. On the other hand, it is important to undertake a sober and candid assessment of the available policy tools and instruments the EU has at its disposal. The EUGS's strategic approach to resilience does not aim to reinvent the wheel but rather to make better and more coherent use of all available tools to foster state and societal resilience. This means answering the question, resilience by what means? Moving from the assumption that resilience cannot be produced or inculcated by external actors, the EUGS already provides some cues about the available toolbox by articulating five priorities or lines of action with regard to the MENA region. They include old instruments

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26. EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, cit., p. 23.

such as the enlargement policy, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), functional multilateral cooperation of the kind that is pursued by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), and reinforced, flexible cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations. Next to this, the EUGS hints at new initiatives and instruments, such as catalysing strategic investments through public-private partnerships. Old and new instruments – be they bilateral or multilateral – need to be tailored to the indicators and benchmarks of resilience in its different dimensions. For example, in light of its strictly bilateral nature, the revised ENP could be sharpened to promote reforms with a view to supporting inclusive and rules-based accountable governance according to the specific needs of individual countries. However, since most of the challenges currently facing MENA countries are transnational in nature, regional and multilateral cooperation beyond the confines of the EU’s “neighbourhood” becomes of the essence.

In light of the above, this book presents the results of the first ever attempt to undertake a research agenda on the EU’s role in fostering resilience in the MENA region and to deliver policy-oriented recommendations accordingly. This attempt has taken the form of a year-long project implemented by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) in Brussels and the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in Rome. It has gathered and relied upon the expertise of a prominent group of scholars and practitioners from the MENA region and Europe who have conducted research and met several times to discuss with other local and international stakeholders. The first part of the book is composed of six chapters covering the six in-depth country case studies selected at the beginning of the project. This selection – Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Qatar, Tunisia, Turkey – offers a wide-ranging and representative sample of cases that span different features in terms of political systems, socio-economic conditions, previous cooperative relations with the EU (or the lack thereof) and the fact of having experienced a popular uprising or not. The goal of these chapters is to assess the challenges to state and societal resilience in each country and to highlight some of the positive dynam-

ics and actors the EU should encourage as “resilience-friendly” drivers in these contexts. The final Chapter corresponds to the second part of the exercise mentioned above. In the form of a comparative report, it broadens the scope of the analysis by taking a regional picture of the constraints and opportunities to resilience. Furthermore, it offers the concluding policy-oriented recommendations to the EU and its member states as to how to make sense of the new strategic approach to resilience in the EU’s external action discourses and practices *vis-à-vis* the MENA region.

# 1

## **CHALLENGES AND STAKES OF STATE AND SOCIETAL RESILIENCE IN TUNISIA**

MOHAMED KERROU

If we conceive of political transition as a thoughtful, peaceful and pragmatic transformation that remains open to the future,<sup>1</sup> we can affirm that Tunisia is going through a historical phase that is both promising and perilous. The fall of the old regime has paved the way for the institutionalization of pluralism and civil liberties after decades of authoritarian rule. Free elections were held, a new Constitution adopted and several representative and independent bodies created. The transitional process is underway and reforms are on the agenda to attain a new semi-parliamentary and semi-presidential political regime in Tunisia.

Going through an unfinished transition, the country is currently in a critical period due to difficulties related to economic, social and security factors. The growing indebtedness and low growth and investment rates are hardly helping to reduce high unemployment, especially amongst young graduates. As a result, there is an increase in social protest movements in the internal regions that are suffering most from social disparities. In addition, there are threats caused by terrorism, particularly along Tunisia's borders. National security is being adversely affected by the situation in neighbouring Libya, which has become a stronghold of radicalized militias.

Faced with all these challenges, the state and society have deployed strategies of resistance to sustain the social and political order in Tunisia. Importantly, state and society are not to be

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1. Pascal Chabot, *L'âge des transitions*, Paris, PUF, 2015, p. 21-24.

separated but should be approached together. Society is the result of social, economic, psychological and cultural interactions forming a system and including a control and command apparatus, with the state mediating in all interactions. More concretely, the existence of the state depends on the citizens – whose coexistence within a state depends on the state apparatus itself.<sup>2</sup> There is thus no need to separate the state from society, even if each of these historically situated entities has its own autonomy and particular structure. In reality, assessing the challenges to resilience urges us to take into account the complexity of the relations between state and society on the one hand and the different levels and entanglements of society on the other.

What is resilience if not the ability of state and society to adapt, regain their initial aptitudes and overcome various upheavals and crises? Using the concept of resilience serves primarily as a tool to analyse the situation at the national and regional levels. In fact, most studies so far have underestimated the ability of the social and political system to persist despite the upheavals experienced during the transition period. The proof is that the state and society in Tunisia have not collapsed, as was the case for Libya right after the fall of Gaddafi, or Syria and Yemen, which both descended into civil war.

According to the new Global Strategy of the European Union entitled “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe”,<sup>3</sup> resilience is understood as the opposite to fragility, being defined as “the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises”.<sup>4</sup> This definition is corroborated by the fact that resilience is necessarily linked to growth and development within the frame-

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2. Edgar Morin, “Le mot société”, in *Sociologie*, 2nd ed., Paris, Seuil, 1994, p. 88. Cf. Same for the complexity paradigm, Edgar Morin, *La tête bien faite. Repenser la réforme, réformer la pensée*, Paris, Seuil, 1999.

3. European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/339>.

4. *Ibid*, p. 23.

work of democracy, and not to the tendency of adaptation or a rehabilitation of authoritarianism. A sharp nuance creates a demarcation between approaches that justify authoritarianism and the relativist view of resilience that favours the attainment of democracy. The two views illustrate how resilience is a normative concept, as well as being an analytical tool and a strategic vision.

This prescriptive direction becomes clear when resilience is related to the concept of effectiveness and to the notions of resistance and flexibility or rehabilitation. Basically therefore, resilience can be used as a concept to improve sociological analysis and political governance, signalling a means to emerge from an ambient of disorder or crisis through attaining a new equilibrium different from that established during the authoritarian regime. The new equilibrium hopes to ensure economic growth and political pluralism, while the old equilibrium reproduces the authoritarian order.

Theoretician of complex systems Robert Ulanowicz believes that the optimal behaviour of a system lies in the balance between efficiency and resilience. In fact, “resilience allows the system to maintain itself despite disturbances”. It requires real complexity, and attention to the various relationships between the elements of the system.<sup>5</sup> Effectiveness and complexity are thus the two constitutive elements of resilience to be analysed by adopting a historical perspective of state politics in the framework of its organic relations with society.

For the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the relevance of the resilience approach lies in the attention it gives not only to the resistance of the social system to state control but also to the state’s capacity to persist, and to preserve itself against internal

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5. Pascal Chabot, *L’âge des transitions*, cit., p. 66; Robert Ulanowicz, “Le nouveau paradigme de la durabilité”, in *Transitions*, No. 2 (2009), p. 16-17, <http://anthropopedagogie.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Transitionsww-2.pdf>; Bernard Lietaer, Robert Ulanowicz and Sally Goerner, “Options for Managing a Systemic Bank Crisis”, in *S.A.P.I.EN.S.*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2009), p. 7-8, <http://sapiens.revues.org/747>.

and external threats. On this basis, it is possible to appreciate the interlinkages between state and society, addressing them simultaneously on the basis of their complexity and respective roles. Similarly, the challenges to resilience will be discussed in relation to “drivers” or “facilitators” in order to grasp their links and overall impact on the state and society in Tunisia. Just as there are challenges to resilience, there are also positive contributors to resilience at the state and societal level. Overall, then, the double question underlying the analysis in the context of Tunisia will be the following: resilience of whom and resilience to what?

Resilience will be addressed in its national public policy framework, taking into account three main challenges confronting state and societal resilience in Tunisia: security, smuggling and corruption, and the rise of social protest movements paralysing the national economy. The analysis will then move to highlighting a number of “positive drivers” for state and societal resilience in Tunisia, namely the country’s bureaucratic tradition, reforms and state reformism as well as the role of the civil society, which induced the national dialogue and facilitated the historic compromise between Islamists and secularists that has been key to the progression of Tunisia’s political transition since 2011.

## **1. Challenges to state and societal resilience**

Three major challenges are affecting state and society during the current transition period. These existed before the revolution but were not as intense, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, as they are today. Challenges are associated with the turbulent and uncertain situation on different levels, from security to the political and socio-economic aspects. The country is threatened by terrorism, smuggling and corruption in addition to the political instability caused by the rise of social protest movements. For each challenge, the chapter will seek to identify its external manifestations that constitute real and potential threats, while illustrating the logics of resilience developed against it, by the state and society.



## 1.1 The security challenge linked to terrorism and national security

Since the advent of the 2010–11 revolution and the beginnings of the process of democratic transition, Tunisia's security environment has worsened considerably. Tunisia has provided the largest contingent of jihadists, officially estimated at around 3,000 fighters by the Tunisian Ministry of Interior,<sup>6</sup> located in the conflict zones in Syria, Iraq and Libya. Foreign research and information centres, such as the New York-based Soufan Group, have doubled the estimate.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the United Nations has noted that Tunisians outnumber other Arab countries in the number of citizens fighting with extremist groups across the region.<sup>8</sup> Whether these estimates are correct or inflated remains unknown, however.

It is true that terrorism already existed in the old regime, as proven by the murderous attacks in Djerba in 2002 and Soliman in 2005. However, the phenomenon has grown in recent years through local, regional and international networks and in military zones such as the Chaâmbi Mountain and along the border with Libya. The terrorist phenomenon has indeed become globalized, propelling powerful and mobile organizations like Al-Qaeda and Daesh or the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) that have the logistics, territories and strategies to attack and demoralize states.

Tunisia has emerged as a privileged target for terrorists of radical Islamist leanings because of its secularist tradition, its emancipatory revolution and its democratic transition so far

6. Yamna Salmi, "Year after Attacks, Daesh Threat Receding in Tunisia", in *Andolu Agency*, 11 March 2017, <http://v.aa.com.tr/768985>.
7. Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters. An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*, December 2015, <http://soufangroup.com/?p=24281>.
8. UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination on its mission to Tunisia (A/HRC/33/43/Add.1), 2 August 2016, p. 1, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/33/43/Add.1>.

successfully carried at the political level. The objective of these terrorist organizations is to undermine the territorial integrity of Tunisia's modern state, weaken the legitimacy of political actors and challenge the Tunisian economy based on tourism and trade with Europe by spreading fear and radical ideologies.

After attacks targeting the symbols of the “*taghut*” or “iniquitous government” of police, the national guard and the army, terrorism led to the assassination in 2012 and 2013 of two left-wing political leaders known for their criticism of political Islam. Later, in 2015, attacks reached key tourist spots, including the Bardo Museum and the Imperial Hotel in Sousse. In fact, the tourism sector lost more than one million visitors after the Bardo and Sousse attacks, compared with 2014. There is some recovery now, but the sector continues to suffer in terms of infrastructure, foreign exchange services and receipts.<sup>9</sup> As for the national economy, its growth rate went from 5 percent under the old regime to a low rate ranging between 1 and 2 percent over the last seven years, with a significant decrease in investments and increased inflation rate and external debt.<sup>10</sup>

The aim of these attacks is to bring the economy to its knees and destabilize the state, particularly by splitting border regions such as those in the south, including Ben Guerdane and Remada where radical groups sought to occupy the cities and announce a Salafi emirate. Such groups have also targeted Western regions such as Kasserine, Jendouba and Kef, taking up residence in the mountains and regularly carrying out raids and attacks on security forces. Still, the terrorist strategy has failed in its objective to establish an emirate by occupying territory, despite the pressures on the economy and the general security environment.

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9. “Tunisia sees 30 percent tourism growth in 2017”, in *Reuters*, 21 March 2017, <http://reut.rs/2nNOito>; Patrick Scott, “Tourists Return to Tunisia, but Slowly”, in *The New York Times*, 15 May 2017, <https://nyti.ms/2qmalLu>; Tunisia's National Institute of Statistics (INS), *Tunisie en chiffres 2016*, May 2017, p. 32, <http://www.ins.tn/en/node/3453>.

10. Moniteur du commerce international (Le MOCI), *Tunisie: Données générales*, <http://www.lemoci.com/fiche-pays/tunisie>.

Faced with these efforts by radicalized armed groups, Tunisians have demonstrated a significant ability to resist destabilization and forestall a descent into chaos or civil war. A major reason for this is the country's commitment to national and republican values. In fact, on the one hand, the army was helped by the local population to defeat the 2016 attempted occupation of the town of Ben Guerdane, located in the extreme south of Tunisia. On the other, the security forces succeeded in dismantling terrorist cells and in bringing down the elements embedded in the Chaâmbi Mountain near Kasserine, on the Algerian border.

The city of Ben Guerdane is a symbol of resistance to jihadist terrorism, illustrating the combined resilience of the state and society. During the attack by a terrorist commando from Libya that aimed to occupy the border zone, local citizens aligned with the army to defeat the terrorists. The event provides a window on the strength of national unity and the organic link between state and society in the case of countering radical extremism and terrorism in Tunisia.

The resilience of civilians and the authorities is increasingly becoming a policy of survival. It is actively helping in the security domain as well as in the construction of more equitable governance structures. The threat to Tunisia and to the whole of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is undoubtedly connected to the Libyan situation, where rival governments in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica have hitherto been unable to find a compromise to stabilize the country. As long as terrorism finds refuge in Libya and in the conflict zones of the MENA region it will be difficult to neutralize this global phenomenon. In addition, national resilience requires coordination at the regional and international levels in the fight against terrorism, while paying particular attention to solving the dual origin of jihadism, namely the psychological vulnerability resulting from socio-economic exclusion and ideological radicalization through mosques and fundamentalist imams.

## 1.2 The political challenges of smuggling and corruption

Smuggling and corruption are linked to terrorism – a phenomenon that is both local and global – occurring as they do in the border areas and in transit locations for goods, such as commercial ports. While it is true that terrorist networks are deployed everywhere, they are particularly active along the borders, because of their porosity and the emergence of new forms of economic and political deregulation in line with globalization.<sup>11</sup>

Southern Tunisia has been a centre for contraband for decades, especially in connection with the oil wealth of Libya, which favoured a low-cost consumption and the movement of merchandise and people on both sides of the border. An informal economy of smuggling took shape along these regions, while authorities in the two countries chose to look the other way as a means to ensure stability and the sustenance of border communities that rely on such trade. In the context of this political economy, the movement of goods, fuel and currency was accompanied by an enrichment of intermediaries and “big shots” that, after the 2011 revolution, were transformed into “Mafia clans” orchestrating a whole “smuggling system”. That system combines illegality with legality, and citizens and control agents to reproduce a “necessary evil” for the survival of the economic and political order.<sup>12</sup>

The size of the informal economy is such that, in the absence of official statistics, experts estimate it to account for more than half of the transactions in the national economy. In fact, according to the Tunisian think tank Jossour, the shadow econ-

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11. Jenny Raflik, *Terrorisme et mondialisation. Approches historiques*, Paris, Galimard, 2016, p. 363 sq.

12. International Crisis Group (ICG), “Tunisia’s Borders: Jihadism and Contraband”, in *ICG Middle East/North Africa Reports*, No. 148, 28 November 2013, p. 9 sq., <https://www.crisisgroup.org/node/1018>.

omy has gone from 35 percent in 2012 to more than 55 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016.<sup>13</sup>

The current national unity government, which includes the main political parties, has begun a fight against corruption. Initiated by the government of Youssef Chahed in May 2017, the initiative was followed by strong measures including the arrest of several “bigwigs” of the parallel economy. However, this action, which is being carried out in connection with the “Carthage Pact” signed by political parties and civil society, has not changed the situation of the parallel economy which continues to operate.

Corruption undermines the institutions of the state, the formal and informal economic circuits and the relationship of trust between state and society. The confirmed links between smuggling and terrorism have alerted the authorities and public opinion to the urgency of adopting a national strategy to protect the economy, security and democratic transition. The strategy is blocked because of clientelism and corruption, reflecting a conflict affecting economic elites from the coastal regions that are increasingly being challenged by businessmen in the border regions.<sup>14</sup>

The challenge of combating corruption is twofold: first, to reduce protest movements in southern Tunisia, especially in the Tataouine-El Kamour region, which experienced extreme tension during the first half of 2017; and second, to confer political legitimacy on the government of national unity at a time when consensus is under severe strain, both inside and outside the ruling coalition.

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13. Radhouane Erguez (ed.), *Le secteur informel en Tunisie*, Tunis, Joussour, March 2016, <http://joussour.org/?p=3893>; Stephen Quillen, “Informal Economy Presents Tunisia with Thorny Issue”, in *The Arab Weekly*, No. 117 (30 July 2017), p. 19, <http://www.thearabweekly.com/Economy/8983/Informal-economy-presents-Tunisia-with-thorny-issue>.

14. International Crisis Group (ICG), “La transition bloquée: corruption et régionalisme en Tunisie”, in *ICG Middle East/North Africa Reports*, No. 177, 10 May 2017, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/node/5455>.

The fight against corruption was preceded by the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Authority (INLUCC) by Decree Law No. 2011-120 of 14 November 2011. The mission of this body, which replaced the Commission to Investigate and Combat Corruption and Misconduct (CNICM), is to propose appropriate policies to eradicate corruption, particularly among members of former leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's family. Yet, since the revolution, corruption has become somewhat "democratized", extending well beyond the corrupt and co-opted elites close to the former president.

Despite the importance of its mission and the progress made – according to Transparency International, Tunisia gained three points in 2016, ranking 75th at the world level<sup>15</sup> – INLUCC suffers from a lack of human resources and equipment. The anti-corruption policy of the government therefore remains embryonic in terms of the handling of transmitted dossiers by the Ministry of Justice and the establishment of a constitutional body for good governance and the fight against corruption. The war against corruption, an objective that was included in the "Carthage Pact" which gave birth to the national unity government led by Youssef Chahed, was only concretized by the *coup de théâtre* involving the arrest of several barons whose names are publicly known for their links with the contraband communities. Since then, there has been increased control of the administration over financial transactions. Effective anti-corruption policies, however, which are symptomatic of the resilience of the state and society, have so far been limited since the government has not yet tackled the sources of corruption within the administration and the centres of power.

### 1.3 Social protest movements for employment and development

The Tunisian revolution that began on 17 December 2010 with an act of self-immolation by Mohamed Bouazizi and led, on

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15. Transparency International, "Tunisia", in *Corruption Perceptions Index 2016*, January 2017, <https://www.transparency.org/country/TUN>.

14 January 2011, to the fall of the Ben Ali regime, has become an ideal model of social protest for other MENA countries. The social protest movement taking shape in the border area of south-eastern Tunisia with Libya, is a movement aimed at meeting the demands of employment and dignity. As such it is a movement that denotes, at this particular level, the resilience of civil society. However, it is being manipulated by smuggling networks and political movements.

The two “lobbies” seek to weaken the state, add pressure to its economy and the legitimacy of its elites, and heighten security threats, particularly those emanating from neighbouring Libya. The movement is thus ambivalent in its vocation and its ambitions, highlighting how spontaneous social protest movements that are not organized and structured can represent both an asset and a challenge to resilience – in Tunisia as elsewhere.

Other protest movements emerged before the fall of the former regime, particularly in the Gafsa mining area in 2008. Nevertheless, the protest movement of 2010–2011 is the only one involving the local, national, regional and global levels. In fact, starting from the city of Sidi Bouzid, the movement spread to all Tunisian cities and even to neighbouring and distant Arab countries such as Libya, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain. There are also similarities with the global movement of indignation that took place in the public squares of many cities in Europe and the world starting in 2011.

There exists a conjunction between the particular situation of Tunisia and other Arab countries on the one hand, and the universal demand for citizenship and development on the other. Such conjunction reflects not only the resilience of society and the state to the drifts of authoritarianism but also the importance of civil society, with the main actor being young educated people who are connected via the new information and communication technologies (NICT).

This “digital generation” is at the heart of the social and political mobilization that emerged and developed in response to

social and regional disequilibriums. We are talking about civilian movements, of a peaceful nature, directed towards a strong demand for work and development. They reveal the deep economic, social and political crisis that is shaking Tunisia and the whole region of the Maghreb, where social and spatial inequalities are remarkable.

In April 2017, in the south-eastern border region of Tataouine, not far from Ben Guerdane, there was a strong social mobilization to demand work, dignity and the end of economic, social and political marginalization. Similar, though smaller, mobilizations were also taking place in most parts of the interior, where investment and employment are lacking. Faced with these social movements, the national state is powerless. It has neither the financial nor the political means to find solutions and to defuse this kind of crisis. It can sometimes, as was the case in El Kamour and Kebili, partly neutralize tensions through dialogue and by recognizing the legitimacy of the demands - to which the authorities can only provide temporary and insufficient solutions. In fact, the number of jobs demanded by the protesters falls beyond the capabilities of the government due to a serious economic crisis caused by declining investments, and the government's promises reflect this gap.

However, such movements can spread to other areas, given that other categories and regions share similar problems of unemployment and exclusion. The new protest movements are the expression of deep psychosocial frustration caused by feelings of socio-economic exclusion and marginalization, particularly in under-developed zones of the Tunisian interior and border regions. The main demands of these protest movements concern employment and dignity. The strong demand for social justice - and consequently, redistribution of resources and incomes - places these movements in the historical process of unfinished "Arab revolutions".

As a cradle of political revolution leading to change of regime but not change of the system, Tunisia has witnessed relative



success related to the demand for freedom, during its ongoing democratic transition. However, demands for work and national dignity are still not met. The latter is a major challenge for the political transition which is risking social and economic collapse and consequently the failure of the democratic experience. How can Tunisia counterbalance these challenges, if not by employing those same drivers of resilience inherited from the past and which are resurfacing in the demands of the present?

## **2. Facilitators for state and societal resilience**

There are three foundations of the Tunisian state's resilience as an institution that is entangled with society in a set of special relations characterized by political domination and ideological hegemony. First, state and society influence each other mutually even though there exists in Tunisia a centralizing and bureaucratic tradition through which the state subjects society and prevents dissent from threatening the social and political order. The situation is more remarkable in Tunisia than in the rest of the countries in the region because of its urban geography, as well as the civil (non-military or religious) history associated with the processes of state formation in Tunisia.

The second foundation of resilience is the Tunisian state's tradition of reforms and reformism that has produced a "median society" composed of a large educated and emancipated middle class. This social class is backed by a culture of openness and moderate Islam that is a founding characteristic of the Tunisian state and society ("*Tawnassa*" or "Tunisianity").

Finally, the success of Tunisian civil society actors in building a national dialogue, resulting in the sealing of a "historic compromise" between Islamists and secularists, has served as a guarantee against violence in consolidation of the democratic transition – and consequently, has furthered the resilience of both state and society.

## 2.1 The centralized bureaucratic tradition

The collapse of the Ben Ali regime did not lead to a collapse of the Tunisian state. The main reason for this lies in the continuity of the administration, as evidenced by the smooth succession of the head of state achieved in a short time span and with exemplary effectiveness. Tunisia's bureaucratic tradition with its hierarchical administration is grounded in an administrative, political and military elite groomed in modern schools. This tradition goes back to the Polytechnic School of Bardo founded by Ahmad Bey in 1840. Khayreddin Pasha, among others, was educated there before becoming the first Grand Vizier to the Ottoman sultan in Istanbul.

Khayreddin himself founded the Sadiki College in 1875. It was in this institution of modern education that the ruling elite of Tunisia was taught. Habib Bourguiba, the first president of independent Tunisia from 1957 to 1987, was enrolled in the Sadiki College for his primary and secondary studies before passing his baccalaureate at the Carnot High School established by the French and going to France to continue his studies in law. Most senior administrators also pursued their higher education in France, becoming engineers, doctors, lawyers and state clerks, carrying out important administrative and political positions back home in Tunisia.

Other national leaders were educated at the National School of Administration shortly after independence. The national state thus has a structured administration, with a French Napoleonic tradition. It is a somewhat bloated but on the whole effective administration that is capable of providing necessary services to citizens and thus tends to enjoy their trust.

State expenditures for the public administration are particularly high in Tunisia, however. The public sector workforce was further augmented with the 70,000 recruitments made by the Ennahda party between 2010 and 2012 – mainly in the low-skilled categories – and a wage increase of 13 percent on average. This inflated state expenditures from 10.7 percent of GDP in 2010 to

12.5 percent in 2013, equal to nearly 60 percent of tax revenues and 30 percent of the state budget. This, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), places Tunisia “well above” most countries in the world. With 795,000 state employees – including 180,000 in state-owned enterprises – the public sector accounts for almost a quarter of the active workforce.<sup>16</sup>

This large administration, and particularly lower-level bureaucrats and local authorities, was separate from the circuits of corruption associated with the Ben Ali family. Shortly after the downfall of the Ben Ali regime, the loosening of state authority led to a crisis in the administration, as witnessed by repeated strikes and sit-ins throughout Tunisia, even though basic services were provided without interruption.

Following the revolution, three other defects of the Tunisian administration emerged. These included the spread and “democratization” of corruption; the inexperience and incompetence of Islamist politicians and bureaucrats rehabilitated by the troika government (the alliance between three Tunisian parties – Ennahda, Ettakatol and Congress for the Republic or CPR – that ruled the country between 2011 and 2014); and a retrenchment of state authority that has increased the detachment of certain regions and segments of the population.

According to the president of the anti-corruption body, 90 percent of cases concern the administration, and corruption affects 25 percent of public procurement.<sup>17</sup> This means that the Tunisian administration, which has a tradition of bureaucracy and historical resilience, is increasingly threatened, especially as the liberalization of economic, educational and service industries such as transport risks marginalizing the administration while enhancing corruption within the private sector.

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16. Nabil Ben Ameur, “Fonction publique en Tunisie: Réduire les effectifs et améliorer la productivité”, in *Kapitalis*, 14 October 2014, <http://www.kapitalis.com/kapital/25179>.

17. Abderrazek Krimi, “Chawki Tabib: La corruption touche 25% des marchés publics”, in *Kapitalis*, 9 April 2017, <http://kapitalis.com/tunisie/?p=90537>.

In reality, the issue of administrative reform is linked to that of good governance, incorporating both technical dimensions (recruitment vs. voluntary retirement, reduction of budgetary expenditure, and restructuring of services, control and recovery) and the political dimensions of decentralization and financial autonomy of institutions and regions.

Even if decentralization is *included* in the new constitution, there is still a lack of enforcement texts and bold political reforms that would ensure a definitive interruption of the welfare state of the past, which is arguably no longer sustainable. The other urgency of administrative reform is the question of taxation, which is characterized by high levels of evasion and fraud because of the weak technical and human resources of the administration as well as taxation inequality (withholding tax vs. compulsory income tax return). The inequality of taxation is verified at the level of the civil service which is subjected to a high rate of taxation, while the private sector and all liberal professionals (doctors, pharmacists, lawyers, etc.) effectively pay less taxes when compared to their income. Not to mention the informal sector that escapes state taxes entirely. As a result, tax evasion is costing Tunisia 7 billion dinars annually (approx. 2.4 billion euros).<sup>18</sup>

The current government intends to launch a new strategy for the modernization of the public administration and public services, through a civil service law that will put an end to the administrative burden and inefficiency of employees in terms of services and benefits.

Despite its fallings, the Tunisian administration continues to hold, thanks to the concerted conjunction of historical tradition, adaption of contemporary democratic values and resistance against internal and external threats that aim to weaken the state and its legitimacy.

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18. "Finances: L'évasion fiscale fait perdre à la Tunisie 7 mrd de dinars annuellement", in *Webmanagercenter*, 7 April 2016, <https://www.webmanagercenter.com/?p=169079>.

## 2.2 Social reforms and the state reformist tradition

Tunisia, which was part of the Ottoman Empire while enjoying the status of an autonomous “Regency”, was crossed, culturally and ideologically, by two reformist currents: a conservative current that wanted to preserve the country’s Islamic identity and a modernist current that sought to adapt to the spirit of the times. Khayreddin Pasha led the second trend and spurred political reforms consisting of the abolition of slavery (1842), the adoption of a fundamental pact (1857) recognizing the equality of all citizens irrespective of religion and a liberal Constitution (1860) limiting the absolute power of the authorities.

After the resignation of Khayreddin as chief minister in 1877, the conservative current eventually superseded the modernist movement. Even though the country became a French protectorate in 1881, the reformist movement continued to have much following among the elites.<sup>19</sup> At the beginning of the 20th century, a Tunisian Youth Movement was created based on the Turkish model, leading ultimately to the inception of the nationalist movement with the founding of the Destour liberal party (1920) by Sheikh Abdelaziz Thaâlbi and Bourguiba’s Neo Destour (1934).

Once in power, the nationalist elite set out to build an independent state, in accordance with the reformist and modernist model. Thus, a cascade of bold reforms emerged and transformed the social and political landscape of Tunisia. Among these was the adoption of a Personal Status Code that abolished polygamy and instituted civil divorce, giving women the right to choose and decide on marital status. This measure, revolutionary for an Islamic country, was followed by a reform of the judiciary that abolished the religious courts and by a

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19. See multiple historians’ researches, particularly those of Béchir Tlili: *Les rapports culturels et idéologiques entre l’Orient et l’Occident, en Tunisie, au XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle (1830-1880)*, Tunis, Université de Tunis, 1974; and *Etudes d’histoire sociale tunisienne du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, Tunis, Université de Tunis, 1974.

reform of the schools (1959) that established their free and compulsory nature. In addition, a health reform was introduced in 1960, authorizing contraception and family planning, not to mention the voting rights granted to women in 1956 and the right of all Tunisians to decent housing. Through these reforms, the state transformed Tunisian society from top to bottom, stimulating modernity and the rise of a larger middle class. Reforms and reformism of the state have produced a “median society” composed of a large, educated and emancipated middle class, backed by a culture of openness and moderate Islam – founding characteristics of “Tunisianity” or “*Tawnassa*”.

However, these reforms were imposed from above, led by the charismatic leader Bourguiba, who monopolized power and the political scene for more than three decades. Reformism was transformed into an ideology of the state and provoked a backlash in the form of the emergence of the Islamist current that reconnects with the conservative reformist spirit and challenges the legitimacy of Bourguiba’s legacy.

In spite of this opposition and criticisms against the excessive centralization of power under Bourguiba, the moderate Islamist-leaning Ennahda party has recently changed its opposition to the modernist reforms, deciding to separate the religious from the political. Ennahda was thus transformed into a political, civil and democratic Islamic party, following the model of Christian Democratic parties in Europe.

This new orientation, which remains to be proved by political practices in the long term, is not new to Tunisian Islam, a moderate and consensual form of Islam belonging to the Malikite and Asharite currents. The orientation is also derived from the historical openness attached to Tunisia’s position as “cross-roads of civilizations” within the Mediterranean, situated as it is between East and West.

This reformist spirit has not dried up over time, as demonstrated by the adoption, in July 2017, of a new law on violence

against women.<sup>20</sup> Pressure to enact the new law resulted from a national feminist movement in support the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Additionally, in 2014, Tunisia withdrew its reservations over the full implementation of the CEDAW Convention, including reservations relating to the transmission of nationality (Article 9 (2)), marriage and divorce (Article 16) and the choice of residence (Article 15 (4)).<sup>21</sup> An additional step has been taken thanks to the initiative of the President of the Republic to create a National Commission to review discriminatory articles at the legal level. This tackles the inequality of inheritance (a woman inherits half of what a man does) and the prohibition of marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man, in order to ensure total equality between the sexes.

The implementation and spirit of these reforms allows us to rethink state-society relations, approaching the social contract from a new perspective, as the reforms promoted by the state are not only vertical. They also correspond to an evolution of society, since the status of women has changed considerably in recent years. This is evidenced by the higher female success rate compared to that of men in schools and universities, with the school attendance rate of girls in and their success rate outperforming that of their male contemporaries. In addition, there is an increasing rate of women's access to high economic and political decision-making positions, estimated to be 30 percent across all sectors and 40 percent in the public sector, not to mention their active participation in the revolution and social protest movements.<sup>22</sup>

20. Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Tunisia: Landmark Step to Shield Women from Violence*, 27 July 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/node/307144>.

21. Khedija Arfaoui, *Tunisian Women Take Major Steps to Implement the CEDAW*, 9 March 2014, <http://www.icanpeacework.org/?p=990>; UN Women website, *Declarations, Reservations and Objections to CEDAW*, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reservations-country.htm>.

22. Tunisia's National Institute of Statistics (INS), *Rapport national genre Tunisie 2015*, May 2016, <http://www.ins.nat.tn/fr/node/3123>.

The reformist symbiosis between state and society does not, of course, exclude the persistence of inequalities in the relations between men and women, especially rural women who are the pivot of the agriculture sector and yet receive less in terms of wages, inheritance and political participation, from which they are often excluded. That said, the situation is likely to change in the upcoming years based on planned reforms on many levels including law, women rights, the new education reform that has been going on for three years, the growing role of the media – old and new – and the blooming of spaces for cultural and visual expression, such as the Street Art, theatre, painting and cinema outpouring in public spaces, free from the censorship of the old regime.

### 2.3 Civil society, national dialogue and the historical compromise between Islamists and secularists

The rise and expansion of Tunisian civil society is the result of a long-term historical process that dates back to the mid-20th century, with intellectual debates on the role of the state in implementing legal and political reforms. Throughout the 20th century, the public space was strengthened by news coverage via newspapers and other information media (radio, TV, Internet), as well as the emergence of political parties and labour unions. The French protectorate and the post-independence Tunisian state have tried to control the public space using repressive measures, but they have also contributed to its expansion through the generalization of education and the spread of popular culture.

Civil society was closely monitored, but it imposed itself through associations and other organizations representative of trade unions and political tendencies that resisted colonial ideology and the dogma of single party rule imposed by the Bourguibian regime. During the 1970s and 1980s, the culture of human rights asserted itself and the ruling body had to contend with the first Arab association for the defence of human rights, namely the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH), established in 1976. The contradiction between the authoritarian



police state and Tunisia's growing pluralistic society became clear and is directly linked to the exercise of individual and public freedoms.

The collapse of the Ben Ali regime paved the way for the consolidation of civil society. As a multi-stakeholder structure for all non-governmental organizations, civil society took part in democratic public life without directly engaging in the electoral process. Therefore, it was granted the status of partner, above political conflicts. Diverse and pluralistic, Tunisian civil society is composed of many actors, the most important of which is the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT).

For historical reasons related to the role it played in the national movement, since its creation in 1946 – and later, as a structure of reception and protection of freedoms during the reign of Bourguiba and Ben Ali – the UGTT has enjoyed a special prestige in society. It is seen as the essential partner in social and political negotiations, especially since it includes trade unionists representing different socio-professional categories (workers, employees, civil servants, teachers, doctors, etc.). Practically nothing is done in Tunisia without the UGTT. Political actors are aware of this and have become increasingly so during circumstances of alliance or conflict with the UGTT. Such was the case during the reign of the troika, with the tripartite government dominated by the Islamist Ennahda party.

During the sit-ins at Bardo in 2013 and 2014 (Bardo I and Bardo II), the political opposition and civil society – whose pivot is the UGTT – exerted strong pressure after the assassination of two leftist deputies, Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi, calling on the Islamist government to resign. They were successful in launching the National Dialogue negotiations that finalized the constitution and formed an independent government to organize free elections in 2014, won by the secularist party Nidaa Tounes. This result was the product of a genuine national dialogue between Islamists and secularists organized by a quartet formed by the UGTT and three other civil society organizations: the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade

and Handicrafts (UTICA), the bar association (Tunisian Order of Lawyers) and LTDH.

The quartet was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015 for its role in the success of the national dialogue and the implementation of a “historic compromise” between the Islamists and secularists in Tunisia.<sup>23</sup> This compromise made it possible for Tunisia to overcome the bipolarization of political life, avoid the scenario of political violence, adopt a consensual and pluralistic constitution, organize free elections and ultimately ensure the peaceful transfer of power after Islamist parties lost the 2014 parliamentary elections.

National dialogue resulted in a consolidation of the democratic transition through the perseverance of civil society and political parties. Dialogue continued with the signing of the “Carthage Pact” in August 2016 by eight political parties gathered in a coalition. The pact led to the creation of a national unity government with the support of the two trade unions of employees (UGTT) and of employers (UTICA). This is a political achievement and proof of the resilience of civil society, which has overcome individual and partisan interests to protect the young democratic experience born in the wake of the 2010–11 revolution.

The national dialogue has yet to be translated into action on the social and economic levels, which remain significant challenges to both state and society resilience in Tunisia. If left unchecked, the combination of socio-economic woes and declining trust and political legitimacy of state actors risks undermining Tunisia’s fragile transition, potentially leading to a failure of the democratic experiment.

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23. Maha Yahya, “Great Expectations in Tunisia”, in *Carnegie Papers*, March 2016, p. 3, <http://ceip.org/2aWmbT2>; Nobel Prize, *The Nobel Peace Prize for 2015: National Dialogue Quartet*, 10 December 2015, [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2015/press.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2015/press.html).

## Conclusion

Resilience, which is both resistance and rehabilitation to new situations and challenges, can be seen in the particular case of Tunisia through the issues and challenges of security and terrorism, the economy of smuggling and corruption as well as social protest movements. These are the three major challenges faced by both state and society. For each challenge, the state and society have developed strategies of defence and survival which make it possible to outline and contain the problem in order to avoid the collapse of the social and political order. The battle is never won in advance, and challenges constantly threaten the construction that is taking place. However, there are safe and robust protection approaches that make it possible to climb the slope and overcome obstacles, whatever the nature of the threat. Among the means of transcending these challenges is Tunisia's bureaucratic tradition, which enables the state to maintain itself through the rational organization and continuity of services. In addition, state-driven reforms in relation to the evolution of society are likely to create a new dynamic that consolidates the process of change and democratic transition. Finally, the dynamics of Tunisian civil society, the result of a long historical process, allowed for a genuine national dialogue between various political actors which succeeded in sealing a "historic compromise" and thus avoiding the risk of violence or an abrupt failure of the democratic transition.

To summarize, Tunisia, which has been ingenious in establishing political dialogue, is currently at a turning point faced with a new challenge that may well overshadow the significant progress achieved so far. This challenge relates to the urgent need to reduce unemployment and social and regional inequalities. If Tunisia succeeds in bringing together a pact of economic and social solidarity, it will not only be able to reduce the protest movements that are blocking the production apparatus and weakening the legitimacy of state institutions, but also restore the authority of the state on the basis of a more inclusive and sustainable social contract. Ultimately, the task at hand is that of building and reinforcing trust between state and soci-

ety, as it is this trust that acts as the fundamental glue keeping the social and political-institutional order intact. Only by strengthening the bonds of trust and mutual responsibility can the Tunisian state and society hope to build a more resilience future. Identifying and strengthening those indigenous actors that have characterized Tunisia's historical processes of state formation and consolidation, and that have allowed the country to advance and overcome internal and external challenges, should be considered a starting point to help foster state and societal resilience in Tunisia, while simultaneously also supporting the country's democratic transition.

## 2 EGYPT IN TRANSITION: CHALLENGES OF STATE AND SOCIETAL RESILIENCE

EMAN RAGAB

Egypt has been experiencing a prolonged transition since the January 2011 revolution, which uncovered a number of challenges affecting state–society relations. State institutions have largely resisted these challenges, remaining the central organizing force in the country, thereby demonstrating their ability to respond to societal pressures and calls for reform, while recovering from internal crises. The state remains strong in Egypt and is working to meet the demands for change expressed by citizens who took to the streets on 25 January 2011 and 30 June 2013.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Egypt is not sliding towards partition as is the case in Libya, and the society is homogenous enough not to be torn apart by civil war or armed conflict as in the cases of Yemen and Syria.

The process of transition unleashed by the 2011 revolution has however created a deep political rift in the society that reached its peak after the December 2012 constitutional amendments adopted by former President Mohamed Morsi and meant to expand his power as president.<sup>2</sup> The main fault line in society remains that which divides those who supported these changes, namely supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and the political Islamic groups that allied with them, and the revolu-

1. For 2011 revolution see: Amir Ahmed, “Thousands Protest in Egypt”, in *CNN News*, 26 January 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/01/25/egypt.protests>. For 2013 revolution see: Patrick Kingsley, “Protesters across Egypt Call for Mohamed Morsi to Go”, in *The Guardian*, 30 June 2013, <https://gu.com/p/3hxd3>.
2. Mara Revkin, “Egypt’s Untouchable President”, in “The Battle for Egypt’s Constitution”, in *POMEPS Briefings*, No. 17 (11 January 2013), p. 13-15, <https://pomeps.org/?p=3064>.

tionary and civilian groups that created a unified front known as the National Salvation Front.<sup>3</sup> This rift created the momentum for the protests of 30 June 2013 that led to the overthrow of President Morsi with the aid of the army.

Another rift developed after the fall of the MB-linked government led by Morsi: the society became polarized between the “coalition of 2013”, which spearheaded the overthrow of the MB, and the “coalition of legitimacy”, which believes in the legitimacy of the MB and their right to return to power. This polarization is echoed in public opinion polls. According to the Baseera poll of October 2013, 46 percent of Egyptians objected to any negotiations with the MB, 46 percent called for negotiations and 8 percent were unsure.<sup>4</sup>

Following the election of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in 2014, this rift has become multidimensional. One manifestation of these multiple dimensions relates to the debate on whether to create more space for political freedom or to maintain “order and the consolidation of the ‘State’”.<sup>5</sup> Another debate is focused on economic policy and the best means to encourage growth and development. These dimensions foster divisions between those actors that support the implementation of mega economic projects (such as the Suez Canal development project),<sup>6</sup> those that call for the adoption of International Monetary Fund (IMF) inspired economic reforms<sup>7</sup> and those

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3. “Profile: Egypt’s National Salvation Front”, in *BBC News*, 10 December 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20667661>.

4. Baseera, *Poll on the Muslim Brotherhood Return to the Political Scene* (in Arabic), 31 October 2013.

5. Hanaa Ebeid, “Eluding Normalcy: Egypt’s Political Situation”, in *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2015*, Barcelona, IEMed, 2015, p. 192, [http://www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxiu-adjunts/anuari/med.2015/IEMed%20Yearbook%202015\\_Panorama\\_Egypt\\_HanaaEbeid.pdf](http://www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxiu-adjunts/anuari/med.2015/IEMed%20Yearbook%202015_Panorama_Egypt_HanaaEbeid.pdf).

6. Stephen Kalin, “Egypt’s Sisi Delivers Economic Reforms but Hurdles Remain”, in *Reuters*, 30 September 2014, <http://reut.rs/1DVrxqj>.

7. These include a VAT tax, reduction in subsidies, and free floating the currency. See Steven A. Cook, “Egypt’s Economic Reform: The Good and the Bad”, in *From the Potomac to the Euphrates Blog*, 14 November 2016, <https://www.cfr.org/blog-post/egypts-economic-reform-good-and-bad>.

that prioritize the provision of social protection to the most vulnerable sections of society.<sup>8</sup>

## 1. Resilience against what?

Based on this background, the analysis will apply the EU's resilience approach, as outlined in the 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS) for Foreign and Security Policy, to the case of Egypt. Using the general definition of resilience contained in the EUGS, which sees resilience as the opposite to "fragility",<sup>9</sup> Egypt is less fragile than other countries in the Arab region. For instance, the 2017 Fragile States Index that measures a state's fragility over ten years (2007–2017) designates Egypt in the category of countries that are "marginally worsening".<sup>10</sup> This rank makes Egypt less fragile than Tunisia, Jordan, Turkey, Iran and Oman during that decade.

Also, following the public debate in Egypt after the 2011 revolution, and even more so after the election of Sisi in 2014, the concept of state fragility in Egypt remains contentious. On the one hand, there are many experts who are convinced that Egypt is going through a transition, but cannot be considered

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8. Gamal Essam El-Din, "Parliament Divided on Economic Reforms", in *Al-Ahram Weekly*, No. 1319 (10-16 November 2016), <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/17829.aspx>.
  9. European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, p. 23, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/339>.
  10. J.J. Messner (ed.), *Fragile States Index 2017*, Washington, The Fund for Peace, 2017, p. 41, <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/?p=485>. Fragile States Index uses six primary social and economic indicators (demographic pressures; refugees; uneven economic development; group grievance; human flight and brain drain; poverty and economic decline) and six political and military indicators (state legitimacy; public services; human rights and rule of law; security apparatus; factionalized elites; external intervention). Total scores for Egypt in 2006 was 89.5, in 2017 it was 89.8, while in 2016 it stood at 90.2. A peak of 91 was reached in 2014. See the Fragile States Index website: *Country Dashboard: Egypt*, [https://public.tableau.com/shared/DWQG747QZ?:display\\_count=yes](https://public.tableau.com/shared/DWQG747QZ?:display_count=yes).

fragile.<sup>11</sup> Ali Hillal has argued in his book *The Return of the State* that the 2013 revolution and overthrow of the MB actually brought state institutions back to business, strengthening the state's legitimacy as it sought to maintain order and meet the demands of the people.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, Egyptian president Sisi, in commenting on the ineffectiveness of state institutions in meeting the needs of the people, went so far as to use the term "semi state".<sup>13</sup> Mohamed Ali Ibrahim, columnist with the newspaper *Al-Masry al-Youm*, responded to Sisi's statement by arguing that Egypt is a strong state in terms of international legitimacy, but is still a semi state because of the power struggle among the ruling elite that prevents the birth of genuine opposition movements, the deteriorating economy and continued corruption in municipalities.<sup>14</sup>

Others are convinced that the political and economic situation in Egypt is worse today than under former President Hosni Mubarak. Amr Khalifa has argued that since 2011 a "counter-revolution [has] strangled the uprising", adding however that "the arrogance of the military, shepherded by Sisi, will ultimately cause the pendulum to swing back".<sup>15</sup>

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11. Khaled Elgindy, "Egypt's Troubled Transition: Elections without Democracy", in *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (March 2012), p. 89-104; Dina Guirguis, "Egypt's Fragile Stability", in *Democracy and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Winter 2011), p. 11-15, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/egypts-fragile-stability>; Pauline H. Baker, *Fragility and Resilience in Revolutionary Egypt*, Washington, Creative Associates International, February 2017, <http://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Fragility-and-Resilience-in-Revolutionary-EgyptFINAL.pdf>.
  12. Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, May Mujib and Mazen Hassan, *The Return of the State. The Evolution of the Political System in Egypt after the 30th of June* (in Arabic), Cairo, Egyptian-Lebanese Press, 2015, p. 11-16.
  13. Sisi's speech at the inauguration of the Farafra mega project (in Arabic), 5 May 2016, <https://youtu.be/6byISChIW28>.
  14. Mohamed Ali Ibrahim, "Mr President: Who Turned Us a Quasi State?" (in Arabic), in *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 8 May 2016; Abdullah Elsenawy, "State Cracks" (in Arabic), in *Al-Shorouk*, 7 August 2017.
  15. Amr Khalifa, "In Cairo, the Pot Boils", in *Middle East Eye*, 30 June 2017, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/node/64401>.



The EU Global Strategy also provides another, more articulated, definition of resilience, describing it as, “the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises”.<sup>16</sup> Applying this concept to the case of Egypt leads to a number of findings.

First, the dividing line between state and society is blurred. There are interconnections and linkages between the state, understood in terms of formal state institutions, the bureaucracy, the armed forces and municipalities, and the broader society, in its various groupings and sub-groupings. Safi Kharboush, professor of comparative politics in Cairo University, considers the state as “a system containing two sub-systems, the political and the social”. According to him, “historically in Egypt the political system has dominated the social system and accordingly used the state institutions to strengthen its legitimacy”.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, state institutions in Egypt (including the bureaucracy, the army, the educational system, the health system, the ministries, etc.) have not been alienated from the society and are indeed an integral part of it. The state remains the major employer in the country, ensuring a degree of legitimacy and support for these institutions. For instance, the adoption of mandatory military service provides employment for about 1.8 million young citizens annually. The number of civil servants in the state bureaucracy had reached, by the end of 2016, around 6 million, which represents 25 percent of the workforce in Egypt.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, 71 million people are benefiting from government-provided ration cards. This number reveals that two thirds of the population are dependent on the state for basic goods.

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16. European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, cit., p. 23.

17. Author interview with Mohamed Safi Kharboush, professor of comparative politics, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University, Cairo, 25 May 2017.

18. Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), “Labor Force”, in *Statistical Yearbook 2017*, Cairo, CAPMAS, September 2017, p. 28, [http://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/StaticPages.aspx?page\\_id=5034](http://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/StaticPages.aspx?page_id=5034).

Second, the political regime tends to use state institutions to strengthen its legitimacy, thus furthering the linkages between “state”, “regime/elites” and society. This overlap means that a “weakening of the legitimacy of the regime has its impact on the legitimacy of the state”.<sup>19</sup>

With these points in mind and against the general backdrop of significant linkages between the state, the regime and broader society in Egypt, the analysis defines state resilience in the Egyptian context as a process through which the state maintains a capacity to meet social, political, economic and security demands of the people and to do so without weakening the legitimacy of its institutions. Societal resilience can by contrast be defined as a process through which individual citizens or groups of citizens can create and express demands for change and reform. The ultimate goal of the process of building state and societal resilience according to the EUGS is that of paving the way for “sustainable growth and vibrant societies” as well as for the ultimate attainment of democracy.<sup>20</sup>

The aforementioned polarization and the prolonged transition the country has gone through since 2011 have generated many challenges to state resilience. At the same time, however, many of these same processes reflect the capabilities of citizens to take political positions, demanding change and reform. The analysis below will examine three significant challenges to resilience in Egypt: deteriorating living conditions; radicalism and terrorism; and the difficulty in working out a sound balance between security needs and political freedoms.

For each of these challenges, the analysis will examine its effects on state and societal resilience independently or in synergy, what type of responses these challenges have generat-

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19. Author interview with Mohamed Safi El-Din Kharboush, cit.

20. European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, cit., p. 23.

ed from the society and the institutions of the state, and how these responses can contribute to the goal of strengthening state and societal resilience in the country.

## 2. Deteriorating living conditions

Since the election of President Sisi in June 2014, economic recovery has emerged as a key priority for the government. Given Egypt's lack of financial liquidity and mounting budgetary deficits, receiving a loan from the IMF has become a priority. The government has adopted many economic reforms in order to meet the loan conditions.<sup>21</sup> Reforms include the devaluation of the national currency by 50 percent, the cutting of fuel subsidies and the introduction of a value added tax (VAT). These reforms are meant to redress a situation in which the unemployment rate has reached 13 percent,<sup>22</sup> with inflation reaching 34.2 percent in July 2017.<sup>23</sup>

The short-term outcome of these reforms is leading to further deterioration of the living standards of regular citizens as well as of the poor, who used to rely on subsidized commodities to survive the rising inflation rates. According to the UN Human Development Index of 2016, the ranking of Egypt declined from 101 in 2010 to 111 in 2016,<sup>24</sup> and the average Annual Human De-

21. The loan is for 12 billion dollars, to be paid by IMF over three years. The loan repayment will be over a 10-year period with an interest rate of 1-1.5 percent. See Mohamed Samir, "IMF Approves \$12bn Loan: What's Next for Egypt's Economic Reform Programme?", in *Daily News Egypt*, 12 November 2016, <https://dailynewsegypt.com/2016/11/12/imf-approves-12bn-loan-whats-next-for-egypts-economic-reform-programme>.

22. CAPMAS, "Labor Force", in *Statistical Yearbook 2017*, cit., p. 4.

23. CAPMAS, *Change percentage from the same month of the previous year - Inflation rate*, [http://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/IndicatorsPage.aspx?page\\_id=6130&ind\\_id=2542](http://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/IndicatorsPage.aspx?page_id=6130&ind_id=2542).

24. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2010. The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 149, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/node/270>; UNDP, *Human Development Report 2016. Human Development for Everyone*, New York, UNDP, 2016, p. 203, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>.

velopment Index (HDI) growth is decreasing over time.<sup>25</sup> Poverty is also increasing. According to Egypt's Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), the poverty percentage in 2000 was 16.7. With a 2015 rate of 27.8 percent,<sup>26</sup> nearly one third of the population is poor.

It is worth noting that the deterioration of living conditions in Egypt is part of a regional phenomenon. However, in the case of Egypt, it is becoming worse due to slow economic growth caused by the prolonged transition since January 2011.<sup>27</sup> In 2010, one year before the revolution, the annual GDP growth rate was 5.1 percent. Following the 2011 revolution, the annual growth rate of the GDP was 1.7 percent in 2011, 2.2 percent in 2012-2013 and 2.9 percent in 2014.<sup>28</sup> Since the election of Sisi in June 2014, tourism, which represents one third of the GDP, is slowly recovering, foreign aid from the Gulf states and European countries is fluctuating, remittances are decreasing and the GDP growth rate is 4.3 percent,<sup>29</sup> which is below the target of 5 percent.<sup>30</sup> This is coinciding with uneven economic development. For instance, according to CAPMAS, the percentage of poor people in the upper rural governorates is 49.9 percent, the highest among the regions. The percentage in the upper urban is 26.7 percent, in the boundary governorates 24.2 percent, in the lower rural 17.4 percent, in the lower urban 11.7 percent and in the urban governorates 15.7 percent.<sup>31</sup>

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25. UNDP, *Human Development Report 2016*, cit., p. 203.

26. "CAPMAS: Poverty is the Highest since 2000" (in Arabic), in *Youm7*, 26 July 2016, <http://www.youm7.com//2816823>.

27. Xavier Aragall, Jordi Padilla and Aleksandra Chmielewska, "Descriptive Report: Domestic and Geopolitical Changes in the Euromed Region", in IEMed, *The European Union in a Transformed Mediterranean: Strategies and Policies. Euromed Survey of Experts and Actors*, Barcelona, IEMed, 2014, p. 81, 86, 87-89, <http://www.iemed.org/publicacions/historic-de-publicacions/enquesta-euromed/euromed-survey-2013/euromed-survey-2013>.

28. World Bank, *GDP growth (annual %) - Egypt*, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=EG>.

29. Ibid.

30. Brendan Meighan, "IMF Loan a Way Forward for Egypt", in *Sada*, 15 November 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=66147>.

31. CAPMAS, *Statistical Yearbook 2017*, cit.

This dire economic situation impacts on the legitimacy of the state and of the regime, even though President Sisi was elected with 96.1 percent of the vote.<sup>32</sup> Three years after he took office, there is little doubt that the economic situation in Egypt represents the primary challenge to the political legitimacy of the regime. According to the Baseera opinion poll of October 2016, 68 percent of the sample approved of Sisi's performance.<sup>33</sup> This number was 82 percent in the August 2015 poll<sup>34</sup> and 90 percent according to the June 2015 poll.<sup>35</sup>

Societal resilience is affected by this situation in two ways. First, economic hardship is making living conditions the main priority for the people rather than political reform. According to the World Values Survey, most surveyed Egyptians believe that fighting rising prices is the second most important issue after maintaining order.<sup>36</sup> Also, the negative impact of this situation is not confined to the poor but extends to the middle classes, who were less affected by the economic instability following the 2011 revolution. According to the World Bank, individuals belonging to the middle class earn 4.9 dollars per day. The Global Wealth Report issued by the Credit Suisse Research Institute shows a decrease over time in the number of individuals qualified financially as belonging to the middle class in Egypt. The total number according to the report dropped from 5.7 million in 2000 to 2.9 million in 2016.<sup>37</sup>

32. Patrick Kingsley, "Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi Won 96.1% of Vote in Egypt Presidential Election, Say Officials", in *The Guardian*, 3 June 2014, <https://gu.com/p/3pnec>.
33. Baseera, *The Performance of President Al-Sisi after 28 Months in Office*, 22 October 2016, <http://baseera.com/EN/RecentPolls2.aspx?ID=125>.
34. Baseera, *The Performance of President Al-Sisi after 26 Months in Office*, 15 August 2015, <http://baseera.com/EN/RecentPolls2.aspx?ID=116>.
35. Magued Othman, *Press Release: The poll conducted by the Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research (Baseera) on Egyptian President's approval rate at the end of his first year in office*, June 2015, [http://baseera.com/EN/PressPoll-Ar/82\\_En.pdf](http://baseera.com/EN/PressPoll-Ar/82_En.pdf).
36. World Values Survey (WVS), "V62.- Aims of respondent: first choice", in *World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014*, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp>.
37. Salma Shukrallah, "High Inflation Takes Its Toll on Egypt's Shrinking Middle Class", in *Ahram Online*, 23 October 2016, <http://english.ahram.org/EN/News/246377.aspx>.

Second, the deteriorating socio-economic situation is driving an increasing number of young Egyptians to illegally migrate directly to Europe, often through Libya. According to the Minister of Immigration and Egyptian Expatriate Affairs, Nabila Makram, “Kafr el-Sheikh, Gharbiya and Fayoum governorates rank first domestically in the number of youth who illegally migrate to Europe, most notably to France and Italy”.<sup>38</sup> These three governorates are the highest in terms of the poverty level and unemployment. For legal migrants, Egypt in comparison to other Arab countries is also ranked first. The number according to the Arab Human Development Report was more than 5 million in 2010–2014.<sup>39</sup>

## 2.1 Positive contributions to resilience

The state’s response to the economic difficulties has been two-fold. First, the state has focused on reviving the economy in an attempt to enhance the legitimacy of the regime. It has launched a number of mega economic projects such as the expansion of the Suez Canal and a state-planned agricultural project to reclaim 1.5 million *feddan* of desert land in Farafra.<sup>40</sup> The state has also sought to directly strengthen the resilience of those sectors of society that are most exposed to these socio-economic challenges. In this domain, state authorities are adopting gradual reform policies in order to direct subsidies to the most disadvantaged sectors of society.<sup>41</sup> Part of these subsidies is provided through the governmental ration cards that benefit 71 million citizens, but not all of these individuals are disadvantaged.<sup>42</sup>

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38. “Egypt Ranks First in Illegal Migration Worldwide: Minister”, in *Egypt Independent*, 25 November 2016, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/?p=2474477>.

39. UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2016. Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*, New York, UNDP, 2016, p. 152 and 268, <http://www.arab-hdr.org/Reports/2016/2016.aspx>.

40. “Sisi Inaugurates 1st Phase of 1.5 Million Feddan Reclamation Project”, in *Mada Masr*, 31 December 2015, <https://www.madamasr.com/en/?p=30291>.

41. Adopted since 2012, but not implemented until the election of Sisi. See: Julie Herrick, Maya Moseley and Laura Raus, “Egypt’s Impending Subsidy Crisis”, in *Egypt Oil and Gas*, 29 December 2014, <http://egyptoil-gas.com/?p=10075>.

42. “Supply Ministry to Start Revising Ration Cards in January”, in *Egypt Independent*, 18 December 2016, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/?p=2474969>.

For instance, according to CAPMAS, more than 90 percent of people in the lower rural governorates hold these cards,<sup>43</sup> while the percentage of poor people in these governorates is 17.4 percent. The state is also implementing the Takaful and Karama programme which aims to protect the poor by providing direct cash transfers.<sup>44</sup> The programme is designed to target three million poor families over four years, in seven governorates.<sup>45</sup>

Second, the authorities are supporting the army and developmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for the provision of subsidized commodities to citizens. The army is widening the provision of low-price foodstuffs and supply commodities. These are dispatched daily through its National Services Project Organization<sup>46</sup> and the *Tahia Masr* fund's 1,100 distributing units, with total capacity of 1.1 tons daily, providing the basic commodities via 341 outlets spread across most of the governorates.<sup>47</sup>

Developmental NGOs are also launching many projects in order to provide basic commodities, health services and housing, especially in the poorest villages. For instance the *Misr El Kheir* institution has provided nearly 29 million services since its founding in 2007. It runs a wide range of programmes covering Debtors Redemption, *Ibn el-Sabeel* (The Wayfarer), Direct Aid and Income Generating projects, as well as programmes for Pre-University Education, Vocational and Higher Education, Prevention of Hepatitis C, Medical Treatment and Social Inclusion for People with Disabilities.<sup>48</sup>

43. CAPMAS, *Statistical Yearbook 2017*, cit.

44. "El-Sisi Wins Egypt's Presidential Race with 96.91%", in *Ahram Online*, 3 June 2014, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/102841.aspx>.

45. Afrah Alawi Al-Ahmadi, *Egypt, Arab Republic of - Strengthening Social Safety Net Project. P145699 - Implementation Status Results Report. Sequence 03*, Washington, World Bank, 17 October 2016, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/664211476725796183>.

46. For more see the official website: <http://www.nspo.com.eg>.

47. Statement by army spokesperson on Facebook, 19 July 2014 (in Arabic), <https://ar-ar.facebook.com/Egy.Army.Spox/posts/509906759140311>.

48. See the Misr El Kheir official website: <http://misrelkheir.org/en>.

Assessing the extent to which these policies are meeting the socio-economic needs of the people is no easy task. State institutions have limited capabilities whereby their legitimacy as providers of basic services is diminished. For instance, the target number of beneficiaries for the Takaful and Karama programmes represents 12 percent of the people living below the poverty line,<sup>49</sup> leaving the remaining 88 percent of the poor not covered by this programme.

In addition, the mega projects are not enhancing the living conditions of citizens in the short term, or alleviating the negative impact of rising inflation.<sup>50</sup> According to many economic experts, such projects will only yield positive impacts in the medium and long term.<sup>51</sup> For instance, the Suez Canal project is expected to contribute to state and societal resilience in 2023 by creating one million new jobs, expanding industrial production and increasing revenue.

The outcome of the expanding role of the army and the developmental NGOs is strengthening both the resilience of the state, as the army is one of its institutions, and that of society, as the societal sectors receiving help are becoming more socially secure. Yet, these two actors are also replacing other governmental institutions that have traditionally been responsible for these services, namely the ministries of Social Solidarity, Health, Education, Higher Education and Supply. This means that that these formal institutions of the state are losing some degree of legitimacy, as their functions are increasingly replaced by NGOs and the army.

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49. According to CAPMAS, the Egyptian poverty line was 482 Egyptian pounds monthly in 2015. It was 326 Egyptian pounds monthly in 2012/2013. Adel M. Fakhry, "EGP 482 per Month Becomes New Poverty Line", in *Daily News Egypt*, 27 July 2016, <https://dailynewsegyp.com/2016/07/27/egp-482-per-month-becomes-new-poverty-line>.

50. Baseera, *The Performance of President Al-Sisi after 28 Months in Office*, cit.

51. Henry Harding, "Egypt's Economy Five Years after the Revolution", in *Middle East Eye*, 23 January 2016 (last update 3 December 2016), <http://www.middleeasteye.net/node/50337>.



### 3. Radicalism and terrorism

The state's ability to maintain security and order, which is another aspect of resilience, has been challenged since the dispersal of the Muslim Brotherhood's sit-ins in Rabaa and in Al-Nahda squares on 14 August 2013, and the subsequent waves of tensions and terrorist attacks that have impacted Egypt since. This wave is not confined to Northern Sinai and has been spreading to many cities on the mainland, targeting civilians, infrastructure, police and army officers, as well as foreign embassies and religious institutions.<sup>52</sup> Not all of these events are directly related to the MB, yet instances of violence and attacks have increased since the 2013 events.

Radicalism and terrorism challenge state and societal resilience in three ways. First, the continuation of "a ferocious war" on terrorism (as labelled by President Sisi) is challenging the perceived legitimacy of the state and security services among the public.<sup>53</sup> This is particularly important given that the main priority for the Egyptian people according to the World Values Survey is achieving security and maintaining order.<sup>54</sup> Second, terrorism and radicalism contributes to the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions in the country. It hinders the implementation of development projects, especially in Northern Sinai. Third, the prolonged asymmetric war with the terrorists is negatively affecting Egypt's tourism industry. According to the Global Terrorism Index developed by the Institute for Economics and Peace, the global rank of Egypt jumped from

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52. Eman Ragab, "Counter-Terrorism Policies in Egypt: Effectiveness and Challenges", in *Papers IEMed/EuroMeSCo*, No. 30 (October 2016), <http://www.iemed.org/publicacions-en/historic-de-publicacions/papersiemed-euromesco/30.-counter-terrorism-policies-in-egypt-effectiveness-and-challenges>; Jeremy M. Sharp, "Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations", in *CRS Reports*, No. RL33003 (24 March 2017), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf>.
53. Edith Lederer and John Daniszewski, "AP Interview: Egypt's Leader Says Country in 'Ferocious War'", in *AP News*, 27 September 2015, <https://apnews.com/c7899e61dbf94c9db60d359c4b018d44>.
54. WVS, "V62.- Aims of respondent: first choice", in *World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014*, cit.

27 during the period 2002–2011 to 13 in the years 2013 and 2014.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.1 Positive contributions to resilience

The state is adopting three sets of policies to maintain its legitimacy as the sole provider of security. The first set targets the terrorists both in Northern Sinai and on the mainland by arresting leaders responsible for planning and carrying out terrorist attacks, tracking their financial transactions and dedicating hotline numbers for regular citizens to report suspicious activities that could escalate into terrorism. The state has also recently focused on tightening the security procedures in all ports in order to prevent the smuggling of terrorists, while visibly increasing the physical presence of security forces on the streets.

The second set of policies aims at countering religious Islamic radical ideas to prevent recruitment of new terrorists.<sup>56</sup> The third set of policies aims to help the victims of terrorism, among both civilians and the security services. Those who have suffered due to the counter-terrorism measures adopted by the state are also included under these policies. Here, the state provides compensation to the victims on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, on 3 June 2016 the authorities announced the launch of a national project to develop Sinai, an attempt to bring socio-economic development to the area as a measure against extremism and radicalization. The total budget for this project is 150 billion Egyptian pounds (about 8.5 billion dollars) dedicated to implementing development programmes covering fishing, housing, water treatment and agricultural sectors. These projects are expected to indirectly enhance the living conditions in Northern Sinai in the long term, thus helping to

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55. Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), *2012 Global Terrorism Index*, December 2012, <https://reliefweb.int/node/541719>; IEP, *Global Terrorism Index Report 2014*, November 2014, <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf>; IEP, *Global Terrorism Index Report 2015*, November 2015, <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/04/2015-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report.pdf>.

56. Eman Ragab, "Counter-Terrorism Policies in Egypt", cit., p. 16-26.

deal with the grievances among the people created by the counter-terrorism measures.

The combination of these policies led to a decline in the total number of terrorist attacks in 2016,<sup>57</sup> with much of the threat becoming confined to Northern Sinai. However, the state's ability to confront terrorism and radicalism is still being challenged. The terrorists are still capable of attacking significant targets unilaterally or through coordination with other groups. For instance, on 8 May 2016 four men carried out a mass shooting in Hilwan, killing eight policemen. Two terrorist organizations, *Welayat Sinai* and the Popular Resistance, claimed responsibility. The former organization also recently unleashed a new wave of attacks targeting Egyptian Copts in the country. In April 2017, it claimed responsibility for the double bombing of churches in Alexandria and Tanta.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, there are many sectors of society that are still vulnerable, or less resilient, in their ability to withstand or counter radicalism. This is particularly true with regard to the victims of terrorism, for two reasons. First, the absence of a well-defined compensation scheme (along with clear criteria for compensation) risks further alienating these people from the state. Second, the state is primarily tackling religious radical ideas, which it perceives as the main driver for terrorism, ignoring other trigger factors and motivations leading to such actions. Members of active terrorist groups on the mainland, namely the Revolutionary Punishment, *Liwaa al-Thawra* and Hasm, are in fact driven by a set of intertwined drivers that combine individual grievances, political and religious reasons, as well as economic and social motivations.<sup>59</sup>

57. By the end of 2016, the total number of terrorist incidents had reached 861 attacks, with an average of four per week. The average number of attacks in 2015 was six per week. Ahmed Kamel El-Beheiry, *Count of Terrorist Attacks in Egypt in 2016* (in Arabic), Cairo, Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 4 January 2017, <http://acpss.ahram.org.eg/News/5619.aspx>.

58. Ruth Michaelson, "Egypt: ISIS Claims Responsibility for Coptic Church Bombings", in *The Guardian*, 9 April 2017, <https://gu.com/p/695ah>.

59. Eman Ragab, "Counter-Terrorism Policies in Egypt", cit.

## 4. Security vs. political freedoms

State and societal resilience in Egypt is also challenged depending on how the state chooses to balance the protection of liberties and freedoms, as stated in the 2014 constitution, and the goal of ensuring order and countering radicalism and terrorism.

Egypt is witnessing intertwined developments in this regard. On the one hand, the government has adopted the protest law of 2013, the terrorist entities law of 2014 and the counter-terrorism law of 2015, which according to many analysts are violating the right of citizens to protest and express their opinions.<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, the political discourse in Egypt does not welcome any genuine form of political opposition. The suspension of Amr El-Leithy's show in October 2016 after it broadcast a video in which a *tuk-tuk* driver harshly criticized the living conditions in Egypt is an indicative example.<sup>61</sup> In parliament, the "25–30 group" that is formally part of the opposition is not providing genuine counter-narratives as an alternative to the policies of the government. Its role is confined to criticizing the government's economic policies,<sup>62</sup> while never providing concrete alternatives or calling for questioning of the ministers involved.<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, many columnists have called on the regime to provide more space for political dialogue and opposition. One such example is given by Emad El-Din Hussein, who has eloquently argued, "security can disperse demonstrations, but politics can convince people not to organize them".<sup>64</sup>

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60. Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Egypt: Draft Law Bans Independent Civil Society Groups*, 28 November 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/node/296958>.

61. Toqa Ezzidin, "Renowned TV Presenter Ibrahim Eissa Suspends His Talk Show Due to Ambiguous 'Pressures'", in *Daily News Egypt*, 1 January 2017, <https://dailynewsegypt.com/2017/01/01/renowned-tv-presenter-ibrahim-eissa-suspends-talk-show-due-ambiguous-pressures>.

62. Gamal Essam El-Din, "Parliament Divided on Economic Reforms", cit.

63. Samir Ramzy, *Party Coalitions in the Parliament* (in Arabic), Badil Center for Planning and Strategic Studies, 3 October 2016.

64. Emad El-Din Hussein, "Less Security... More Politics" (in Arabic), in *Al-Shorouk*, 28 March 2016, <http://www.shorouknews.com/columns/view.aspx?cdate=28032017&id=a49cd85e-90cf-44c4-91e3-b268936eaf7d>.

Also, many individuals and social groups are convinced that practicing their right to protest government decisions does not constitute a national security threat. The April 2016 protest against the agreement with Saudi Arabia on Tiran and Sanafir Islands was organized in violation of the protest law and is considered the largest demonstration since the election of Sisi.<sup>65</sup> Also, police brutality remains a driver for spontaneous protests. For instance, the death of an Egyptian citizen, Tala'at Shabib al-Rashidi, a few hours after being arrested by the police in Luxor on 1 December 2015 drove a march against police brutality.<sup>66</sup>

Besides, workers' protests are still remarkable. Between January and April 2016, the number reached 493. During 2015 it was 933, while the previous year there were 1,655 protests recorded.<sup>67</sup> The dominant feature of these protests is that they are short, focused on a single cause and in many cases spontaneous.

It is worth noting that social media platforms are becoming important venues for expression of criticisms and protests, even though the government has significantly increased its monitoring of the web. For instance, the "internet revolution campaign" launched in 2014 remains very active on Facebook to mobilize users to protest against the low quality and speed of Internet services, creating financial losses for the main service providers.<sup>68</sup> Also, in response to the rising inflation rate, many Facebook users called on 1 December 2016 for a boycott of all commodity items for one day. According to a Baseera

65. "Final Court Ruling Declares Egyptian Sovereignty over Tiran and Sanafir Islands", in *Mada Masr*, 16 January 2017, <https://www.madamasr.com/en/?p=231458>.

66. "Protest in Egypt after Death of Man in Police Custody", in *Al Jazeera*, 1 December 2015, <http://aje.io/f2y6>.

67. Amr Hamzawy, "Workers Protests 2013-2016" (in Arabic), in *Al-Shorouk*, 4 November 2016, <http://www.shorouknews.com/columns/view.aspx?cdate=04112016&id=cb9f37f4-53cf-4aef-a4ac-2ea1f257325f>.

68. Mohamed Alaa El-Din, "'Internet Revolution' Targets Communications Companies over Low-Quality Services", in *Daily News Egypt*, 28 June 2015, <http://www.dailynewsegyp.com/2015/06/28/internet-revolution-targets-communications-companies-over-low-quality-services>.

poll, 77 percent of Egyptians supported the call and considered it a means to pressure tradesmen and sellers to reduce prices.<sup>69</sup>

The existence of these contradictory dynamics reveals how society is still capable of creating demands for change using tools that are not under the full control of the state, like the social media platforms. Yet, many observers believe that what the regular citizen in Egypt is most keen on is “enhancing his/her living conditions and not to participate in politics”.<sup>70</sup> The Arab Human Development Report of 2016 has shown how ordinary Egyptians, similarly to what is the case in many other Arab countries, are concerned with two main issues: the economy and their security.<sup>71</sup>

However, the World Values Survey found that most surveyed Egyptians believe maintaining order to be priority number one, followed by fighting rising prices, protecting freedom of speech and then giving people more say in important government decisions.<sup>72</sup> Politics therefore is one of the issues of concern to citizens. Seventy-five percent of Egyptians surveyed consider politics as very important or rather important, especially those in the 30–49 age range.<sup>73</sup> The percentage was lower (48 percent) during the 2000–2004 survey, especially among those above 50.<sup>74</sup>

These dynamics are creating pressures on state institutions and consequently on the regime to weaken or revise its secu-

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69. Baseera, *Ration Cards and the Boycott Campaign on December 1st*, 26 November 2016, <http://baseera.com.eg/EN/RecentPolls2.aspx?ID=126>.

70. Author interview with Ali El-Din Hillal, professor of comparative politics, Faculty of Economic and Political Sciences, Cairo University, Cairo, 25 June 2017; Author interview with Mohamed Safi Kharboush, cit.

71. UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2016*, cit., p. 32.

72. WVS, “V62.- Aims of respondent: first choice”, in *World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014*, cit.

73. WVS, “V7.- Important in life: Politics”, in *World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014*, cit.

74. WVS, “V7.- Politics important”, in *World Values Survey Wave 4: 2000-2004*, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>.

ritization approach to politics and to be more responsive to the political demands of the people.

#### 4.1 Positive contributions to resilience

The continuation of the conflict between a dynamic society and state institutions is revealing different aspects of the political resilience of state and society.

Seeking to respond to the political demands of the people without compromising the fight against terrorism and radicalism has led the state to adopt a mix of policies, some of which have tended to create more space for political discussion, while others have further restricted such space. Speaking of the former, the parliament has for instance reviewed the protest law, following the constitutional court ruling that the article granting the ministry of interior the authority to deny protest requests is unconstitutional.<sup>75</sup> Also, the presidency is sponsoring the organization of a national youth conference to create a new platform for discussing youth issues with government officials as well as with the president. One of the main outcomes of the first youth conference, held in October 2016, was the formation of a committee to free young people imprisoned without conviction or for offenses related to unauthorized political gatherings and protests.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, the president freed 82 people on 18 November 2016<sup>77</sup> and decided to pardon a further 203 in March 2017.<sup>78</sup>

75. "Protest Law to Be Amended, Poultry Customs Exemption to Be Reviewed: Egypt PM", in *Ahram Online*, 4 December 2016, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/251277.aspx>; El-Sayed Gamal El-Din, "Egypt Cabinet Formulates Amendment of Unconstitutional Article 10 in Protest Law", in *Ahram Online*, 7 December 2016, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/251566.aspx>.

76. "Egypt's Sisi pledges reviews of protest law, detentions", in *Reuters*, 27 October 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-sisi-politics-idUSKCN12R2MX>.

77. "Egypt's Committee to Pardon Youth Prisoners Submits New Names for Presidential Review", in *Ahram Online*, 19 January 2017, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/256400.aspx>.

78. Hadeer El-Mahdawy, "Egypt's Sisi Pardons 203 Prisoners in Protest-Related Cases", in *Ahram Online*, 13 March 2017, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/260840.aspx>.

There is also a developing tendency of holding police officers accountable for their brutality against citizens, in order to strengthen the rule of law. Cases include Shaima al-Sabbagh, who died after being shot by the security services during a protest in Cairo in 2015,<sup>79</sup> and Magdy Makeen, an Egyptian fish seller who died after being arrested and tortured in a Cairo police station in 2016, for example.<sup>80</sup> However, the extent to which this practice will continue is questionable, especially given that the list of alleged instances of police brutality cited by many human right organizations is very long.<sup>81</sup>

Turning to policies that are restricting freedoms in Egypt, the government adopted in May 2017 a new law that regulates NGOs in the country. This law restricts the activities of NGOs and their capabilities to raise funds, as well as creating a new agency to direct the operations of these non-governmental organizations. According to Nasser Amin, a prominent human rights lawyer, the law

failed to take into account the rulings of the Egyptian Constitutional Court, which has consistently chosen not to intervene in the affairs of NGOs, whether related to dissolving the organization, selecting activities, or even determining fields of administrations.<sup>82</sup>

These developments reveal the capacity of society to exert pressures for change, and the state and regime's capacity to respond to them. However, the final outcome of this dynamism is yet not defined.

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79. Amira El-Fekki, "Retrial of Police Officer in Shaimaa Al-Sabbagh's Case Postponed", in *Daily News Egypt*, 22 December 2016, <https://dailynewsegyp.com/2016/12/22/re-trial-police-officer-shaimaa-al-sabbaghs-case-resumes>.

80. Taha Sakr, "Magdy Makeen's Autopsy Report Proves His Death Was Result of Torture: Lawyer", in *Daily News Egypt*, 7 December 2016, <https://dailynewsegyp.com/2016/12/07/magdy-makeens-autopsy-report-proves-death-result-torture-lawyer>.

81. See for instance: Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Egypt. Events of 2016", in *World Report 2017*, New York, Seven Stories Press, January 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/node/297810>.

82. Maged Atef, "NGO Law in Egypt", in *Fikra Forum*, 12 January 2017, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/ngo-law-in-egypt>.



## Conclusion

The analysis has examined state and societal resilience in Egypt within the framework of the EU Global Strategy. Egypt can be considered something of a unique case in the region due to the interconnectedness between the institutions of the state, the ruling elite and society. These linkages create their own dynamics that affect the resilience of the state and society and how they manage to confront the three challenges examined in this chapter.

Each of these challenges reveals the limited capability of state institutions to meet the economic and security needs of the people, which in turn prevents a greater attainment of state and societal resilience in the case of Egypt. For instance, radicalism and terrorism hinder the implementation of developmental projects and affect the economic outlook of the state, which again challenges its ability to provide the basic social services to those in need.

In other words, the state and society's responses to these challenges reveal, on one hand, that the state remains capable of carrying out its functions in the political, economic and security fields to address the three challenges. On the other hand, society is still capable of expressing dissatisfaction and anger caused by the state's securitization approach to politics in order to be more capable to counter radicalism and terrorism, which affects the socio-economic situation and political development in the society.

Nonetheless, resilience in Egypt remains subject to how the state-society relationship will develop in the context of the prolonged transition the country has been going through since 2011.



### 3

## UNPACKING LEBANON'S RESILIENCE: UNDERMINING STATE INSTITUTIONS AND CONSOLIDATING THE SYSTEM?

JAMIL MOUAWAD

In 2011, a *New York Times* article suggested that the protracted crisis in Lebanon has become a “way of life”, whereby Lebanon is to the crisis what the “sherpa is to the mountain”. The article quotes a shopkeeper, convincingly summarizing Lebanon’s relationship to crisis:

We’ve been through so many wars. It doesn’t matter what happens anymore. One day there’s a crisis, the next morning we wake up and nothing. It’s like a 7-Up. You shake it and it explodes. You leave it alone, and it stays flat.<sup>1</sup>

Lebanon has continued to be “shaken” consecutively at least since the official end of the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990). Despite continuing attacks by Israel on Lebanon (1993, 1996 and 2006), institutional deadlocks, extended periods of presidential void, the absence of an official budget since 2005 as well as the recent influx of Syrian refugees, the state remains intact and a sense of *business as usual* continues to characterize the Lebanese polity. In fact, Lebanon carries on adapting and accommodating itself to new realities and challenges, without a major change in the composition of the ruling elite in decades. Meanwhile, the international community continues to praise the so-called resilience of Lebanon.

It is no secret that in recent years the concept of “resilience” has become more popular in the discourse of the internation-

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1. Anthony Shadid and Nada Bakri, “For Lebanese, Crisis Has Become a Way of Life”, in *The New York Times*, 14 January 2011, <https://nyti.ms/2kXyFCh>.

al community and humanitarian and development agencies.<sup>2</sup> Most recently, the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) has put *resilience* at centre stage in defining Europe's role in the world. Even though it does not provide a clear-cut definition of the concept, the EUGS reveals that the "resilience" of the states and societies on the "East" and the "South" of Europe ultimately serves the interest of the EU: "Fragility beyond our borders threatens all our vital interests", reads the EUGS. Thus, resilience, or "the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises, benefits us [EU]".<sup>3</sup>

The worldwide pervasiveness of the concept gives the impression that resilience is unquestionably a "good" value to be striven for, invested in and cultivated throughout society at whatever cost.<sup>4</sup> The problem, however, is that resilience remains a concept not clearly defined and rarely empirically explored. In light of this, how can we understand Lebanon's so-called "resilience"? Who are its main actors? Who is resilient, to what, and by what means?

## 1. Lebanon's hailed resilience: How is it understood?

Lebanon's so-called resilience, whether extolled or criticized, has been understood in many ways over the years. The most prevalent account of Lebanon's resilience stresses the country's financial and economic strength. The resilience of the economy during times of conflict and state disintegration is attributed

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2. Couple of years ago, for instance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) adopted a new slogan that attest to this shift: "Empowered Lives. Resilient Nations".

3. European Union External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, p. 23, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/339>.

4. Wolfgang Wagner and Rosanne Anholt, "Resilience as the EU Global Strategy's New Leitmotif: Pragmatic, Problematic or Promising?", in *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2016), p. 414-430, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2016.1228034>.

to Lebanon's liberal and market-oriented economy, whereby the private sector historically has been self-reliant and independent of state intervention.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, however, the sector has not been able to sustain itself without governmental fiscal policies.<sup>6</sup> For instance, and until today, the central bank plays a crucial role in maintaining the stability of the sovereign debt through the currency peg. What makes Lebanon further financially resilient, from this perspective, is the nexus of the commercial banks and the central bank, whereby the latter preserves the stability of the exchange rate, but also preserve the profitability of the banks.<sup>7</sup> The economy hence remains stable and the central bank, a public authority, is at the service of private interest while simultaneously securing the stability of the national economy.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, commercial banks are directly associated with the political elite. The findings of a study published in 2016 reveal that "18 out of 20 banks have major shareholders linked to political elites", and that "four out of the top 10 banks in the country have more than 70% of their shares attributed to crony capital".<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, expat remittances constituted approximately 15.9 percent of the GDP in 2015,<sup>10</sup> substantially helping to counterbalance the absence of a productive national economy.

5. Samir Makdisi, *The Lessons of Lebanon. The Economics of War and Development*, London and New York, I.B. Tauris, 2004, p. 74-76.
6. Charbel Nahas, "The Lebanese Socio-Economic System, 1985-2005", in Laura Guazzone and Daniela Pioppi (eds.), *The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalization. The Restructuring of State Power in the Middle East*, Reading, Ithaca Press, 2009, p. 125-157.
7. Julia Thierry, "The Diaspora, Debt, and Dollarization: Unraveling Lebanon's Resilience to a Sovereign Debt Crisis", in *Jadaliyya*, 25 November 2015, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/23250>.
8. Hicham Safieddine, "The Banking Lobby in Lebanon: The Institutional Roots of Money Power" (in Arabic), in *Al-Adab*, 15 October 2015, <http://al-adab.com/node/1004>.
9. Jad Chaaban, "I've Got the Power: Mapping Connections between Lebanon's Banking Sector and the Ruling Class", in *ERF Working Papers*, No. 1059 (October 2016), p. 3, <http://erf.org.eg/?p=14032>.
10. See World Bank Data: *Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=LB>. See also World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Data*, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>.

A second account of Lebanon's resilience underscores the capacity of society to come together and self-organize, whether through family networks or communal solidarity, during times of hardship such as the civil war, the July 2006 war<sup>11</sup> and the aftermath of the Syrian influx into Lebanon.<sup>12</sup> A third related attribute of Lebanon's resilience is its ability to weather regional spillover effects, particularly the impact of the ongoing Syrian war. Since "the opportunity costs of war" are deemed too high for all political actors with stakes in Lebanese affairs, whether nationally or regionally,<sup>13</sup> Lebanon remains above the fray of all-out conflict. Finally, a most convincing and recent argument is that what international donors praise as Lebanon's resilience is in fact the capacity of its elites to keep their privileges and influence *at the expense* of state institutions and political reform.<sup>14</sup>

According to these interpretations, resilience is presented as a clear or rational policy that is designed and orchestrated by institutions and political groups, or a societal response that is akin to a survival mechanism. Studying state-society relations in the specific case of Lebanon, however, reveals that resilience is neither a policy nor a mechanism to adapt to new situations. Rather, resilience is a discourse, often adopted by international actors and appropriated by national elites, that conceals a set of practices by several actors, ranging from the international community to the ruling political elite, that hollow out state public institutions. These actors work to pursue their own interests in the name of an allegedly "weak" state or in support of Lebanon's state-building. In this sense, lauding Lebanon's

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11. Iman Nuwayhid et al., "Summer 2006 War on Lebanon: A Lesson in Community Resilience", in *Global Public Health*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (2011), p. 505-519.

12. Estella Carpi, "Syrians in Akkar: Refugees or Neighbours? Rethinking Hospitality towards Syrian Refugees in Lebanon", in *Refugee Hosts*, 15 January 2017, <http://wp.me/p7Thtb-cn>; Nathalie Bekdache, *Resilience in the Face of Crisis. Rooting Resilience in the Realities of the Lebanese Experience*, London, International Alert, March 2015, <http://international-alert.org/node/13208>.

13. Tine Gade, "Lebanon on the Brink", in *NUPI Policy Briefs*, No. 23/2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2403262>.

14. Carmen Geha, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Lebanon's Endemic Deadlocks: Trading Reform for Resilience", in *Middle East Institute Articles*, 17 March 2016, <http://www.mei.edu/node/22761>.

resilience is misleading as these mechanisms empower the resilience of the system and undermine the state's public institutions, rendering the society dependent on a system of aid and clientelism rather than on state-driven development projects.

## 2. Background: State-society relations in Lebanon

There is a common tendency to depict the state in Lebanon as "weak" or dysfunctional, whereby its public institutions are unable to penetrate the society<sup>15</sup> on the one hand, and its power-sharing formula gives greater power to sectarian groups to the detriment of state institutions on the other.<sup>16</sup> As a result, sects supersede the "state" and prevent the emergence of an independent "civil society". This paves the way for external intervention and meddling by regional powers in domestic affairs and the emergence of powerful non-state actors.<sup>17</sup> The state is therefore said to be weak and becomes irrelevant in understanding Lebanon. Yet in order to understand Lebanon's resilience, it is important to examine state-society relations and not succumb to narratives of "state weakness".<sup>18</sup>

The edifice of the state was set up during the French mandate (1920-1943) when a centralized administrative bureaucracy was established that "kept the number of government officials at a minimum, leaving the bulk of the educational, medical and other services to be provided on a communal basis".<sup>19</sup> Effectively, the newly established bureaucracy and the

15. Tom Najem, *Lebanon. The Politics of a Penetrated Society*, London and New York, Routledge, 2012.

16. Imad Salamey, *The Government and Politics of Lebanon*, London and New York, Routledge, 2013.

17. Shoghig Mikaelian and Bassel F. Salloukh, "Strong Actor in a Weak State. The Geopolitics of Hezbollah", in Mehran Kamrava (ed.), *Fragile Politics. Weak States in the Greater Middle East*, London, Hurst, 2015, p. 119-143.

18. Jamil Mouawad and Hannes Baumann, "Wayn al-Dawla? Locating the Lebanese State in Social Theory", in *The Arab Studies Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2017), p. 66-90.

19. Roger Owen, "The Political Economy of Grand Lebanon, 1920-1970", in Roger Owen (ed.), *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*, London, Ithaca Press, 1976, p. 23.

“colonial civic order” were based on “organizing power relations between state and non-state actors by setting norms and practices by which they interacted”.<sup>20</sup> This granted societal and political groups an essential role in distributing state resources to society through welfare organizations and employment.<sup>21</sup> The current governance of Lebanon has its roots in the “war system”, which was developed by militias and civil administrations as a substitute to the void due to the collapse of state institutions during the civil war (1975–1990). This war system “generated and institutionalized its own groups and networks with its particular structures and interrelated webs of rule and obligations”.<sup>22</sup>

The war system was further consolidated during the post-war period, when the state was presented by the post-war ruling elite, an alliance of warlords and a new “contractor bourgeoisie”,<sup>23</sup> as unable to undertake reconstruction efforts. In fact, the post-war system granted this elite a key position in state-society relations. The system worked in two directions, with state institutions central to its functioning. On the one hand, the ruling elite did not spare any efforts to accumulate resources through capturing and cannibalizing state institutions by setting up neo-liberal policies which granted the private sector an essential role in serving the society.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the system set up “powerful and effective redistributive mechanisms” through injecting “considerable amounts of sub-

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20. Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens. Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2000, p. 65.

21. Melani Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism. Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2014.

22. Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon. A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 251.

23. Hannes Baumann, “The ‘New Contractor Bourgeoisie’ in Lebanese Politics: Hariri, Mikati and Fares”, in Are Knudsen and Michael Kerr (eds.), *Lebanon After the Cedar Revolution*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 125-144.

24. Hannes Baumann, *Citizen Hariri. Lebanon's Neoliberal Reconstruction*, London, Hurst, 2016.



sidies to cater for the needs” of the population who are suffering from this system in place.<sup>25</sup> Consolidating and securing the resilience of this system creates what can be described as a “parallel state”, which acts as an intermediary between state and society and is endorsed by the ruling elite and the international community.

### 3. Resilience of whom and to what?

In what follows, the chapter takes two examples of how the “system”, rather than the state per se, secures its resilience. The examples are drawn firstly from the 2015 trash crisis, which witnessed popular mobilizations unprecedented in post-war Lebanon, and secondly from the refugee crisis that Lebanon has experienced since 2011.

#### 3.1 The private-public collusion: The trash crisis

According to the law of municipalities in Lebanon (Law No. 118 of 1977), trash collection and management falls under the prerogative of local authorities. Just after the civil-war, the government judged the municipalities as lacking in knowhow and not having sufficient funds, and delegated trash collection and management to private companies. In 1993, the government contracted a private company, Sukleen, to collect and sort Beirut’s trash. Sukleen charged at least double the cost of what the municipality of Beirut would have charged. Several reports highlighting this discrepancy were completely ignored by the government.<sup>26</sup> It is not a secret anymore that then-premier Rafic Hariri favoured Sukleen because it was established by his close friend Maysara Sukar. The contract, originally awarded for three years only in 1994, was regularly renewed to cover a large part of the Lebanese territory. It is highly probably that

25. Charbel Nahas, “The Lebanese Socio-Economic System, 1985-2005”, cit., p. 132.

26. Reinoud Leenders, *Spoils of Truce. Corruption and State-Building in Postwar Lebanon*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2012, p. 55-57.

Sukleen paid off members of the ruling political elite to secure its presence in this sector.<sup>27</sup> Driven by private interests, the government used funds allocated to the municipalities to foot the bill for private service providers. Accordingly, Sukleen is not accountable to the public in the same way the municipalities as elected bodies would have been. Instead, Sukleen's fate depends on its network in the government.

In 2010, during a meeting under the presidency of Saad Hariri, the son of Rafic Hariri, the Sukleen contract was brought to the table for negotiation. According to newspapers, Saad Hariri addressed his ministers, clearly asserting: "either the contracts are extended or you will drown in garbage".<sup>28</sup> Then in 2015, when ministers disagreed over a solution, Beirut's streets effectively became trash heaps. The reality of trash on the streets brought the Lebanese face to face with the failure of their government. They had heard about it before, and individually encountered it in their everyday lives – this time, however, they could feel it and smell it.

As a reaction, a group of young activists took to the streets to protest the trash crisis. The mobilization soon transformed into a popular protest, which put unprecedented pressure on the ruling political elite. The "You Stink" movement targeted not only the foul smell of the mounds of garbage polluting streets throughout the country, but also the rampant corruption of the Lebanese political system. The demands of the movement ranged from holding the minister of environment accountable for failing to manage the rubbish crisis and the minister of interior accountable for resorting to violence against protesters, to conducting new parliamentary elections and bringing down the sectarian regime. During the crisis, the government was unable to find immediate and successful solutions. In fact, any proposed solution was directly related yet again to the unapologetic corruption of the ruling elite. For instance, the

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27. Ibid.

28. Mohammad Zbeeb, "\$5 Million a Year: The Tip of the Sukleen Waste Pile", in *Al-Akhbar*, 27 August 2012, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/11479>.

government initially awarded waste collection tenders to six companies run by people close to power. Two days later, under pressure from the streets, the tenders were cancelled. Then prime minister Tammam Salam stated that he would not convene his government until a trash solution was found.<sup>29</sup> Subsequent events show that such any such solution continues to lie within the purview of the ruling elite, and depends on their consensus and hence their private interests.

As of the time of writing, the trash crisis remains unresolved, according to the demands of experts and the civil movement. Trash heaps were removed from the streets in summer 2015 and Sukleen continued afterwards to collect the trash. Most recently in September 2017, the mayor of the Beirut Municipality called for a press conference to inform the public that a new company, Ramco Trading, had won the bid for waste management in Beirut. In stark similarity to the process adopted with Sukleen since 1994, the public remains uniformed about the bid and the terms of the contract. This has raised concerns for groups such as Beirut Madinati,<sup>30</sup> a civil collective that ran for the 2016 municipal elections against the winning list supported by Saad Hariri. Expressing concern that the Court of Audit had not issued a final decision regarding the tender, the civil collective launched a campaign to petition the municipality and pressure it to provide detailed information about the process for the sake of transparency and accountability. While it is too early to judge the performance of Ramco, and the connection it has to politicians, yet again the process attests to how the state is “hollowed out” to the advantage of private interests, which in turn serve society at an exorbitantly high financial and environmental cost.

In other words, public state institutions, whether the government or the municipality, do not seem to be the locus of power

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29. George Fakhry, “Salam Threatens to Resign over Trash Crisis”, in *An-Nahar*, 3 March 2016, <https://en.annahar.com/article/324427>.

30. Deen Sharp, “Beirut Madinati: Another Future Is Possible”, in *Middle East Institute Articles*, 27 September 2016, <http://www.mei.edu/node/23613>.

where decisions are taken. Rather, it is the parallel system representing private interests that has proved more powerful and able at any stage to impose its decisions and solutions on the public authorities.

### 3.2 Syrian influx into Lebanon: The pinnacle of resilience?

Since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011, fears have emerged about a potential spillover of the war into Lebanese territory. Despite significant tensions and occasional violent clashes (such as the battle of Aarsal in 2014), and most recently a war against the Islamic State or ISIS on the north-eastern borders with Syria, this spillover has been contained, and Lebanon has not fallen into civil conflict between domestic groups divided along Syrian political fault lines, or between host communities and Syrian refugees. Lebanon hosts approximately 1.1 million refugees from Syria, which amounts to around one in five people in the country, or one in four according to other estimates. A 2016 IMF report reads: “Lebanon’s response so far is a testament to both its generosity and resilience”.<sup>31</sup> The report concludes that Lebanon is doing “a global public good” related to the availability of refugee protection.<sup>32</sup> This service necessitates the commitment of the international community to securing funds in support of Lebanon, whether for the host community or the refugees themselves.

In Lebanon, two parallel policies have been adopted to deal with the influx: a grassroots policy whereby the majority of people, and especially those who sympathize with the Syrian revolution, have hosted Syrians in their villages or towns in the name of “hospitality”; and an open door policy adopted by the government according to which all refugees have been able to enter the country. These two policies are now being some-

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31. Andrew Tiffin et al., “Lebanon: Selected Issues”, in *IMF Country Reports*, No. 17/20, January 2017, p. 17, <http://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2017/01/24/Lebanon-Selected-Issues-44573>.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

how modified. The state closed its borders in 2015. Against the backdrop of a discourse of hospitality, a discourse of greed or grievance is growing louder among host communities.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, and chiefly among the international multilateral actors, a discourse oriented towards social cohesion and the prevention of violence is emphasized. In addition, a wide range of international and non-governmental organizations have actively provided aid to the refugees and host communities.

In the absence of an efficient centralized national policy, the role of the Lebanese government is limited to raising money for infrastructure under the alibi of serving host communities and in order to appease growing tensions between the Lebanese and Syrians. Accordingly, Lebanon is said to be on the brink of physical collapse and the government urges that most of the aid should go to infrastructure. The state has not invested much in infrastructure, innovation or job creation. As shown recently, the 1.6 billion dollars UN envelope deployed in response to the Syrian crisis represents three times what the government itself spends.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the UN, along with other agencies, functions as yet another parallel state, providing services to alleviate the grievances of the Lebanese community, not unlike the Lebanese ruling elite.

Most importantly and despite the development of the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan, which is led by UN agencies along with the Minister of Social Affairs, the role of the state remains oriented towards “raising money”, although this role is limited to “validating or endorsing the decisions and strategies of donors and international agencies”.<sup>35</sup> The risk – and the stabilizing factors – related to the crisis lies not in the (in)ability of the state to adopt a comprehensive plan or not, but rather in the will of the international community to fund Lebanon. In

33. Estella Carpi, “Syrians in Akkar: Refugees or Neighbours?”, cit.

34. Rosalie Berthier, “Abracada... Broke: Lebanon's Banking on Magic”, in *Synaps Articles*, 2 May 2017, <http://www.synaps.network/abracada-broke>.

35. Kamal Hamdan and Lea Bou Khater, “Strategies of Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon”, in *Policy Dialogues Series: Lebanon*, No. 3 (2015), p. 35, <http://www.commonspaceinitiative.org/publications.html>.

this sense, the hailed resilience of Lebanon in hosting a large refugee population depends more on international aid and less on state policies. The Lebanese society in return, and specifically in underprivileged areas, is now dependent on the funds that are allocated to supporting local communities. In many instances, a lack of funds directed to the municipalities leads them to put pressure on the international community to expel the refugees. In this sense, intervention poses a twofold problem. On the one hand, the international community remains a key player in addressing the Syrian refugee crisis while giving a limited role to state institutions formulating long-term and rights-based development projects. On the other hand, while the state has played an active role in pursuing certain policies that accentuate the vulnerability of the Syrian presence in Lebanon, it has nevertheless remained absent from drafting and adopting rights-based policies (more tolerant procedures for residency for the Syrians) or undertaking development projects that secure jobs and services for both the Lebanese and the Syrians themselves.

#### **4. Challenges to resilience: A grim situation**

Contrary to how the EUGS understands resilience, this chapter does not approach the topic in a normative way, whereby resilience is something positive or negative. On the contrary, it shows that Lebanon's resilience is rooted within state-society relations that have long undermined state institutions while empowering a system of patronage and clientelism often endorsed directly or indirectly by the international community. Its effects are clear: undermining state institutions, empowering the "system" and creating a dependency of society on this system. The so-called resilience thus produces and reproduces the same features and parameters of what we often call "Lebanon's fragility" or "state weakness" and which in turn create the foundations for elite resilience. Indeed, Lebanon is resilient to the extent that it does not collapse or experience renewed civil conflict; however, this resilience is exclusive to certain groups and does not foster institutional sustainability or social justice.

Moreover, this so-called resilience results in a fake “stability” more than anything else. This stability harbours the seeds of conflict and instability that persist underneath an outward image of “resilience” and might indeed erupt at any point.

In the two examples provided above, the chapter shows how governance takes place outside state institutions. If this resilience is lauded by the international community, it is nevertheless far from helping establish a well-grounded social contract between state and society based on social justice, rights and equality.

Indeed, the situation is grim. According to a study conducted in 2013, 48 percent of private wealth in Lebanon, which is estimated at 91 billion dollars, was concentrated in the hands of just 8,900 individuals, or 0.3 percent of the adult population. On the other side, 99.7 of the population owned 52 percent of this wealth.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the lack of official data, a study by the World Bank and the Central Administration for Statistics (CAS) reveals that in 2011–2012, “27 percent of the population were poor. This implies that about one million people had levels of consumption that were below the annual poverty line”.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand,

45 percent of individuals 15 years of age and above were in the labor market and employed. Fifty-one percent of the population in this age range were inactive (i.e. not in the labor force). The unemployment rate, defined as the ratio of unemployed to total active population in the labor force, was about 9 percent.<sup>38</sup>

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36. Fawwaz Traboulsi, *Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon*, Beirut, Heinrich Böll Stiftung Middle East Office, 2014, p. 35, <https://lb.boell.org/en/node/1037>. On the Global Wealth Databook 2014 report, see more on this blog entry: <http://stateofmind13.com/2015/02/18/0-3-of-lebanese-own-50-of-lebanon>.

37. Najwa Yaacoub et al., *Snapshot of Poverty and Labor Market Outcomes in Lebanon Based on Household Budget Survey 2011-2012*, Washington, World Bank, May 2016, p. 2, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/24781>.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Institutionally, the last legislative election was organized in 2009 and the parliament has prolonged its mandate for two consecutive terms failing until now to organize elections. The upcoming elections in May 2018 remain uncertain. The budget approved by the government in 2017 has yet to be approved by the parliament, and if approved it serves chiefly the private interests of the ruling elite. In fact, during the past 12 years the budget has been spent in an ad hoc manner, and subject to little or no oversight from the parliament. The World Bank estimates that the country's debt-to-GDP ratio, among the highest in the world, will reach 157 percent in 2017.<sup>39</sup> More serious indicators continue to reflect the country's social and economic predicament. Lebanese young people who have received higher education are looking forward to leaving the country for better economic opportunities. Thirty-six percent of young men and women (15–29) express their desire to emigrate to countries outside Lebanon.<sup>40</sup> Since 1990, statistics show, over half a million Lebanese have already been living abroad. More precisely, in 2014, an estimated 885,000 Lebanese migrants, first-generation, born in Lebanon, were residing abroad.<sup>41</sup> In 2007, of those who migrated, aged between 18 and 35, 43.4 percent have university degrees, and 22 percent have high school degrees, which reflects the “brain drain”, as migrants are almost twice as educated as non-migrants.<sup>42</sup>

Of course, Lebanon has proven to be “resilient”, no matter how we define this concept. It has survived the wave of Arab uprisings, popular mobilizations, political deadlock and exter-

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39. “Why Lebanon Has Not Passed a Budget for 12 Years”, in *The Economist*, 28 March 2017, <https://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2017/03/economist-explains-22>. See also World Bank, *Lebanon's Economic Outlook - October 2017*, 11 October 2017, <https://goo.gl/WNvmsu>.

40. Silatech, *The Silatech Index: Voices of Young Arabs*, Fall 2010, p. 18, <http://www.silatech.org/en/publication/publication-details/docs/default-source/publications-documents/the-silatech-index-voices-of-young-arabs-nov-2010>.

41. Françoise De Bel-Air, “Migration Profile: Lebanon”, in *MPC Policy Briefs*, No. 2017/12 (May 2017), p. 1, <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/46504>.

42. Choghig Kasparian, *L'émigration des jeunes libanais et leurs projets d'avenir*, Beyrouth, Presses de l'Université Saint-Joseph, 2009.



nal pressure due to the presence of Syrian refugees and the involvement of Lebanese parties in the war in Syria, whether through direct military intervention or support to military groups. Yet this *trompe-l'oeil*<sup>43</sup> resilience is indeed the resilience of the system and the ruling elite and not that of the state. It is equally the resilience of the society – a society that presently depends on this system.

There is a pressing need to face the reality and avoid sweeping any more dust under the rug. If Lebanon has survived the spill-overs from the Syrian war, this does not mean that the Lebanese are not involved in the conflict. The battlefield is different (Syria not Lebanon) but the actors are the same. It is time to seriously address the structural faultiness of the Lebanese system. The municipal elections in 2016 clearly attest to a healthy environment, where a group of independents challenged the ruling elite by fielding a list and running for the elections. This is a welcome move as reform is not about pressuring the system and advocating for change through democracy promotion. Reform in this context is about winning elections and reclaiming the state as the only institution through which structural change can be brought about.

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43. The expression is borrowed from Sahar Atrache, "Lebanon's Deceptive Resilience", in *Middle East Eye*, 23 July 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/node/45343>.



## 4

# FRAGILITY AND RESILIENCE IN IRAQ

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The crisis currently engulfing Iraq extends beyond the emergence and atrocities of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). While the jihadis dominate headlines, it is Iraq's structural problems that have enabled the group's emergence. The crisis of authority and security in Iraq has resulted from weakened or partly collapsed institutions, the absence of the rule of law, dysfunctional and corrupt governance and the ascendancy of Shia militias and sectarian divisions that have produced an environment conducive to militancy. State fragility in the region and the proxy war between the Russia-Iran-Hezbollah coalition and its opponents in Syria have additionally exacerbated these challenges, stifling Iraq's efforts to stabilize and rehabilitate its institutions.

The challenges to Iraqi resilience today stems from the supremacy of the men with guns and cash instead of those with ideas and visions. Iraq's inability to provide security and public services, or to reconcile its disparate communities, will continue to enable the space in which militants and extremists thrive. While the territorial vestiges of the so-called "Caliphate" may have been defeated following ISIS's loss of territory in eastern Syria and central Iraq, the group will nonetheless maintain its capacity to conduct attacks, including terrorist atrocities. The infrastructure to do so is still intact and will continue to allow the group and its ilk to destabilize Iraq and exacerbate the ongoing humanitarian crisis that has seen close to three million people internally displaced since 2014 and 11 million in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom only six million have received aid from humanitarian organizations.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *Iraq: IDPs Caught Between a Rock and a Hard Place As Displacement Crisis Deepens*, 30 June 2015, <http://>

All this notwithstanding, the Iraqi state has remained resilient. Despite a bloody internal conflict, disastrous reconstruction policies, regional interference and proxy warfare, the economic crisis and the civil war in neighbouring Syria, the state has not disintegrated. This has as much to do with Iraq's contemporary history as it does with the role of its institutions, the strength of Iraqi identity and the substantial interactions between the state and communal structures such as tribes and religious leaders, civil society and armed groups that often function alongside the state security forces.

Iraq also has a thriving civil society that has played a critical role in fostering pluralism and co-existence, and in holding the corrupt elite to account. This civil society – comprised of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), charities and religious leaders – can be empowered.<sup>2</sup> Policy-makers often disregard the bottom-up, communal dynamics as a potential driver of resilience, much less as a driver for stability. Yet, it has been crucial in suppressing the ability of militant organizations to swell their ranks and of sectarian elites to exploit and widen the polarization within the Iraqi society.

State resilience in Iraq originates from the capacity of the state to interact and engage with the Iraqi society, while providing a national framework that is oriented around a common history, goals and aspirations. Societal resilience in Iraq hinges on the capacity of Iraqi society to contest government policies and influence national politics to address political, social and economic grievances within a framework that allows for dialogue and interaction with the state.

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[www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/iraq/2015/iraq-idps-caught-between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place-as-displacement-crisis-deepens](http://www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/iraq/2015/iraq-idps-caught-between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place-as-displacement-crisis-deepens).

2. For examples of the interactions between these different components of Iraqi society, see: Zahra Ali, "Young Grassroots Activism on the Rise in Iraq: Voices from Baghdad and Najaf", in *openDemocracy*, 5 May 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/node/101859>.

## 1. Resilience to what? Corruption, governance and security challenges

The fragile but nevertheless functioning governing mechanisms created by the Baath regime were disrupted by the 2003 American-led invasion of Iraq. However, the elements that made the state resilient in Iraq prior to 2003 are for the most part responsible for its resilience after 2003. Since the 1958 revolution that ousted the monarchy and established a republican system, the state has faced countless challenges, ranging from the Kurdish national liberation movement in the north to the Communist movement, Shiite Islamist opposition groups, and multiple domestic uprisings and regional conflicts, including the gruelling eight-year war with Iran that led to a million casualties.<sup>3</sup> This is in part the result of the way the Iraqi state organized authority and power according to the challenges of the day, but also because of the buy-in of Iraqi society.<sup>4</sup>

The Baath regime became explicitly sectarian during the 1991 Shia uprising, thereby losing support from large sections of the Shia population, particularly in the south where it had destroyed centres of learning, shrines and communities. From this environment of extreme poverty and violent repression emerged Mohammad Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr, a preeminent Shia cleric who established the Sadrist movement, a grass-roots organization that, under the leadership of his son Muqtada, currently constitutes Iraq's most powerful socio-political movement. Sadeq al-Sadr provided an outlet for political and economic grievances at a time of extreme hardship. He galvanized the Shiite masses by appealing to fierce Iraqi nationalist sentiments and anti-Western discourse. From the perspective of the Baath regime, this countered Iran's influence and provided a useful unifying ideology that could mobilize the Arab consciousness of Iraq's Shia community against what was framed as the alien Persian Shia.

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3. Ian Black, "Iran and Iraq Remember War That Cost More Than a Million Lives", in *The Guardian*, 23 September 2010, <https://gu.com/p/2jqg6>.

4. Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *The Future of Iraq. Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

While Iraq inherited many problems from the Baath regime, sectarianism has had the single most influential impact on the post-2003 state and society, manifesting itself in violent conflict, institutional mistrust and divisive ethno-sectarian political alliances that have collectively eroded Iraq's fragile social contract. Two competing orders that have shaped conflict and bloodshed in Iraq still remain very much in play. First are Iraq's Arab Shiite factions that have used the repressive rule of the Baath Party as a source of legitimacy, positioning themselves as the liberators of the country and the guarantors of the post-2003 political order. Their identity and existence is based around narratives of victimhood and the notion of preventing a Baathist resurrection that would return the country to repressive rule. This narrative has provided Shiite Islamist parties and militias with the capacity to mobilize cross-sections of the Shiite population. Conversely, for Arab Sunni actors – ranging from political parties to tribes, insurgent groups and jihadis – the pre-2003 period is invoked to elicit memories of an era of glory, free of militia rule, sectarian discord and Safavid (Iranian) as well as Western imperialism. The latter narrative has enabled ISIS and its previous incarnations to swell their ranks.

Post-2003 Iraq's confessional power-sharing mechanisms reinforced particularistic and sectarian politics; communities mobilized and coalesced around political objectives based on their ethnicity or sect, which came at the expense of a common national identity and the pluralistic politics of co-existence that is often a prerequisite for stabilization and good governance. Under the Baath, framing politics and governance through a nationalistic lens produced a resilient society that was able to resist disintegration into anarchy and that prevented the state from collapsing. After 2003, the policies pursued by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and later by the US-backed Iraqi government, compounded the sectarian fissures within Iraqi society.<sup>5</sup> The most infamous of the CPA decisions was the de-Baathification of the Iraqi state and society. This policy re-

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5. Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq. Winning the War, Losing the Peace*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2007.

moved all officials associated with the Baath party from public office when, in fact, membership in the party was a prerequisite for jobs and promotion. The ban struck civil servants and bureaucrats as much as it did teachers, academics, lawyers and engineers. Initially, some 30,000 ex-Baathists were expelled from various ministries. Half were eventually permitted to return after winning their appeals. All military officers above the rank of colonel were expelled as were all 100,000 members of Iraq's various intelligence services. Hundreds of thousands of trained soldiers, officers and intelligence officials become jobless overnight.<sup>6</sup>

Between 2006 and 2007, Shia militias were engaged in a turf war with Arab Sunni militant groups, including remnants of the Baath regime, Arab Sunni tribes, Al-Qaeda in Iraq and foreign jihadists. A coalition of unlikely bedfellows emerged as the Mahdi Army, the capital's unofficial police force (dominated by members of the Badr Brigade militia) and armed gangs mobilized between 2006 and 2007 to engage in a sectarian war that claimed the lives of 34,452.<sup>7</sup> Estimates put the number of Arab Sunnis killed by Shia militias at 1,000 per month,<sup>8</sup> and 365,000 civilians were forced from their homes. Many of Baghdad's historically mixed communities underwent major demographic changes as a result of forced displacement.<sup>9</sup>

The rampant corruption in the security forces not only rendered the Iraqi armed forces ineffective, allowing Shia militia groups to use their failures to justify their existence. It also has a more sinister element, creating an informal economy of abuse and exploitation by officials. Due process and the rule of law have given way to a lucrative market where families of innocent detainees face extortion from corrupt officials.<sup>10</sup> A significant

6. Judith S. Yaphe, "Iraq's Sunni Arabs: Part of the Past, Part of the Future?", in *Sada*, 25 November 2003, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/21507>.
7. Sabrina Tavernise, "Iraqi Death Toll Exceeded 34,000 in 2006, U.N. Says", in *The New York Times*, 17 January 2007, <https://nyti.ms/2k2HD13>.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "Corruption in Iraq: 'Your Son Is Being Tortured. He Will Die If You Don't Pay'", in *The Guardian*, 16 January 2012, <https://gu.com/p/34kq7>.

proportion of the public payroll goes to those known as “ghost employees” or “ghost soldiers” – employees who receive salaries but who do not exist. There are an estimated 30,000 ghost soldiers in Iraq’s military, whose salaries are pocketed by corrupt officials. The fall of Mosul in 2014 was in part attributed to the corruption that had engulfed the Iraqi security forces, in addition to the endemic problem of corruption in public procurement.<sup>11</sup>

Corruption has, at the same time, filled the pockets of sectarian entrepreneurs and corrupt elites, especially by blocking accountability measures and oversight of the state’s expenditures, ultimately to the detriment of moderate, pluralistic voices. The colossal state-building resources invested in Iraq by the international community since 2003 have had little or no oversight. The management and distribution of these resources would have constituted an administrative challenge for most advanced democracies that have an organized and professionalized public sector, while the Iraqi state was effectively dismantled and functioned in a disorderly manner after 2003. Billions of dollars in US and international resources were poured into the country. More recently, however, the US Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction has estimated that 40 percent of reconstruction projects assessed in 2013 had deficiencies, including overcharging by subcontractors, unaccounted expenditures, waste and fraud.<sup>12</sup> According to estimates, 300 to 350 billion dollars has gone missing from government coffers since 2003 because of graft.<sup>13</sup> Transparency International ranked Iraq as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, placing it 170th out of 175 countries in 2015.<sup>14</sup>

These structural challenges do not bode well for a country that is almost wholly dependent on oil revenues. Iraq is 95 percent

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11. Ibid.

12. US Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Learning from Iraq*, March 2013, <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA587236>.

13. Loveday Morris, “Beyond Terrorism, Iraq’s Leader Is Struggling to Fight Corruption”, in *The Washington Post*, 21 August 2015, <http://wapo.st/1PCu90Q>.

14. Ibid.



reliant on oil revenues but loses its revenues to mismanagement, corruption and low productivity.<sup>15</sup> The bloated Iraqi state has been engulfed in an economic crisis since the decline of oil prices after the great recession of 2008-9. Salaries and pensions cost the government more than 3 billion dollars a month. The public payroll is roughly estimated to be 7 million from a population of just over 21 million. Productivity is extremely low: in 2016, public sector workers were estimated to have been granted 184 days of leave, which – economists have estimated – costs the country three billion dollars a year in lost productivity.<sup>16</sup> This economic model is not sustainable in the long run, as the Iraqi government has realized since the decline of oil prices. While historically this dependence on oil reserves has provided a degree of state resilience, it is no longer sustainable.

In this crisis of governance, there is dissatisfaction among a rapidly increasing, and young, population. Iraq's population is currently estimated to be 33 million and is expected to double in size within the next 10-15 years. Youth dissatisfaction constitutes a ticking time bomb that could explode in the near future with disastrous consequences. Nearly half of the population is under 19, yet opportunities for the youth to engage in politics or civic activities are limited.<sup>17</sup> The number of youth aged 15 to 24 in Iraq is expected to double in the next 30 years, an increase of six million.<sup>18</sup> One in five Iraqis lives below the poverty line. Every single year, more than half a million Iraqis enter the job market.

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15. "Long Weekend: Iraqis 'Worked Just Six Months' in 2016", in *The New Arab*, 19 April 2017, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/blog/2017/4/19/long-weekend-iraqis-worked-just-six-months-in-2016>.

16. Ibid.

17. See the website of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq: *About Iraq*, <http://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/countryinfo.html>.

18. Farzaneh Roudi, *Youth Population and Employment in the Middle East and North Africa: Opportunity Or Challenge?*, Paper presented at the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Adolescents "Youth and Development", New York, 21-22 July 2011, [http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/egm-adolescents/p06\\_roudi.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/egm-adolescents/p06_roudi.pdf).

Attempts to reform Iraq have been undertaken on a number of occasions. Since 2015, Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi has been emboldened by the vociferous backing of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's highest Shia authority and the leading Shia clergyman in the world, who has led calls for an end to corruption and government reforms.<sup>19</sup> His role as both mediator but also as someone who empowers more moderate actors within the Shia political class, should not be understated. He has truly been a fundamental driver of societal resilience. Sistani is widely regarded in Iraq as a reconciler. At 87, this revered and leading clergyman of the Shia Islamic world has functioned as a crucial check on the power of Iraq's corrupt ruling elite and weak institutions that are paralyzed by ethnic and sectarian divisions. Sistani's early interventions after the 2003 war included pressuring the United States and Iraqi officials into ensuring that an elected assembly wrote the country's new constitution, contrary to the wishes of the United States and others, who sought a closed-door process. Sistani also convened warring Shia factions in 2005 to ensure that they contested parliamentary elections as a unified bloc, lest infighting among various Shia groups and militias should embolden a resilient Sunni insurgency composed of Baathists and Al-Qaeda in Iraq. In 2006, Sistani helped contain, although he could not stop, a new wave of sectarian violence in Iraq that erupted after Al-Qaeda in Iraq bombed the Al-Askari Shrine, a sacred Shia mosque in the Sunni-dominated city of Samarra. Sistani has therefore played an important role in curbing the level of bloodshed by calling for unity and moderation. This did not prevent Iraq from sliding into civil war, but Sistani's interventions almost certainly helped to constrain state-backed Shia militias and prevented them from committing genocide against Iraq's Sunni population.

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19. "Iraqi PM Abadi pledges corruption drive after Sistani criticism", in *Reuters*, 9 January 2016, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-abadi-corruption-idUKKCN0UN0JC20160109>. See also Martin Chulov, "Post-war Iraq: 'Everybody Is Corrupt, from Top to Bottom. Including Me'", in *The Guardian*, 19 February 2016, <https://gu.com/p/4gq93>.

With his backing, popular protests in 2015 saw security details for politicians cut by 90 percent, which freed up to 20,000 personnel for other duties.<sup>20</sup> In January 2016, the federal government, in coordination with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), also agreed on an economic reform agenda that aims to reduce the dependence on oil and is focused on the collection of customs duties and income tax.<sup>21</sup> This was followed by a 5.34 billion dollar loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in July 2016, which has spurred efforts to reform the macro-economic environment so as to expand the private sector and reduce dependency on the state. The impact of the loan, in the short term at least, will be piecemeal and could even prompt social unrest as a result of the austerity measures that the loan requires.<sup>22</sup>

## 2. Iraqi society fights back

Despite the plethora of challenges thrown at them, Iraqis have maintained their capacity to confront the Iraqi state. This is, after all, a population that has revolted on multiple occasions, even during the brutal Baath era. Since 2003, there have been countless contestations against a combination of the occupying forces, the Iraqi government as well as regional powers. There are communal networks collectively comprised of economies worth hundreds of millions of dollars and vast sums of religious donations from around the world that are used to finance projects that are autonomous of the state. The Shia religious establishment in Iraq presides over an extensive web of local and national institutions that enables it to contest the

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20. Loveday Morris, "Beyond Terrorism, Iraq's Leader Is Struggling to Fight Corruption", cit.

21. "Abadi and the Kurdish Delegation Agree to Adopt Economic Reform Program to Reduce Dependence on Oil" (in Arabic), in *Al-Sumaria TV*, 31 January 2016, <http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/158410>.

22. International Monetary Fund (IMF), "Iraq Gets \$5.34 Billion IMF Loan to Support Economic Stability", in *IMF News*, 14 July 2016, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/07/12/14/31/NA071416-Iraq-Gets-IMF-Loan-to-Support-Economic-Stability>.

government in unparalleled fashion. Sistani, for example, has vast social and religious networks that enable local governance, provide services and support other public programmes such as schools, hospitals and libraries. Harnessed in the right way, these networks can help lead the way toward establishing a stronger civil society across Iraq, in partnership with other civic organizations. These include a vast network of institutions and charitable organizations, along with construction companies and printing presses.

Since the emergence of ISIS and the ensuing humanitarian crisis, these organizations have used their status and wealth to provide sanctuary to IDPs, including Arab Sunnis and Iraq's different ethnic and religious minorities. In a similar vein, Iraq's Arab Sunni-dominated heartlands in the north saw periods of stability after 2007 when the US re-engaged local tribes and other communal actors. Functioning through dialogue and co-operation, including an integration of tribal communities and former members of the Sunni insurgency into the government, these communal grassroots actors are overlooked by policy-makers as potential drivers of stability. Yet they have a proven capacity to function autonomously from the corrupted political process in Baghdad, whilst also having a moral authority that can be capitalized on to combat militancy and nudge armed groups into disarming and demobilizing.

Since 2011, protests have escalated and Iraqi society has fought back against corrupt and sectarian governance, albeit with mixed and often disappointing results. In 2011, against the backdrop of the Arab Spring uprisings, so-called "Day of Rage" protests gripped Baghdad and led to violent clashes with the Iraqi security forces. There were no calls for overhauling the government, but for improved public services and jobs.<sup>23</sup> Then, in 2013, political upheaval in Baghdad led to protests in northern Iraq that provided the staging-ground for ISIS's seizure of multiple towns and cities in 2014. Resentment among

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23. Jack Healy and Michael S. Schmidt, "Demonstrations Turn Violent in Iraq", in *The New York Times*, 25 February 2011, <https://nyti.ms/2jYcf3l>.

Arab Sunni communities was exacerbated when former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, in an attempt to consolidate his hold on power, moved against his Arab Sunni rivals after years of reorganizing key state institutions into patronage networks. Protests in 2013 erupted after Maliki controversially arrested the bodyguards of prominent Arab Sunni politician and former finance minister, Rafi Issawi. The arrests came just a year after the equally controversial arrest warrant issued against the country's former vice-president, Tarek al-Hashimi, also a prominent Arab Sunni politician.

The protests that erupted in northern Iraq, in Anbar province specifically, criticized the Shia-led government's marginalization of Arab Sunnis as well as poor services and indiscriminate (as well as disproportional) anti-terror raids and arrests in Arab Sunni communities. These criticisms were specifically targeted at Prime Minister Maliki, whose corrupt and sectarian governance and management of key institutions like the Iraqi armed forces, has been widely blamed for the emergence of ISIS in 2014.<sup>24</sup> In addition to providing the social conditions that could allow ISIS to project itself as an alternative to his rule, Maliki also led to the weakening of the Iraqi security forces. Hence, in 2013 Maliki reactivated Shia militias in an attempt to fill this security vacuum, in tandem with which there was a spike in sectarian atrocities.

While the population in northern Iraq has not had the space to protest and express its grievances given ISIS's brutal occupation since 2014, this has not stopped other sections of the population from mobilizing against the government.<sup>25</sup> Since 2013 mass protests and demands for reform have spread throughout the country. In August 2015, amid rising temperatures and the availability of electricity for only a few hours, Iraqis took to the

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24. "Iraq Ex-PM Nouri Maliki Blamed for Mosul Fall to IS", in *BBC News*, 16 August 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33952451>.
  25. For an overview of protests in the Kurdistan Region, see Ranj Alaaldin, "Kurdistan Comes Alive", in *openDemocracy*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/node/58538>.

streets. While the government could dismiss protests in northern Iraq as an Al-Qaeda-inspired effort to challenge the post-2003 political order, the 2015 protesters were overwhelmingly Shia and protests took place in Baghdad and Shia-dominated provinces in the south. Unlike protests in northern Iraq, these protests were met with the moderating hand of the Abadi government (the 2011 protests faced a military response, under the orders of the former Prime Minister Maliki). The protests also received the endorsement of Grand Ayatollah Sistani, which helped legitimize and swell their ranks, while also providing Prime Minister Abadi with a popular mandate to push for necessary reforms.<sup>26</sup>

Fundamental to societal (but also state) resilience has been the role of Shia militias and other armed groups, and their place within the Iraqi state and society more generally. Among the outstanding and critical issues that Iraq will have to address after the Mosul operation and the eventual end of the so-called “Caliphate”, is the status of the plethora of armed groups that are currently fighting alongside each other against ISIS. In some instances, these forces are autonomous and do not answer to the federal government in Baghdad, while at times work in coordination with other Iraqi security forces. If indeed the post-ISIS territorial configurations, the balance of power and issues of governance are to be addressed – namely who it is that will be doing the rebuilding in an effort to stabilise Iraq and replace the ensuing power vacuum that will follow ISIS’ demise – then appraising the status and role of armed groups will require going beyond the paradigm that treats them as either threats to the state and society, foreign proxies or criminals.

Each of the armed actors engaged in the Mosul operation has a complex and contentious socio-cultural status and political background. Each has staked its claim in the future of northern Iraq and overlaps to some degree with the local population. Shia militia groups, for example, are generally dismissed for be-

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26. AFP, “Thousands of Iraqis Protest against Corruption and Power Cuts”, in *The Guardian*, 7 August 2015, <https://gu.com/p/4bbqn>.

ing Iranian proxies or criminal groups that enable the space in which militant groups like ISIS operate. However, while some of these groups – including both Arab Sunni tribal militias and Shia militias – have committed sectarian atrocities, they also have substantial popular legitimacy and interact significantly with the Iraqi state.

Far from the criminal or Iranian proxy paradigm, Shia militias can also function as drivers of resilience at the state and societal level. Their product is, and will continue to be, violence and disorder and their prominence enables groups like ISIS to swell their ranks with alienated Arab Sunnis. However, their discourse is often steeped in Iraqi nationalism and the most powerful militias overlap and interact extensively with the Iraqi state. Some Shia militia heads, for example, have held ministerial posts and tens of thousands of militia fighters have been integrated into the state security forces. There are multiple identities that comprise these groups. For example, Iraq's most powerful militia, the Badr Brigade, is a state-aligned militia force with strong ties to Iran and can function autonomously from the state and yet has also militarily cooperated with the US. Badr has fully integrated itself into the political system and its head, Hadi al-Ameri, has held ministerial posts.

At the same time, the dynamic nature of Iraq's Shia militia groups has helped preserve the resilience of the Iraqi society against external actors, particularly where these actors attempt to exploit instability for their own objectives. For example, there are multiple militia factions within the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) that include powerful, vehemently nationalistic Iraqi actors such as Muqtada al-Sadr's Peace Brigades. While this militia may refuse to submit to the federal government, it also opposes Iranian interference in Iraqi affairs and espouses a nationalistic discourse.

Further, the Shia religious establishment plays a far-reaching role that strengthens the resilience of society. In addition to the moderating role played by Grand Ayatollah Sistani, there are state-aligned militias that are managed by the holy shrines

(which are controlled by Sistani) and that include the Imam Ali Brigade, Ali al-Akhbar Brigade and Abbas Division. Sistani and the shrines have a large following within the PMF and command respect across the ethnic and religious spectrum. Similarly, there are significant state-aligned Sunni tribal forces that have fought alongside the Iraqi security forces in northern Iraq in the campaign to liberate predominantly Arab Sunni towns and cities from ISIS.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, tribal forces, organized into the so-called 'Awakening Movement', were pivotal to turning the tide against Al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2007 and 2008, even helping establish the infrastructure that would allow for reconstruction and stable local governance, in turn providing the local Arab Sunni population with a greater stake in the Iraqi state.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. Moving forward

The Iraqi state holds sovereign status and international recognition, remaining the only actor capable of constructing and shaping the country's constitutional and legal system. The Iraqi state must be ready to take the place of militant groups that are positioning themselves as alternatives to the government. This will require an organized and effective security force, the capacity to deliver basic services and revive the country's economy. At the bottom-up level, there are dynamics that have functioned as drivers of resilience, ensuring the state and society do not succumb to militant groups, even helping to contain civil conflict. At the top-down level, reformist politicians who do not want Iraq to succumb to corruption and the lack of accountability have resisted the efforts of malevolent actors to fully supplant and fleece the state of its resources.

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27. Mat Wolf, "The Tribe That Won't Stop Killing ISIS", in *Daily Beast*, 10 December 2015, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-tribe-that-wont-stop-killing-isis>.

28. See Michael E. Silverman, *Awakening Victory. How Iraqi Tribes and American Troops Reclaimed Al Anbar and Defeated Al Qaeda in Iraq*, Philadelphia and Newbury, Casemate, 2011.



For all that is said about factionalism, sectarian divisions and confrontations between Iraq's disparate communities, politics and power do not constitute a zero-sum game and there is enough history and cooperation between the various factions to be capitalized on. The Awakening Movement provides a precedent of how discontented and disenfranchised communities can be re-integrated into the state or, put another way, how grievances can be remedied by way of providing communities with a stake in the future of the country, as could a rehabilitation of Iraq's judiciary, pursuant to the goal of establishing a culture of accountability.

Rather than adopting prescriptive policy goals, there needs to be a better appreciation of the bottom-up communal dynamics that shape Iraqi society, and greater focus on civil society and the young for the purposes of stabilizing the country. While the rehabilitation of Iraq's institutions and its political system should continue, that does not mean policy-makers cannot factor into these analyses and recommendations the spoilers that impede progress and reform – including, among others, corrupt political and sectarian elites and their patronage networks.

State fragility in the region and the regionalized proxy war in Syria have additionally exacerbated Iraq's challenges. Such is the overlap between the civil war in Syria and conflict in Iraq – whose competing factions and militants have extended their conflict into Syria – that it may be implausible to bring stability to Iraq without first stabilizing Syria, and vice versa. The challenge could, therefore, be a generational one, not only because conflict in Syria is unlikely to abate for the foreseeable future but because of the multitude of overlapping political, socio-economic and security challenges that Iraq currently faces.

Despite being taken to the brink on multiple occasions, with some even declaring that Iraq is no more, the Iraqi state and society have, against all odds, survived and repeatedly bounced back. This has as much to do with Iraq's contemporary history as with the role of its institutions, the strength of the Iraqi iden-

tity and the role of sub-national actors like civil society and the religious institutions, along with tribes and indeed even armed groups.

With support from international actors, Iraq must reconstruct a national consensus and a framework capable of addressing issues of power-sharing. This will help achieve a grand bargain between Iraq's factions and communities that can end the competing political orders in post-2003 Iraq that have engulfed both state and society. This requires building on the history of cooperation and goodwill between factions, premised on the basis that they have more that unites them than divides them and, at the least, that there is enough of Iraq to go around for all.

Iraq does not have so much of a sectarian problem as of a governance problem; its ruling Shia political class lacks both vision and capacity to move the country forward. These failures of the Baghdad government and the uncertainty of Iraq's future have even led Iraq's Arab Sunnis - once vehemently opposed to any weakening of the central government - to call for their own autonomous region akin to Kurdistan, one that allows them to manage their own security and resources within a federal Iraq. Policy-makers in Iraq and internationally must afford greater appreciation to communal dynamics and drivers in Iraq, actors that from the bottom-up can influence and affect public policy and hold politicians and decision-makers to account. In the interim, a decentralized Iraq that affords greater powers to communities that perceive the government in Baghdad as sectarian, and that feel marginalized and disenfranchised, could help enable sufficient breathing room to allow the state and society to undergo a process of reconciliation.

The European Union can adopt a dual-track policy aimed at strengthening local sub-state governance (through, for example, focusing on transitional justice, reconciliation and by devolving reconstruction and development funds) while also strengthening institutions at the federal level. Supporting decentralization does not necessarily conflict with keeping Iraq's

territorial boundaries intact.<sup>29</sup> Treating civil society actors, tribes and religious institutions that have far-reaching influence and support as actors that could undermine the authority of the state is, therefore, counter-productive. It is after all these local actors that are engaged in the day-to-day business of meeting the humanitarian needs of local communities and displaced populations, as well as holding the government and political class to account by way of popular demonstrations.

The international community can encourage Iraqi decision-makers to continue Iraq's reform programme, even if this may yield limited results in the short term. Fundamentally, engagement with Iraq's government should centre on greater investment in the new generation of Iraqis: according to studies, Iraq allocated only 5.7 percent of its government expenditure to education in the 2015-16 school year, positioning the country on the bottom rank among Middle Eastern states. According to the report, only half of Iraq's internally displaced children have access to school and the cost to Iraq's economy of having so many children out of school is roughly one billion dollars in unrealised potential wages.<sup>30</sup>

Armed groups should not be treated, in their entirety, as malevolent. Policy-makers may have to make some hard decisions that require engaging, potentially even supporting, groups that in the past have been complicit in human rights abuses. Yet these groups may have emerged from the ruins of violence and disorder as important socio-cultural actors that have edged closer toward accepting international norms and basic human rights.

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29. Of course, Kurdistan remains the exception – and may secede from Iraq – but there is little by way of empirical evidence to support the idea that this would precipitate the end of the Iraqi state, and there is immense resistance to both additional autonomous regions and secessionist movements within Iraq and the region.

30. UNICEF and Government of Iraq, *The Cost and Benefits of Education in Iraq*, 21 May 2017, [http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=7344](http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=7344). See also Peter Hawkins, "Iraq Must Invest in Education to Secure Its Future", in *Al Jazeera*, 27 May 2017, <http://aje.io/xp2l>.

These could be leveraged as a result of their grass-roots influence and willingness to resist malevolent actors that are attempting to shape the future of the state and society. Shifting focus and resources to local, communal actors and militias that may have or have already a mutually reinforcing relationship with the state would rejuvenate governance in Iraq, while at the same time strengthening the social contract between the state and society.

## 5

# A RESILIENCE APPROACH TO A FAILED ACCESSION STATE: THE CASE OF TURKEY

SINAN ÜLGEN

## 1. The Turkish context

The 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS) for Foreign and Security Policy, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe”, identifies building “state and societal resilience to our East and South” as a central element of the EU’s new foreign policy vision.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will analyse the implications of this concept in the case of Turkey, seeking to identify both the challenges and potentially positive drivers for state and societal resilience in the country, while reflecting on the best means for the EU to engage Turkey in line with the objectives identified in the EUGS.

The application of the concept of “resilience” to Turkey requires a novel and creative frame of analysis. In contrast to all the other countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Turkey is an EU accession country. In other words, Turkey remains the subject of the EU’s historically most successful political transformation strategy, called enlargement. Yet, in contrast to all previous candidates, the accession methodology is failing with Turkey. Initiated in 2005, membership talks have now stalled with little prospect of revitalization in the foreseeable future. Therefore, the first significant challenge of this analysis will be to realistically assess the implications of an approach focused on building “resilience” in relation to a country where the arguably stronger and more effective transformative project of accession has visibly failed.

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1. European Union External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/339>.

A reason for the failure of the accession dynamic has been the regression in democratic standards witnessed in Turkey since the beginning of this decade. The Commission's yearly Progress Reports provide a stark reading in that respect.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Defining state-centric resilience: De-democratization and weakening of institutions**

Turkey's path to democracy has been characterized by a gradual, non-linear and difficult progress. What has characterized Turkey's culture of democracy has been an absence of consensus among the political elite on the rules of democracy and a genuine commitment to inclusive institutions to uphold these rules. Turkey's process of democratization has witnessed many episodes of breakdowns, transitions, crises and restorations. The frailty of democratic norms may be related to the top-down decision by state elites with aspirations to adopt European norms and standards to introduce democracy instead of its being the outcome of a long-term struggle by social groups that came to have increasing political efficacy and asked for a more open regime. But overall the Turkish body politic has been unable to generate a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of democratic politics. Democracy in Turkey has tended to be seen as a zero-sum game to control the state. Despite a long experience with the basic structures of democracy like regular elections, political players have been unwilling to move beyond this shallow interpretation of the democratic process. Electoral wins were seen as a sufficient justification to implement majority rule in a way that has increasingly emasculated the principle of checks and balances and the protection of minority viewpoints. This winner-takes-all approach to political life is now set to be consolidated, with a shift to a new constitutional setup that concentrates power at the top in an

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2. See, for instance, European Commission, *Turkey 2016 Report Accompanying the 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. Commission Staff Working Document (SWD/2016/366)*, 9 September 2016, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52016SCO366>.

extreme version of a presidential system that is devoid of any genuine checks and balances.

The EU has been a powerful external actor stimulating internal reform in Turkey as long as the goal of accession retained its credibility. A virtual cycle of domestic reforms fuelled by aspirations for EU membership created this uniquely effective environment for a strengthening of Turkish democracy. As the EU's credibility started to weaken – with political barriers imposed by some EU leaders, the decision by former French president Nicolas Sarkozy to unilaterally suspend selected pillars of the negotiations, and the continuing difficulties created by the ongoing division of Cyprus – this pro-democracy dynamic lost its effectiveness. Since the 2011 elections, with the AKP securing yet another landslide victory, and particularly since the Gezi protests of 2013 and the botched coup attempt of July 2016, the degradation in democratic norms has gathered pace. Today, Turkey is mostly considered an illiberal democracy, as evidenced by a set of international indices that regularly compare governments' democratic performance.

*Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index.* The index measures 167 countries scored on a scale of 0 to 10 based on 60 indicators. Scores of 0–4 indicate an authoritarian regime, 4–6 a hybrid regime, 6–8 a flawed democracy and 8–10 a full democracy.

Date	Score
2010	5.73
2011	5.73
2012	5.76
2013	5.63
2014	5.12
2015	5.12
2016	5.04

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), *Democracy Index 2016*, <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>.

*Freedom in the World Index.* *Freedom in the World* is Freedom House's flagship annual report, assessing the condition of political rights and civil liberties around the world. It is composed of numerical ratings and supporting descriptive texts for 195 countries and 14 territories.

Date	Status	Freedom rating*	Civil liberties*	Political rights*
2010	Partly free	3	3	3
2011	Partly free	3	3	3
2012	Partly free	3	3	3
2013	Partly free	3.5	4	3
2014	Partly free	3.5	4	3
2015	Partly free	3.5	4	3
2016	Partly free	3.5	3	4
2017	Partly free	4.5	4	5

Source: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2017*, <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world>.

Note: \* rating: 1 = most free, 7 = least free.

*Freedom of the Press Index.* *Freedom of the Press*, an annual report on media independence around the world, assesses the degree of print, broadcast and digital media freedom in 199 countries and territories.

Date	Status	Score*	Legal environment**	Political environment***	Economic environment**
2010	Partly free	51	22	18	11
2011	Partly free	54	22	21	11
2012	Partly free	55	22	22	11
2013	Partly free	56	21	24	11
2014	Not free	62	23	26	13
2015	Not free	65	24	27	14
2016	Not free	71	26	30	15
2017	Not free	76	27	33	16

Source: Reporters Without Borders, *Freedom of the Press: Turkey Profile*, <https://freedomhouse.org/node/49602>.

Notes: \* score: 0 = best, 100 = worst; \*\* score: 0 = best, 30 = worst; \*\*\* score: 0 = best, 40 = worst.



*World Bank Voice and Accountability Index.* The index reflects perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association and the free media.

Date	Estimate*	Rank**
2010	-0.08	44.55
2011	-0.14	44.13
2012	-0.21	41.78
2013	-0.25	40.85
2014	-0.34	36.45
2015	-0.37	34.98
2016	-0.63	29.56

Source: World Bank, *Worldwide Governance and Indicators*, <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#reports>.

Notes: \* Estimate of governance ranges from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance. \*\* Percentile rank among all countries ranges from 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest).

A key dynamic in this respect has been the weakening of institutions. Turkey's institutions have increasingly become unbalanced and skewed in favour of state power, at the expense of citizens' rights and meritocracy, executive limitations, transparency and accountability. The AKP's uninterrupted rule of fifteen years, and its efforts to be the sole influencer in all spheres, have amplified Turkey's institutional challenges.<sup>3</sup> Its parliamentary majority has enabled the passing of bills and constitutional reforms, bypassing proper scrutiny by parliamentarians, let alone public consultation or wider debate. Of particular concern is the lack of independence and impartiality of the country's judiciary combined with a political power structure that is excessively dominated by the executive branch. The infiltration of

3. Izak Atiyas, "Economic Institutions and Institutional Change in Turkey during the Neoliberal Era", in *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 47, No. 14 (Fall 2012), p. 57-81. See also Işık Özel, "Reverting Structural Reforms in Turkey: Towards an Illiberal Economic Governance?", in Senem Aydın-Düzgüt et al., *Global Turkey in Europe III. Democracy, Trade, and the Kurdish Question in Turkey-EU Relations*, Roma, Nuova Cultura, 2015, p. 241-250 (IAI Research Papers 19), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/4263>.

Turkey's state institutions – and particularly law enforcement and the judiciary – by the Gülen network, an Islamic transnational religious and social movement led by the US-based cleric Fethullah Gülen who is also widely believed to be behind the failed July 2016 coup in Turkey, has certainly undermined the institutional resilience of the country. This infiltration, it has to be said, was carried out with the full backing of the ruling party for a long number of years. Not surprisingly, the purge of the state institutions of their Gülenist members, commenced in the wake of the botched coup of July 2016 and carried out under emergency rule, has compounded the human resources challenges of the Turkish public administration and weakened institutional capabilities.

The recently adopted constitutional changes following the April 2017 referendum are due to further erode the checks and balances in the political structure. The lack of a clear separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary is therefore heightening Turkey's risk of institutional disempowerment. A similar terminology can be used to describe the relationship between the central government and local authorities, where the Turkish body politic has been resistant to reforms to delegate more power to local leadership and insistent on maintaining the heavily centralized and increasingly politicized model of state governance.

In view of the degradation of democratic standards evidenced by these different studies, the concept of “building resilience” in the specific context of Turkey can be defined as improving the capacity of Turkish institutions and Turkish society to withstand and eventually seek to roll back a sustained challenge to democratic norms in the country.

The barriers to improvements in state and societal resilience in Turkey are arguably quite considerable. The extreme centralization of power is inimical to designs for the establishment of a genuinely democratic system recognizing the role of constitutional and institutional checks and balances. The overriding internal security challenges illustrated by the Gülen network's

successful drive for state capture is also a real impediment for a transition to a more balanced, inclusive and accountable framework of governance.

However, the implementation of any pro-resilience reform agenda, in a country where the centralization of power is a key trend, will inevitably depend on the willingness of these exact actors to embrace such an agenda. In other words, while it is impossible to effect change in Turkey without engaging the central government and the political leadership, it is precisely the actions/ambitions of these actors that are constraining resilience.

### **3. Defining socio-economic resilience: Slowing growth and rising disparities**

From the perspective of Turkish society, the concept of “resilience” also has a very important socio-economic dimension. Economically, Turkey is categorized as a high-middle-income country by the World Bank. This means that Turkey has by and large been successful in fighting poverty and elevating the average wellbeing of its citizens. According to the World Bank, the poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines<sup>4</sup> as a percentage of the total population dropped from 30 percent in 2002 to 1.4 percent in 2014. To put it in perspective in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), this ratio was 25 percent for Egypt and 15.5 percent for Tunisia in 2010.<sup>5</sup>

In light of the above, the challenge from the standpoint of economic resilience is twofold. Firstly, the growth of economic affluence and convergence of per capita incomes with more developed nations has come to an end. Although the national

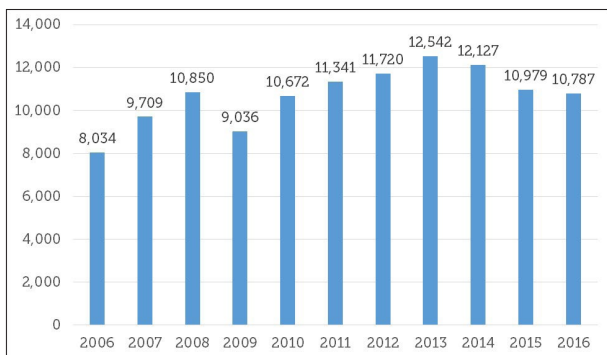
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4. National poverty lines reflect local perceptions of the level and composition of consumption or income needed to be non-poor. See World Bank Data, *Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population): Turkey*, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=TR>.

5. Latest available data.

economy is still growing at robust levels compared to European economies at a yearly average of 3 percent, the growth of personal incomes has stagnated. The per capita income in 2016 at 10,807 dollars was almost the same as the per capita income almost a decade ago in 2008.

**Figure 1 | Turkey per capita incomes, 2006-2016 (in dollars)**



Source: World Bank Data, *GDP per capita (current US\$)*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=TR>.

**Table 1 | Turkey's Gini coefficient, 2006-2016**

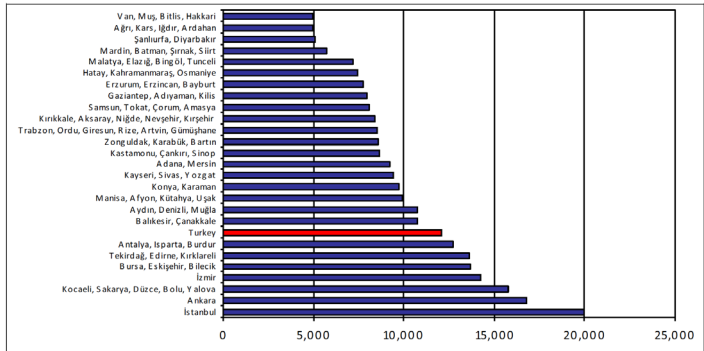
Year	Gini coefficient
2006	0.403
2007	0.387
2008	0.386
2009	0.394
2010	0.380
2011	0.383
2012	0.382
2013	0.382
2014	0.379
2015	0.386
2016	0.396

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), *Gini coefficient and S80/S20 ratio by household disposable income, 2006-2016*, [http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreIstatistikTablo.do?istab\\_id=2354](http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreIstatistikTablo.do?istab_id=2354).

Secondly, Turkey has been less successful in reducing income disparities. The Gini coefficient is a widely used measure of overall income inequality.<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly, public policies have visibly failed to address income inequality in Turkey, with the Gini coefficient in 2015 being the same as in 2008. Corresponding Gini figures for MENA countries, for instance, were estimated by the World Bank as 0.30 for Egypt in 2008 and 0.35 for Tunisia in 2010. The enduring income discrepancy in Turkey has its roots in regional disparities. Turkey has long suffered from an inequitable regional development dynamic, with the country's metropolitan Western regions (Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir) leading economic activity.

**Figure 2 | Regional gross domestic product, 2014 (in dollars)**



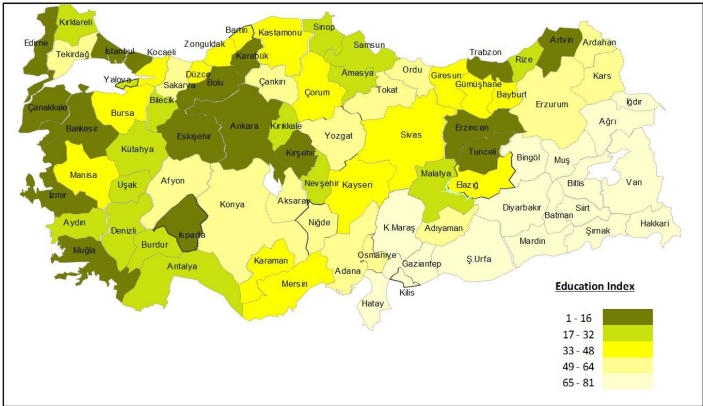
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), *Gross Domestic Product Per Capita, Statistical Regions Level 2, 2004-2014*, [http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PrelstatistikTablo.do?istab\\_id=2523](http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PrelstatistikTablo.do?istab_id=2523).

Despite long-term public policies designed to reduce regional disparities, the persistence of this gap points to more structural deficiencies in terms of human resources and educational out-

6. The Gini coefficient is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 corresponds to perfect equality and 1 to total inequality.

comes. EDAM’s work on regional competitiveness indicators illustrates these regional disparities.<sup>7</sup> The “Regional Human Capital Index” is a proxy calculated on the basis of regional figures for schooling and quantitative figures of academic standards.

**Figure 3 | Regional Human Capital Index rankings**

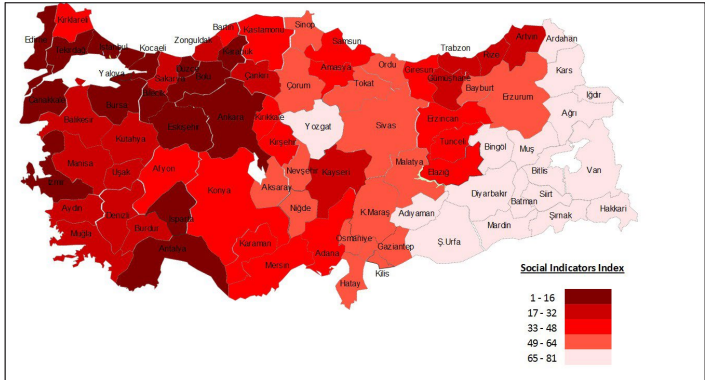


Source: EDAM and Deloitte, *A Competitiveness Index for Turkish Regions*, cit.

Similarly, the “Regional Social Capital Index” is a proxy calculated on the basis of regional indicators of social engagement such as number of civil society organizations per head and health environment, as well as human capital indicators such as women’s schooling rates and the literacy rate.

Therefore the threat to social resilience in Turkey originates from the wide disparities in regional incomes that are themselves a by-product of the equally wide disparities in educational achievements and employable skills.

7. Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) and Deloitte, *A Competitiveness Index for Turkish Regions. Executive Summary*, March 2009, <http://edam.org.tr/?p=2682>.

**Figure 4 | Regional Social Capital Index rankings**

Source: EDAM and Deloitte, *A Competitiveness Index for Turkish Regions*, cit.

## 4. Positive contributions to resilience

Politically, despite being under pressure, Turkish society retains important elements of resilience. This is the end result of a flawed and yet very real experience with multi-party democracy for over seven decades. Firstly there has been an anchoring of a shallow but real set of democratic norms. All political actors, for instance, established a common front to resist the attempted military coup of July 2016. Today, despite having a chequered history of military intervention in democratic life, the Turkish body politic as well as society is averse to any military role in politics. Secondly, not only opposition political parties but also civic movements have in recent years improved their capacity to organize peaceful resistance movements. The Gezi protests of 2013 are the most vivid example of the vibrancy and pluralism of civil-society-led peaceful dissent. The “No” campaign during the constitutional referendum – which was managed, under heavy government pressure, by a multitude of independent actors including political parties (the main opposition CHP and

the pro-Kurdish HDP) but also civil society movements like *Demokratik İtiraz Hareketi* (Democratic Dissent Movement) – is another indication of these remaining sources of societal resilience. Finally, the “Justice March” led by the CHP against the politicization of the judiciary, which after a 450 km walk from Ankara to Istanbul was able to orchestrate a rally with over 1 million participants, is yet another illustration of this potential for grassroots activism.

## 4.1 Society

*The Turkish business community and its umbrella organizations* (primarily the Turkish Industry and Business Association, TÜSİAD and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, TOBB) remain key societal actors in terms of resilience. The Turkish economy is quite open with the total of imports and exports reaching 40 percent of national income. It is also a diversified economy with growing but still relatively low levels of state control. The combination of these features has created a business class, independent of the government, that has acted as a counterweight in policy making. Their role has not been exclusively limited to the economic field. TÜSİAD for instance has been in the vanguard of this trend with its agenda and publications focused also on rule of law, good governance and structural reforms.<sup>8</sup> Although the weight of these institutions in overall policy shaping has been diminishing due to the growing centralization of power, they remain influential and active members of the civil society universe in Turkey. Also, the ability of these business associations to engage the government should improve at a time when Turkey’s growth performance is expected to come under increased strain driven by changes in the global and regional context.

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8. Some examples include a study on judicial reform entitled “Yargı Hizmetlerinde Kalite: Yargı Hizmetlerinde Kalite Talebi ve Kalite Unsurları”, published in December 2014, and a policy paper on reforming the education system entitled “PISA 2012 Değerlendirmesi: Türkiye için Veriye Dayalı Eğitim Reformu Önerileri”, published in April 2014.



*Professional bodies representing liberal professions* like the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (*Türkiye Barolar Birliği*, TBB) and the Turkish Medical Association (*Türk Tabipleri Birliği*, TTB) have been vocal entities in the public debate on democratic rights. The size of their membership and their widespread local networks have enabled these organisations to remain relevant actors at the national as well as the local levels of policy making. In addition, unlike many other civil society organizations that have been set up as associations or foundations, these professional bodies have a founding legal act that gives them added prestige and credibility in their public endeavours.

## 4.2 State

Although Turkey has a highly centralized state structure, it also has close to 3,000 *local authorities* ranging from metropolitan municipalities like Istanbul and Izmir to district-level municipalities. In contrast to the central government, where since 2002 a single party has been at the helm, the power distribution at the level of local government is more diverse. According to results of the 2014 local elections, the ruling AKP won municipal elections in 18 out of Turkey's 30 metropolitan municipalities. This means that Turkish opposition parties presently govern twelve metropolitan municipalities. This set includes large cities like Izmir, Edirne, Adana and Diyarbakir. Depending on the leadership skills of the mayors, some of these local governments have emerged as important hubs of resilience. Izmir, for instance, is a case in point. With a well-managed budget and a strong backing by the local population, this Aegean city has launched a range of sustainable initiatives in areas like culture, women's empowerment and smart cities that have had an influence over other local governments, some of which have adopted similar initiatives.

*Opposition parties* are to be considered as another pillar of political resilience. For a long time now, Turkey's parliamentary opposition has been rightly branded as ineffective in the political landscape. After a series of electoral losses, however, the opposition has gradually improved its strategy and operational

capabilities. Most recently, the main opposition party was able to orchestrate an ambitious example of civic activism with CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu vanguarding the 450 km march from Ankara to Istanbul that culminated in a 1 million strong rally. Even more importantly, the political opposition has become more adept at building a common platform to challenge the ruling AKP government, particularly on issues like the rule of law and the quest for justice.<sup>9</sup>

## **5. Operationalizing resilience: Modernizing the EU-Turkey Customs Union**

Once the concept of “building resilience” has been defined for the specific case of Turkey, the next question relates to the operationalization of this concept. What EU-led policy instruments can be used to achieve these objectives in Turkey?

The answer will need to be contextualized for the Turkish case, which presents a unique set of challenges. Turkey is a large country with a population nearing 80 million. No external actor can directly target Turkish society as the object of its set of engagement strategies and hope to create a meaningful impact. This is not just a consequence of the size of the country. The political culture is also inimical to such large-scale bottom-up engagement strategies. The imperial Ottoman heritage and the still omnipresent trauma of the dismantling of the empire in the nation’s consciousness have created a political culture deeply sceptical of foreign involvement. Turks remain suspicious of foreigners. Turkey’s republican history also demonstrates that change can be triggered by a more indirect approach built around a state-led reform agenda.

Yet at the same time, Turkey is a failed accession state and the frustrations as well as the acrimony generated by this hapless state of affairs will have implications for any other engagement

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9. Amberin Zaman, “No Time for Rest As Turkey’s Justice March Reaches Istanbul”, in *Al-Monitor*, 10 July 2017, <http://almon.co/2w08>.

strategy with Ankara. This means in practice that the instruments devised for the “resilience” approach will need to operate in a political space that is still formally defined by the framework of accession. Secondly, the receptiveness on the side of the Turkish government to any element of this “resilience” focused agenda is likely to be low. All the more so since the government is essentially responsible for the backsliding in democratic norms described in the previous sections, and is therefore largely identified as the major challenge to building state and societal resilience in the country. Finally, Turkey has a GDP of around 750 billion dollars and a government budget around 220 billion, meaning that the amount of EU financial assistance that can realistically be linked to the “resilience” strategy is going to be comparatively marginal and thus of constrained effectiveness in fostering compliance. The overall challenge for the implementation of the “resilience” strategy will therefore be the design of an engagement framework that can still deliver outcomes in this constrained political environment.

Despite the envisaged difficulty of engaging Ankara, there seems to be no other viable option for the resilience approach to succeed. Turkey is just too big and too populous for an exclusively non-government-centric engagement strategy to yield concrete benefits, at least at the desired scale. This does not mean that civil society should be excluded. On the contrary an inclusive approach is indispensable for any measure of success. It does however mean that the government cannot be excluded as the focal actor in the implementation of the strategy. In other words, the different programmes and actions that will eventually be defined as part of this new framework of engagement will continue to rely on the Turkish government and its agencies as the essential implementing body. The difficulty will be to create an incentive structure for Ankara to willingly partner with the EU in the implementation of the resilience programme.

The only realistic option, in this particular case, would be to build the resilience action plan as a component of the formal Turkey–EU agenda, which is broader than the accession track. In particular, with prospects of improving the rule of law and

introducing ambitious structural reforms, the soon-to-be-launched negotiations for the modernization of the customs union provide a timely and useful option for integrating the resilience approach in the Turkey-EU relationship.

The aim of this new set of negotiations will be to overhaul the existing customs union with a view to extending its scope of sectoral coverage by including service industries, agriculture and public procurement as well as modernizing the overall governance framework by designing a new dispute settlement mechanism and addressing deficiencies in trade policy convergence.<sup>10</sup> Viewed from the perspective of resilience, the renewed customs union can provide a strong foundation for the strengthening of the rule of law, at least in the policy areas that are to be covered by the new agreement. As opposed to the accession track where the enhancement of democratic norms and the rule of law is an explicit objective, the modernization of the customs union can have the upgrading of the rule of law as an implicit objective. In other words, the proper implementation of Turkey's commitments under the modernized customs union can indeed lead to improvements in the rule of law.

One key question in this context is whether Ankara can be incentivized to accept this regime of improved governance that will inevitably constrain discretionary rule in sensitive areas like public procurement practices or services deregulation. In the end, Ankara can eventually feel obliged to accept this proposition if the prospect of a failure of the customs union negotiations is perceived as a major threat for the growth prospects of the Turkish economy. In other words, Turkish policy makers may ultimately become resigned to accepting the terms of a renewed customs union incorporating changes in public procurement rules and an overhauled dispute settlement mech-

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10. European Commission, *Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Recommendation for a Council Decision authorising the opening of negotiations with Turkey on an Agreement on the extension of the scope of the bilateral preferential trade relationship and on the modernisation of the Customs Union*. Commission Staff Working Document (SWD/2016/475), 21 December 2016, <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/html/155238.htm>.

anism if they can be convinced that the overhauled customs union will help Turkey to overcome the peril of low growth.

Ultimately this challenge of sustaining growth, which has been a key factor driving the political popularity of the AKP leadership, may compel Turkish policy makers to review their approach to governance. In the long term, Turkey can only overcome this challenge if a more resilient framework of governance that enhances inclusiveness, accountability and the rule of law with full-fledged democratic constraints on the use of executive power can be established.



## 6 QATAR'S RESILIENCE STRATEGY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS

ABDULLAH BAABOOD

Although resilience remains a vague concept, it has become popular in the lexicon and discourse of international and regional organizations, complementing and further advancing the concept of sustainable development.<sup>1</sup> The 2016 European Union Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) has identified resilience as a core pillar of the EU's new strategy.<sup>2</sup> The EU speaks of resilience as "a broad concept encompassing all individuals and the whole of society" that features "democracy, trust in institutions and sustainable development, and the capacity to reform".<sup>3</sup> This chapter draws from this definition of resilience to inquire about the case of Qatar, assessing resilience strategies at the state and the societal level, and making suggestions for where the EU could offer support in line with its objectives outlined in the EUGS.

Given the turbulent nature of Middle Eastern politics, it is not surprising that regional countries pursue self-surviving strategies trying to build their own resilience against rising political,

1. Charles Perrings, "Resilience and Sustainable Development", in *Environment and Development Economics*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (2006), p. 417-427; see also United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), *Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2015, [http://www.unisdr.org/files/46052\\_disasterriskreductioninthe2030agend.pdf](http://www.unisdr.org/files/46052_disasterriskreductioninthe2030agend.pdf).
2. European Union External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/339>.
3. European Commission, *A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action* (JOIN/2017/21), 7 June 2017, p. 3, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52017JC0021>.

economic and social challenges and threats. Qatar is no exception and the recent blockade against it by the Arab Quartet (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt) is a vivid example of its perceived vulnerabilities as well as a test of its resilience.

Qatar is a small country located in Southwest Asia, 11,437 sq. km in area, making it only about a third of the size of Belgium. It occupies the small Qatar Peninsula on the north-eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, with a population of 2.7 millions, of whom less than 10 percent are nationals. Qatar is also geographically located between two large neighbours: Iran, with which Qatar shares the world's largest gas field (North Field, also known as the North Dome or South Pars, in the Persian Gulf), and Saudi Arabia, with which it has its sole land border, to the south. The rest of its territory is surrounded by Gulf waters. Its small size in terms of territory and population, and its geographical location between two large competing and antagonistic regional powers, creates a chronic vulnerability which leads Qatar's leadership to endlessly hedge its bets and play a careful balancing act in order to safeguard the sustainability of the state and the survival of the dynasty in power.

The political system of Qatar is an absolute monarchy ruled by the al-Thani family since the 1800s. The Emir as head of state wields full authority with little room for popular or institutional input. Qatar is evolving from a traditional society into a modern welfare state and, following a constitutional referendum in 2003, it aims to be a constitutional monarchy, although progress in this area has been delayed.

Once one of the poorest Gulf states, Qatar has been transformed into one of the richest countries in the region. Backed by the world's third-largest natural gas and oil reserves, Qatar is now a high-income economy, enjoying the highest per capita income in the world (129,112 dollars in 2017)<sup>4</sup> and is classified by

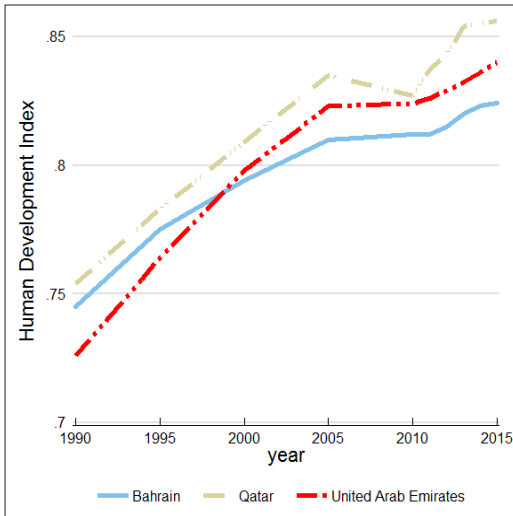
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4. Statistics Times, *List of Countries by Projected GDP per capita 2017* (based on IMF World Economic Outlook Database, April 2017), 7 June 2017, <http://statisticstimes.com/economy/countries-by-projected-gdp-capita.php>.



the United Nations as the most advanced Arab state in terms of human development. According to the UN Human Development Report 2016,<sup>5</sup> Qatar has retained its top position, a distinction it has held for at least the past three years (Figure 1).

**Figure 1 | HDI trends for Qatar, Bahrain and United Arab Emirates, 1990–2015**



Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2016. Human Development for Everyone. Briefing Note for Countries on the 2016 Human Development Report. Qatar*, February 2017, p. 4, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/QAT.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/QAT.pdf).

Until 1995, when Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani deposed his father, Emir Khalifa, in a bloodless coup, Qatar was under the influence of its much larger neighbour Saudi Arabia. To gain domestic legitimacy, Sheikh Hamad ushered in wide-sweeping political, economic, social and media reforms, and in mid-2013

5. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2016. Human Development for Everyone*, March 2017, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>.

he transferred power to his 33-year-old son, the current Emir Tamim bin Hamad – a rare peaceful abdication in the history of Arab Gulf states.

Tamim followed his father's policy and set the country on a development path with unprecedented financial investment, improving the domestic welfare of Qataris, including establishing advanced healthcare and education systems and expanding the country's infrastructure in anticipation of Doha's hosting of the 2022 World Cup (Table 1).

**Table 1 | Qatar's HDI trends based on consistent time series data**

	<b>Life expectancy at birth</b>	<b>Expected years of schooling</b>	<b>Mean years of schooling</b>	<b>GNI per capita (2011 PPP\$)</b>	<b>HDI value</b>
1990	74.9	11.8	5.4	75,260	0.754
1995	75.6	13.1	5.9	80,230	0.783
2000	76.2	12.6	7.9	109,653	0.809
2005	76.6	13.7	8.7	103,643	0.835
2010	77.4	12.4	8.9	116,233	0.827
2011	77.6	13.4	8.6	123,636	0.837
2012	77.8	13.4	9.1	124,506	0.843
2013	78.0	13.4	9.8	126,639	0.854
2014	78.2	13.4	9.8	129,077	0.855
2015	78.3	13.4	9.8	129,916	0.856

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2016. Human Development for Everyone. Briefing Note for Countries on the 2016 Human Development Report. Qatar*, cit., p. 3.

Using income from its large gas reserves to bankroll its ambitious plans, Qatar has carved out a significant regional and global profile in the past decade; and for its size, it has been playing a disproportionate leadership role, with significant power in the Arab world.

Qatar's state-society relations are largely based on an unwritten agreement of political acquiescence in exchange for eco-

conomic benefits.<sup>6</sup> The distributive welfare state is challenged when income from fossil fuel exports is no longer sufficient to fulfil the bargain. Affected by the recent fall in oil prices, Qatar has been attempting economic diversification albeit at a slow pace and with mixed results.<sup>7</sup> Financial surplus, such as that held in the Qatar Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF), can help to cushion against harmful effects of economic slowdown, but the need for economic diversification remains critical for Qatar.

Qatar's economic development necessities foreign labour and the large number of immigrants causes social and cultural friction and resentment. While the state and society tend to work together to overcome the challenge of immigration, the new "Kafala" labour law has come under international criticism for failing to ensure fair treatment of the foreign workers.<sup>8</sup>

The country also faces food security challenges, as most of the food is imported, including from neighbouring countries. The recent economic boycott and closure of the Qatari-Saudi border tested the Qatari government's ability to provide for food. Qatar was able to diversify its import sources to overcome the boycott and is trying to increase its food storage and distribution facilities as well as building its own food production capacity.<sup>9</sup> The state and the private sector have been collaborating on enhancing the country's resilience in this respect.<sup>10</sup>

6. Justin Gengler, "The Political Economy of Sectarianism in the Gulf", in *Carnegie Papers*, August 2016, <http://ceip.org/2bz4Q5S>.
7. International Monetary Fund (IMF), "Economic Diversification in Oil-Exporting Arab Countries", in *IMF Policy Papers*, 29 April 2016, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2016/12/31/Economic-Diversification-in-Oil-Exporting-Arab-Countries-PP5038>.
8. "Critics Sceptical of New Law for Foreign Workers in Qatar", in *The Arab Weekly*, No. 86 (18 December 2016), p. 10, <http://www.thearabweekly.com/article/7387/>.
9. "Qatar Farms on Course to Beat Blockade", in *Qatar Tribune*, 21 October 2017, <http://www.qatar-tribune.com/news-details/id/91786>.
10. "Qatar's Private Sector Helps Overcome Blockade: Chamber", in *Gulf Times*, 9 July 2017, <http://www.gulf-times.com/story/555988>.

It is apparent that Qatar faces a multitude of challenges and threats emanating from its vulnerability as a small state with an unsustainable economic structure largely reliant on hydrocarbons, as well as other related socio-economic challenges. Qatar, however, has been devising plans and strategies to face such challenges and threats by building its own resilience at both the state and the societal level.

## 1. Existential threats

Qatar's small size and geography, and especially its location between two large antagonistic neighbours – Iran and Saudi Arabia, locked in a zero-sum competitive struggle to dominate the region – stand out as the most challenging threats to state security. Historically Saudi Arabia has tried to bring Qatar under its wing.<sup>11</sup> The recent Gulf crisis and the harsh measures that Saudi Arabia along with its Quartet allies have taken against Qatar clearly demonstrate the point.

On the other hand, Qatar shares its main gas field with Iran; and while it also feels the weight of Iran with its dominating attitude towards the smaller Arab Gulf States, Qatar is sensitive towards taking measures that could antagonize Iran and hinder cooperation in the shared gas endeavour.<sup>12</sup> Qatar thus has had to walk a tightrope between these two regional powers, trying to balance them off against each other, while protecting itself from regional turmoil: the spread of regional conflicts, radicalization and international terrorism that could have negative spillover effects on Qatar's security and stability.<sup>13</sup>

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11. Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "How Saudi Arabia and Qatar Became Friends Again", in *Foreign Policy*, 21 July 2011, <https://wp.me/p4Os1y-oXl>.
  12. Giorgio Cafiero, "Qatar's Precarious Position between Saudi Arabia, Iran", in *Al-Monitor*, 4 February 2016, <http://almon.co/2lcb>.
  13. Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "Internal and External Security in the Arab Gulf States", in *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Summer 2009), p. 39-58, <http://www.mepc.org/node/988>.

## 1.1 Protecting the small state

For decades, the Middle East has witnessed competition in the regional balance of power between a number of states including Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran. To avoid being part of this competition, Qatar decided to strengthen its diplomatic relationship with multiple regional and international actors, thereby avoiding collateral damage from neighbouring conflicts.<sup>14</sup> Qatar has therefore followed an active foreign policy, a goal helped in part by the creation of the pan-Arab satellite news network Al Jazeera, undertaking mediation efforts in some of the regional conflicts and expressing support for the popular protests of the Arab Spring.

Qatar has also embarked on a number of measures which include mediation, branding and image building, cultural and sports diplomacy, defence agreements (including by granting foreign bases to international and regional powers) – and even engaging in military interventions. Each of these measures is examined below.

## 1.2 Mediation and branding as a form of state resilience in Qatar

Branding and advertising the role of Qatar as a mediator is a direct method of exercising soft power. According to Joseph Nye, “soft power” or “co-optive power” is

the ability of a country to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own. This power tends to arise from such resources as cultural and ideological attraction as well as rules and institutions of internal regimes.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Mehran Kamrava, “Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy”, in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (Autumn 2011), p. 540.

15. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Soft Power”, in *Foreign Policy*, No. 80 (Autumn 1990), p. 168, [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/joseph\\_nye\\_soft\\_power\\_journal.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/joseph_nye_soft_power_journal.pdf).

There are two main ways in which Qatar exercises co-optive power: branding and advertising. The former is seen on a political level and the latter on a more cultural or societal level.

Branding Qatar's image on a political level occurs through Qatar's multiple mediation efforts. The year 2008 was a successful year for Qatar's role as a mediator, but more importantly, for placing the small state of Qatar on the map as a prudent and strategic political player. Qatar's conflict resolution skills were put in action for two key conflicts that year, one in Sudan and the other in Lebanon. In Sudan, Qatar presented itself as a unique political player. It was the first time that an Arab state had put considerable resources into learning and understanding the on-the-ground reality of the conflict in Darfur. In addition, Qatar hosted negotiations in Doha, which resulted in an agreement of goodwill and a peaceful settlement in 2011 between the Sudanese government and Darfur's Justice and Equality Movement.<sup>16</sup> Political tensions in Lebanon would grant Qatar another mediation opening, which the country made full use of by successfully brokering the Doha Agreement that ended 18 months of deadlock among Lebanese political factions in May 2008.<sup>17</sup> Qatar was able to achieve this through multiple means such as hosting the negotiations in Doha and by having Qatari leaders personally providing a diplomatic, friendly and strategic platform for negotiations. By getting involved in these two conflicts, Qatar placed itself alongside larger countries with a history of negotiation in the region, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Qatar has successfully presented itself regionally and globally as an honest broker, a goodwill ambassador and a diplomatic player. The image that Qatar was able to achieve has given it a recognized status within the international community as a country that promotes peace and stability. As such it has occasionally been called upon by global powers to help in resolving other conflicts such as those in Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine

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16. Mehran Kamrava, "Mediation and Qatari Foreign Policy", cit., p. 546.

17. Ibid.

and Yemen, thereby building goodwill, diplomatic relationships and alliances that add a further dimension to its security and the resilience of the state.

### 1.3 Cultural and sports diplomacy

In addition to branding Qatar's image through political mediation, Qatar has sought to boost its image with the international community through cultural and sports diplomacy. Qatar has invested billions of dollars to establish cutting-edge branches of leading global educational institutions and to reform the existing ones. Qatar has also been very active on the cultural scene through its Cultural Village (Katara) and the creation of a number of world-class museums.

The construction of Qatar's image has gone through a long process of development that started in 1995 with the leadership of Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa al-Thani and continues until today.<sup>18</sup> One of the key factors in changing the international perception of Qatar is the creation of the Al Jazeera Channel. Its emergence reveals Qatar's political strategy towards regional and international events. Though it has received criticism and incited controversies for its intense coverage of the Arab Spring due to its focus on some countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria while overlooking others like Bahrain, Al Jazeera has come to be considered as a major mouthpiece of the Arab Spring. Before Al Jazeera, Qatar and its politics were less known. In addition to the establishment of Al Jazeera, Sheikh Hamad has brought economic and political reforms to Qatar, including holding municipal elections in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. Qatar has moved to re-brand itself through initiatives like sporting projects and winning the bid to host the FIFA World Cup games in 2022.

In the sports scene, Table 2 below demonstrates the number of international sporting events that Qatar has hosted, tried bidding for, or is hosting in the future. Sports are the easiest

18. "Qatar: A Tiny Country Asserts Powerful Influence", in *CBS 60 Minutes*, 4 June 2012, [http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560\\_162-57358891](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-57358891).

and friendliest way to bring nation states together. In addition, sports are a tool for exercising a form of soft power. By hosting large international events on its territory, Qatar is able to show off its hospitable culture and financial capabilities. This puts the country in a positive light in front of its own people and the international community.

**Table 2 | International sporting events in Qatar**

**Past events**

- 1988 Asian Football Cup
- 1995 FIFA U-20 World Cup
- 1999 Handball World Junior C'ships
- 2004 Asian Handball C'ships
- 2004 ITTF World Team T.Tennis C'ships
- 2005 Asian Basketball C'ships
- 2005 World Weightlifting C'ships
- 2005 West Asian Games
- 2006 Asian Sailing C'ships
- 2006 Asian Games
- 2008 Asian Indoor Athletics C'ships
- 2008 Asian Youth Wrestling C'ships
- 2008 Asian Optimist Sailing C'ships
- 2009 13th Qatar Table Tennis C'ship
- 2009 Asian Fencing C'ships
- 2009 FIVB Club World C'ships
- 2009 ISF World Gymnasiade
- 2010 IAAF World Indoor C'ships
- 2010 ISAF World Junior 470 Sailing C'ships

**Annual events** (year of introduction)

- ATP Tennis Tournament Doha (1993)
- Qatar Masters Golf Tournament (2008)
- FIM Moto Racing World C'ships (2004)
- FEI Equestrian Global Champion Tour (2008)
- WTA Tour Tennis C'ships (2008)
- IAAF Diamond League (2010)
- IHF Handball Super Globe (2010)
- FIVB Club World C'ships (2010)

**Failed bids**

- 2017 IAAF World Athletics C'ships
- 2016 Olympic Games
- 2020 Olympic Games

**Future events**

- 2014 FINA Short Course World C'ships
- 2015 IHF Handball World C'ships
- 2016 UCI Road Cycling World C'ships
- 2018 FIG Artistic World Gymnastics C'ships



2011 Asian Football Cup		2022 FIFA World Cup
2011 12th Arab Games		
2012 Asian Shooting C'ships		
2012 FINA Swimming World Cup		
2013 FINA Swimming World Cup		

Source: Danyel Reiche, "Investing in Sporting Success as a Domestic and Foreign Policy Tool: The Case of Qatar", in *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (2014), p. 493.

## 1.4 Defence agreements and foreign military bases in Qatar

Qatar's military strength is limited by the nature of the country, and self-defence especially against larger neighbours is an illusion. Qatar has signed a number of military and defence co-operation agreements with global powers to cement its own security.<sup>19</sup> These include security and defence cooperation with France, which was formalized in 1994.<sup>20</sup> Qatar was also one of the first countries to sign NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), launched at the Alliance's Summit in June 2004, which aims to contribute to long-term global and regional security by offering countries of the broader Middle East region practical bilateral security cooperation with NATO.<sup>21</sup> Qatar's ambassador to Belgium serves as the interlocutor with NATO, and the country contributes to NATO's efforts in Afghanistan as well as in Operation Unified Protector (OUP) in Libya in 2011 where the country is recognized by NATO as a contributing nation, playing a key role in the success of the operation.<sup>22</sup>

19. Kenneth Katzman, "Qatar: Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy", in *CRS Reports*, No. R44533 (19 October 2017), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R44533.pdf>.

20. See France Diplomatie website: *France and Qatar*, last updated 4 April 2016, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/qatar/france-and-qatar>.

21. NATO, *Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI)*, last updated 18 November 2011, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_58787.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_58787.htm).

22. NATO, *NATO agrees the State of Qatar Mission to NATO*, 4 May 2016, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_130510.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_130510.htm); NATO, *The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). Fact Sheet*, April 2014, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_stat-ic\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2014\\_04/20140331\\_140401-factsheet-ICI\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_stat-ic_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_04/20140331_140401-factsheet-ICI_en.pdf).

More significantly, following the 1992 formal Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) with the United States, Qatar welcomed, in 2005, the opening of the Al-Udeid US Air Force base, the largest American base in the Middle East, which hosts 10,000 US troops at its military facilities and is the regional headquarters for US Central Command (CENTCOM).<sup>23</sup> Some would argue that the American air force base is not only an attempt at an alliance between Qatar and the US, but is also a way for Qatar to ensure safety and security against threats from neighbouring countries.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, Doha signed a defence cooperation agreement with Ankara in 2014, and Turkey officially opened its first overseas military base in Qatar in 2016. This did not come as a shock to anyone who has witnessed the development of alliance and similar foreign policy stances of both Qatar and Turkey on certain matters in the region such as Iran, the conflicts in Syria, Libya and Yemen, and the two countries' support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and elsewhere. Opening a Turkish military base in Qatar further increases security, not only from neighbouring countries, but also from the escalation of conflicts in the region.<sup>25</sup> Turkey's former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visited Qatar University in 2016 and shared the following statement: "I can tell you [...] that the security and stability of Qatar is like the security and stability of Turkey. We want a stable and secure Gulf. Turkey and Qatar, we have the same destiny. We face the same threats".<sup>26</sup>

Not only did Qatar increase its defence capabilities and deterrence by welcoming foreign military bases on its territory,

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23. "US Military Presence in Qatar. All What You Need to Know about 'Al Udeid' Airbase", in *SouthFront*, 31 March 2016, <https://southfront.org/us-military-presence-in-qatar-al-udeid-airbase>.

24. Greg Jaffe and Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "For Qataris, a U.S. Air Base Is Best Defense against Trump Attacks", in *The Washington Post*, 6 June 2017, <http://wapo.st/2ry8iEs>.

25. Saeed Al-Haj, "The Implications of the Qatar-Turkey Alliance", in *Al Jazeera*, 18 June 2017, <http://aje.io/4z3b>.

26. "Seeing Shared Threats, Turkey Sets up Military Base in Qatar", in *Reuters*, 28 April 2016, <http://reut.rs/1TyKer2>.

it also implemented a significant shift in its foreign policy orientation, as witnessed by its active military participation in a number of the region's conflicts (e.g., supporting the NATO operation in Libya against the Qaddafi regime<sup>27</sup> and partly in Yemen in support of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition<sup>28</sup>).

By following an active foreign policy, Qatar has tried to punch above its weight and present itself as a country that is active in preserving international peace and security and is a valuable member of the international community, thus building its global image and gaining international recognition that could mediate against potential threats to this small state.<sup>29</sup>

## 2. Economic challenges

Qatar is endowed with major oil and gas reserves which are the backbone of its economy. Qatar has the third largest gas reserves in the world after Iran and Russia, and it enjoys the world's highest oil and gas wealth per capita.<sup>30</sup> Qatar is also the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG).<sup>31</sup> However, Qatar's economy is largely dependent on hydrocarbon extraction. Oil and gas account for more than 50 percent of Qatar's GDP, roughly 85 percent of export earnings, and 70 percent of government revenue.<sup>32</sup> Hydrocarbon revenues are

27. David Roberts, "Behind Qatar's Intervention in Libya", in *Foreign Affairs Snapshots*, 28 September 2011, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2011-09-28/behind-qatars-intervention-libya>.

28. "Qatar Sends 1,000 Ground Troops to Yemen Conflict: Al Jazeera", in *Reuters*, 7 September 2015, <http://reut.rs/1EMCBtw>.

29. Jamal Abdullah, "Qatar's Foreign Policy - The Old and the New", in *Al Jazeera*, 21 November 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/11/analysis-qatar-foreign-policy--2014111811274147727.html>.

30. QNB, *Qatar Economic Insight, April 2017*, [https://www.qnb.com/cs/Satellite/QNBQatar/en\\_QA/InvestorReIn/Publications/enEconomicInsightReports](https://www.qnb.com/cs/Satellite/QNBQatar/en_QA/InvestorReIn/Publications/enEconomicInsightReports).

31. Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), *BTI 2016: Qatar Country Report*, November 2015, <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-reports/detail/itc/QAT>.

32. Andrew Campbell, "Qatar: National Involvement in the Indian Ocean Region", in *FDI Strategic Analysis Papers*, 31 August 2012, <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/?p=1768>.

the cornerstone of the modern Qatari state, allowing it to keep peace at home through funding the economic wellbeing of Qatari citizens in an all-embracing welfare state, with many services free or heavily subsidized. Any challenge to the continuation of the rentier state could have serious effects on the nature of the existing social contract that exchanges public acquiescence to dynastic rule for benefits. Abundance of fossil fuels also allows Qatar to pursue its independent foreign policy. However, Qatar's economic future is vulnerable to fluctuations in hydrocarbon prices, and its government revenues are hostage to the vagaries of international oil and gas markets.

## 2.1 The Qatari State's economic resilience

Qatar is facing multiple challenges to achieving its development goals. The most important relates to the need to transform from a traditional oil-based economy to a diversified and sustainable one. This includes diversifying sources of income, developing its production base and restructuring various economic sectors, as well as excellent preparation and training of national human resources.

Qatar has created a series of strategies and plans to overcome this economic overdependence on hydrocarbons, including a number of five-year plans, Qatar's National Vision 2030, sovereign wealth funds and efforts to create a knowledge-based economy.

## 2.2 Qatar's economic diversification

Although at current extraction rates Qatar's proven gas reserves would last for another 134 years, the country has started to diversify its economy in order to avoid the adverse consequences of falling energy prices and ensure the future of its economic prosperity. Given the economy's reliance on the hydrocarbon sector, and the limits of those natural resources, there is a general consensus among Qatari decision makers and citizenry that the country needs a long-term policy strategy. Qatar's development can be described as unfolding in three

phases. The first was the hydrocarbon phase from the 1990s to 2011, involving heavy investments to increase oil and gas production. The second is the post-2011 diversification phase with rising investment into the non-hydrocarbon sector to build the infrastructure required to attain Qatar's National Vision (QNV 2030). The third will be the realization of a knowledge-based economy by 2030.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Qatar's National Vision 2030 can be considered one of these long-term policy priorities and is based on four pillars: human development, social development, economic development and environmental development.<sup>34</sup>

QNV 2030 outlines the objective of transforming the nation's rent-based economy into a knowledge-based one, although progress in implementation has been slow due to differing priorities like preparation for hosting the FIFA World Cup and a lack of an appropriate eco-system. Policies and procedures have been initiated toward achieving that goal, and international assistance has been sought in order to develop the nation and prepare it for the post-oil economy. It is true that the trajectory of Qatar's economy is tightly linked to developments in the hydrocarbon sector. However, while hydrocarbons still dominate the economic landscape, Qatar is branching out into new areas. Cheap hydrocarbon feedstock and energy has helped prime the development of downstream industries in the petrochemical and metallurgy sectors, and in certain sub-sectors such as fertilizers. Air transportation and media services are gaining further foothold while Qatar's Science and Technology Park now tenants more than 30 ventures in such areas as life sciences, oil and chemicals, environment, electronics and software engineering.<sup>35</sup> Qatar's financial sector, infrastructure development, healthcare and education sectors have also seen rapid development, serving the needs of a larger and more complex economy.<sup>36</sup> In fact, despite lower

33. QNB, *Qatar Economic Insight*, April 2017, cit.

34. Qatar's Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, *Qatar National Vision 2030*, July 2008, <http://www.mdps.gov.qa/en/qnv1>.

35. Qatar's Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, *Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016*, March 2011, <https://www.mdps.gov.qa/en/nds1>.

36. Ibid.

oil prices, the non-hydrocarbon sector continues to be the engine of growth, accounting for 61.4 percent of total GDP in 2015.<sup>37</sup>

The new Emir Tamim al-Thani has tended to emphasize domestic politics over the previously extensive foreign policy engagement,<sup>38</sup> and had started to downscale and rationalize the public sector in order to cut budget deficits caused by the fall in oil prices, even before the recent sanctions imposed by its neighbours.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.3 Sovereign wealth funds

Given its surplus capital, Qatar established the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), a state-owned holding company that can be characterized as a national wealth fund. It specializes in domestic and foreign investment. The QIA was founded by the state of Qatar in 2005 to strengthen the country's economy by diversifying into new asset classes. Qatar's sovereign wealth fund stands at around 300 billion dollars, allowing Qatar to shrug off the country's diplomatic crisis with its neighbours while also planning to expand its holdings.<sup>40</sup> Qatar has diversified its investments in the US and Asia in recent years. The QIA is the 11<sup>th</sup> largest fund in the world and is helping Qatar provide a financial cushion for the country as it seeks to diversify its sources of income.<sup>41</sup>

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37. QNB, *Qatar Economic Insight 2016*, September 2016, [https://www.qnb.com/cs/Satellite/QNBQatar/en\\_QA/InvestorReIn/Publications/enEconomicInsightReports](https://www.qnb.com/cs/Satellite/QNBQatar/en_QA/InvestorReIn/Publications/enEconomicInsightReports).

38. Fatiha Dazi-Héni, "Qatar's Regional Ambitions and the New Emir", in *Middle East Institute Articles*, 9 May 2014, <http://www.mei.edu/node/15076>.

39. "Qatar 2017 Budget Looks to Cut Government Deficit: QNB", in *Gulf Times*, 1 January 2017, <http://www.gulf-times.com/story/526578>.

40. "Update 1-Qatar Sovereign Fund Said to Plan New Foreign Investments despite Sanctions", in *Reuters*, 16 August 2017, <https://reut.rs/2vDvXFD>.

41. Uptin Saiidi, "Qatar Boasts Massive Global Holdings: Here Are Some of Its Headline Assets", in *CNBC*, 3 July 2017, <http://cnb.cx/2CoyOz4>.

### 3. Socio-political structures, demography and the labour market

The pace and content of its hydrocarbon-fuelled economic development has challenged much of the basis of Qatar's traditional and conservative society. Moreover, the rentier psychology has affected work ethics and productivity and in the face of its small population Qatar has had to rely on migrant labour. The number of non-nationals has increased over six times in the last two decades, to the extent that as of 2017, nationals account for less than 10 percent of the total population.<sup>42</sup> The increasing number of foreigners in the country puts Qataris into a minority position in their own country, at a rate that is intensifying over the years.

The sheer number of foreign migrants emanating from different mostly non-Arab countries has strained the social norms of the traditional and largely conservative Qatari society. Public resentment is not only about foreigners taking jobs from locals but also about foreigners taking over the country, affecting its culture and social fabric. Reconciling two opposing positions of a state and society on the issue of migration is a challenge facing the Qatari state. Improving the status and wellbeing of foreign workers, while also recognizing citizens' concerns, will require the state to find a delicate balance between national interests and satisfying local culture and custom.<sup>43</sup>

#### 3.1 Qatar's societal resilience

Qatar's traditional social and political structures have developed coping mechanisms with the rapid development the country has been experiencing since the discovery and exploitation of oil and gas. The country's political and social life

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42. Jure Snoj, "Population of Qatar by Nationality", in *BQ Magazine*, 18 December 2013 (updated 12 June 2014), <http://www.bq-magazine.com/economy/2013/12/population-qatar-nationality>.

43. Abdoulaye Diop et al., "Citizens' Attitudes towards Migrant Workers in Qatar", in *Migration and Development*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2017), p. 144-160.

is complex yet relatively stable. Similar to other Gulf states, however, Qatar is also beset by vulnerabilities and challenges that mainly stem from its tiny population, wealth and rentier economy.

The flow of hydrocarbon revenues has made Qatar one of the most affluent nations per capita in the world<sup>44</sup> and allowed it to capitalize on its resources to pursue ambitious developmental projects. One of the most striking development dilemmas Qatar has faced is the imbalance between Qataris and non-Qataris in the population that resulted from the influx of both skilled and unskilled foreign labour (see Table 3).

**Table 3 | Total population and estimates of the population of Qataris and non-Qataris**

Year	Qataris	Non-Qataris	Total	% of Qataris in total population
1970	45,039	66,094	111,133	40.5
1986	99,754	273,638	373,392	26.7
1997	151,673	384,801	536,474	28.2
2004	192,586	605,475	798,061	24.1
2010	243,073	1,456,362	1,699,435	14.3
2017	243,019	2,430,003	2,673,022	9.1

Source: Author's elaboration on data from the Gulf Labour Markets and Migration database, <http://gulfmigration.eu/glmm-database/demographic-and-economic-module/?search=1&cmct=Qatar>.

Public sentiment has it that the fusion of many cultures due to the presence of a high number of foreigners in Qatar poses a threat to local culture and identity.<sup>45</sup> As a result, there have been several attempts among locals to voice the urgency to preserve local values against those transmitted by the foreign population. One example is the dress code campaign that was

44. CIA World Factbook: Qatar, last updated 20 December 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/qa.html>.

45. Zahra Babar, "Population, Power, and Distributional Politics in Qatar", in *Journal of Arabian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2015), p. 138-155.



initiated by the Qatari Women Association (QWA) in 2014.<sup>46</sup> Taking its legitimacy from article 57 of the Qatari constitution that mandates observing national tradition and established customs, the campaign urged residents and visitors to abide by the conservative dress codes in Qatar.<sup>47</sup> This move by the local population (local women in this case) is an attempt to help preserve local culture and dress code as consistent with the traditional society.

State actors and institutions have also been keen on promoting a national identity strategy supporting an ideal citizenry that is loyal to its traditional roots while embracing the new and the modern. Public education, media, culture and heritage projects are some of the tools the ruling elite uses to achieve this ideal.<sup>48</sup> There is an additional aspect to this institutionalized construction of citizenship in Qatar's case, or the creation of a "civic myth" through a set of symbols based on Qatar's tradition and heritage.<sup>49</sup> These heritage symbols not only provide a sense of national identity but also portray the ruling family as an essential component of the country's cultural and historical traditions.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.2 Public vs. private sector employment

Oil and gas wealth allowed for the establishment and sustenance of a generous patronage and welfare system in Qatar. The oil and gas sector constitute around 55 percent of the

46. Lisa Kirchner, "Qatar Blows It Again: Cover up Campaign Says No to All Women", in *The Huffington Post Blog*, 2 June 2014 (updated 6 December 2017), <https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/5411256>.

47. Emily Thomas, "Qatar's 'Reflect Your Respect' Campaign Urges the Foreigners to Cover Up", in *The Huffington Post*, 27 May 2014, <https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/5399177>.

48. Amal Mohammed Al-Malki, "Public Policy and Identity", in M. Evren Tok, Lolwah R. M. Alkhatir and Leslie A. Pal (eds.), *Policy-Making in a Transformative State. The Case of Qatar*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 241-269.

49. Mehran Kamrava, *Qatar. Small State, Big Politics*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2013, p. 23.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 105-139. Kamrava discusses in detail how the ruling elite achieved domestic popularity and how it contributes to the stability in the country.

GDP.<sup>51</sup> In addition to direct flow of money and the provision of high-salaried public-sector jobs, all Qatari citizens are entitled to education, health care, utilities and other services free of charge, which sometimes nurtures a false sense of entitlement among the locals and a negative feeling of inequality among the foreign community. The rentier relationship between the state and its citizens remains robust, and nationals see government employment as their “inherent right associated with the privileged status of citizenship”.<sup>52</sup> This patron-client system has arguably played a significant role in sustaining social cohesion and achieving political consolidation but has negatively impacted Qatar’s labour market structure and productivity. The welfare perks and artificially swollen public-sector employment diminish the incentives for Qataris to acquire new skills and seek employment in the private sector. As the data below show, the majority of Qataris are employed by the public sector, where they enjoy higher salaries, generous benefits and short working hours, whereas foreigners dominate the private service sector (see Table 4).

**Table 4 | Labour force participation by nationality and sector in Qatar (2016)**

	Total labour force	Private sector	Public and semi-public sectors
Qatari	101,445	10,053	91,392
Non-Qatari	1,951,242	1,592,577	358,665

Source: Qatar’s Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, *Labor Force Sample Survey, 2016*, cit., p. 93 (Table No. 23).

While Qatar has structural constraints due to its small national population, the dependency on foreign labour is exacerbated by the Qataris’ own employment preference for the public sector over the private sector.<sup>53</sup> A sample survey by Qatar’s Ministry of Development and Statistics, for instance, reveals that 61.5 percent of unemployed Qataris with secondary education

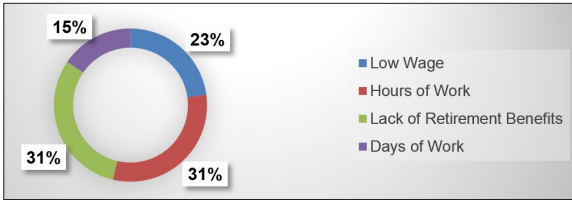
51. See OPEC website: *Qatar Facts and Figures*, [http://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/about\\_us/168.htm](http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/168.htm).

52. Zahra Babar, “Population, Power, and Distributional Politics in Qatar”, cit., p. 147.

53. Ibid.

are not willing to work in the private sector.<sup>54</sup> For this group, two of the major reasons for their unwillingness are low wages and lack of retirement benefits (see Figure 2).<sup>55</sup>

**Figure 2 | Qatari unemployed (15 years & above) with secondary education not willing to work in private sector by reasons, 2016**



Source: Qatar's Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, *Labor Force Sample Survey, 2016*, cit., p. 194 (Table No. 113).

Qatar has implemented strategies and reforms that will help increase the number of skilled nationals in the domestic labour market in both the public and private sectors, where, according to 2013 census data, they comprise only 5.59 percent of the total labour force.<sup>56</sup> One of those strategies is the implementation of "Qatarization" – a policy that aims to replace highly skilled professional foreign labourers with Qatari citizens through preferential hiring. However, the Qatarization strategy has been ineffective because it has been performed merely as a tool to increase the number of Qataris in the labour force without considering factors such as adequate education and training and cultural issues that can affect the quality of work performance.<sup>57</sup>

54. Qatar's Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, *Labor Force Sample Survey, 2016*, November 2017, p. 193 (Table No. 112), [https://www.mdps.gov.qa/en/statistics/Statistical%20Releases/Social/LaborForce/2016/Labour\\_force\\_2016\\_AE.pdf](https://www.mdps.gov.qa/en/statistics/Statistical%20Releases/Social/LaborForce/2016/Labour_force_2016_AE.pdf).

55. Ibid., p. 194 (Table No. 113).

56. See the Gulf Labour Markets and Migration (GLMM) website: *Employed population (15 years and above) by nationality (Qatar/non-Qatari) and sex (2006-2013)*, <http://gulfmigration.eu/?p=5003>.

57. Maryam Al-Subaiey, *Qatarization Policy. Implementation Challenges*, Brookings Doha Center, June 2011, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/06\\_bdc\\_essay\\_winner.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/06_bdc_essay_winner.pdf).

Another attempt to increase the skills of nationals and to reduce the dependency on skilled foreign labour has been investing in developing an indigenous “knowledge-based” economy. Qatar has invested billions of dollars to establish cutting-edge branches of leading global educational institutions and reform the existing ones. The total cost of the six branches of American Universities in Qatar’s Education City alone, for instance, is estimated at 320 million dollars per year.<sup>58</sup> The initial plan was to accept students with a quota of at least 75 percent Qataris. However, this proved to be unfeasible and resulted in half of the student body being children of expatriates. The other half are Qataris,<sup>59</sup> primarily children of Qatar’s ruling elite.<sup>60</sup> The presence of a high number of non-Qatari students has raised questions among Qataris regarding the benefits of such costly investment projects. Equally important, the prevalence of Western-style education and of English as the medium of instruction have increasingly led to public concerns about the risk of erosion in local culture and traditional values.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.3 Tradition vs. modernization

Whether the deeply rooted reason is the internalization of state policies, proximity to resources and power that tribal connections provide or the comfort of economic wellbeing, the interplay between massive changes and tradition in Qatar reveals itself as quite different from other modernization experiences. A common pattern in the Western models of rapid material transformation is that it eventually disrupts traditional establishments in society and pushes people to question the

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58. Nick Anderson, “In Qatar’s Education City, U.S. Colleges Are Building an Academic Oasis”, in *The Washington Post*, 6 December 2015, <http://wapo.st/1IOoy3g>.

59. Neha Vora, “Between Global Citizenship and Qatarization: Negotiating Qatar’s New Knowledge Economy within American Branch Campuses”, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 12 (2014), p. 2243-2260.

60. Allen J. Fromherz, *Qatar. A Modern History*, Washington, Georgetown University Press, 2012, p. 7-8.

61. Neha Vora, “Between Global Citizenship and Qatarization”, cit.

existing political and social structures.<sup>62</sup> However, in the case of the Gulf countries, it is argued that economic progress has had the opposite effect; that is, it has stabilized rather than destroyed certain pre-oil structures<sup>63</sup> and Qatar, with its “remarkably resilient” traditional structures,<sup>64</sup> is no exception. As Allen J. Fromherz puts it, “to understand Qatar, it is important to understand not just the image of rapid change and progress projected to the outside world, but the much-slower moving internal structures of Qatari society”.<sup>65</sup>

Tribes, kinship networks and their constituent lineage system continue to be preserved and are still central in today’s social and political life in Qatar. According to a survey conducted among Qatari men and women between the ages of 18 and 25, both high income and education are strongly, positively and significantly correlated with tribal solidarity and positive perceptions about tribal law and tribal leadership.<sup>66</sup> Abundant wealth arguably has not eroded tribal identity and tribal bonding in Qatar. On the contrary, it has provided the means to magnify them.<sup>67</sup> One can argue that, notwithstanding the importance of rents-derived state wealth, the persistency and centrality of tribal bonds is exemplified by the advisory council or *majlis* system, the traditional sphere of interaction that still occupies a significant role in Qatar’s social and political landscape. Contrary to the common perception, Qataris are not bothered by the lack of Western-style political participation. The *majlis* system works as a venue for negotiation and consultation that is preferred by locals over Western-style parliaments and congresses.<sup>68</sup>

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62. Anh Nga Longva, “Neither Autocracy nor Democracy but Ethnocracy: Citizens, Expatriates and the Socio-political System in Kuwait”, in Paul Dresch and James Piscatori (eds.), *Monarchies and Nations. Globalisation and Identity in the Arab States of the Gulf*, London and New York, I.B. Tauris, 2005, p. 114-135.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

64. Allen J. Fromherz, *Qatar. A Modern History*, cit., p. 3.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

66. A. Hadi Alshawi and Andrew Gardner, “Tribalism, Identity and Citizenship in Contemporary Qatar”, in *Anthropology of the Middle East*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (winter 2013), p. 46-59.

67. Allen J. Fromherz, *Qatar. A Modern History*, cit., p. 7-8.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Qatari society, even though seemingly resilient to the eroding effect of modernism in terms of persevering traditional political and social structures, has not been equally successful in resisting the rising conspicuous Western-style consumerism that has come as a by-product of wealth and integration into the global economy. Malls that promote consumerism, for example, have been sprawling in Qatar. At least nine malls are expected to be opened within the next two years in addition to the 15 currently in operation.<sup>69</sup> Consumerism coupled with a show-off culture challenges the Qatari society with a new social problem: massive personal debt. Media reports show that about 75 percent of Qatari families are indebted to banks due to lavish spending that fails to be commensurate even with the generous welfare state incomes.<sup>70</sup> The debt problem that stems from excessive consumerism is also seen as the major culprit for the increasing divorce cases in Qatar, affecting family relations and cohesion. According to 2013 statistics, 40 percent of marriages end in divorce, with one of the major reasons behind these divorces being disputes between couples regarding debts from excessive spending.<sup>71</sup>

#### 4. Food security

Qatar is located in one of the driest and water-stressed regions in the world. Low rainfall, high evaporation rates and a lack of arable land limit its ability to produce food, driving it to depend on imports to meet 90 percent of its food and water consumption needs.<sup>72</sup> Most of these imports come through

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69. Shabina S. Khatri, "Here are the Nine Malls Opening in Qatar in the Next Two Years", in *Doha News*, 4 February 2017, <http://dohane.ws/2l2POtJ>.

70. Tom Finn, "'Social Curse' of Huge Personal Debt Raises Worries in Wealthy Qatar", in *Reuters*, 3 March 2016, <http://reut.rs/1oRVmod>; Jenifer Fenton, "Qataris Adopt Debt As a Luxury Accessory", in *Financial Times*, 14 May 2012.

71. Krystyna Urbisz Golkowska, "Arab Women in the Gulf and the Narrative of Change: The Case of Qatar", in *International Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2014), p. 51-64, <https://doi.org/10.2478/ipcj-2014-0004>.

72. Haweya Ismail, "Food and Water Security in Qatar: Part 1 – Food Production", in *FDI Strategic Analysis Papers*, 21 July 2015, <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/?p=4177>.

neighbouring countries, namely Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Some 40 percent of Qatar's food imports enter the country across the Qatari-Saudi border.<sup>73</sup>

While Qatar is much less dependent upon its neighbours when it comes to staples, such as wheat, its food security rests on international trade, leaving it exposed to price volatility (relating to import prices) and supply risks (relating to import disruption). Indeed, the greatest threat to food-importing countries such as Qatar comes from reliance on one or more global trade chokepoints – maritime straits, ports and inland transport networks critical to the global grain trade – rather than the closure of land borders.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, 80 percent of its cereal imports transit through the Strait of Hormuz and 30 percent of its wheat supply comes from Russia. Qatar's long-term food security depends upon sea lines of communication starting in Russia's Black Sea export hubs.

#### 4.1 Resilience and food security

Although there are many challenges, the Qatari government has revealed a strong commitment towards ensuring food self-sufficiency through ambitious strategies to boost agricultural production and diversify its food supply sources. Following the 2008 global commodity crisis, Qatar, like many Gulf countries, developed an interest in achieving self-sufficiency, fearing future disruptions in food supply. It introduced the Qatar National Food Security Programme (QNFSP) in 2009 with the aim of increasing self-sufficiency from 10 to 70 percent by 2023. Ambitions were lowered to 40–60 percent in a later edition of the plan, but even that target was not met. Qatar's

73. In 2015, Qatar imported over 400 million dollar worth of agricultural products from Saudi Arabia – mostly dairy products and vegetables. See Laura Wellesley, "Choking Trade: What the Qatar Crisis Tells Us about Food Supply Risk", in *The New Arab*, 27 June 2017, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/Comment/2017/6/27/Choking-trade-Gulf-crisis-reveals-food-supply-risk>.

74. Rob Bailey and Robin Willoughby, "Edible Oil: Food Security in the Gulf", in *Chatham House Briefing Papers*, November 2013, <https://www.chatham-house.org/node/6794>.

sovereign wealth fund for foreign agro-investments, Hassad Food, invests in Australia, Pakistan and Oman, but its investments remain limited and cannot compensate for the need for a national food-security programme.<sup>75</sup>

The QNFSP's four key sectors are agriculture, water, renewable energy and food manufacturing. In 2011, Qatar signed an agreement with the US Agency for International Development to enhance cooperation in global food security. The pact allows the two countries to solidify joint research and scientific exchange, share access to funding, develop public-private partnerships, and engage in technical and policy dialogues.<sup>76</sup>

The Global Food Security Index 2017 ranked Qatar third among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and fourth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region for food security, availability, affordability, quality and safety. Globally Qatar secured the 29th position.<sup>77</sup>

However, it is likely that Qatar will continue to depend on importing a significant portion of its food needs despite the successful implementation of these strategies. Similar to many GCC states, sustainable food self-sufficiency in Qatar is unattainable. Domestic production meets only a small proportion of needs, yet consumes significant economic resources and almost monopolizes water use.

Due to its scarce water resources and arid land, Qatar imports 90 percent of its food, 40 percent of which enters through its

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75. Sara Fouad Almohamadi, "Qatar Dispute Exposes Regional Food-Security Failures", in *IJSS Voices*, 21 August 2017, <http://www.iiss.org/en/iiss%20voices/blogsections/iiss-voices-2017-adeb/august-2b48/middle-east-food-security-5cb4>.

76. See Qatar's Government website: *National Food Security Program*, <http://www.hukoomi.qa/wps/portal/topics/Environment+and+Agriculture/nationalfoodsecurityprogram>.

77. Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), "Qatar", in *Global Food Security Index 2017*, September 2017, <http://foodsecurityindex.eiu.com/Country/Details#Qatar>.



border with Saudi Arabia. When the Saudi border was closed in the recent Gulf crisis and the country came under the blockade that started on 5 June 2017, Qatar was able to recover very quickly through careful contingency planning. As one of the world's richest countries in terms of GDP per capita, Qatar is able to withstand current pressures caused by the blockade and secure access to food for the foreseeable future. But the current crisis has exposed its high dependence on imports for necessities such as dairy products, as well as some of the shortfalls in its food-security programme, which the country is working on correcting.

It is important to remember that Qatar has improved its infrastructure and especially its Hamad Airport (2014) and Hamad Port (2017), which are emerging as major trading hubs in the region. These state-of-the-art facilities offer Qatar good access to the air and sea and are important gateways to more destinations around the world. The world-class airport and port will provide the country with complete independence in its import and export of goods to various continents.

Abundant hydrocarbon reserves ensure that Qatar can maintain its comfortable level of food security through trade; supply risks remain, however, due to global food price spikes and geopolitical tensions, as the current Gulf crisis has shown.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

Qatar is a small state located between two regional giants, Iran and Saudi Arabia, that are locked in regional competition and hegemonic ambitions. In an effort to look after its security, the country has been vigorously engaged in an active foreign policy that involved mediation, branding and image building as well as playing a balancing game between the two regional

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78. Jonathan Saul and Maha El Dahan, "Update 1-Qatar Food Imports Hit after Arab Nations Cut Ties - Trade Sources", in *Reuters*, 5 June 2017, <http://reuters/2rtpLO7>.

powers. Qatar hosts US as well as Turkish military bases and has signed security cooperation agreements with NATO and France. The recent blockade of Qatar by the Quartet has clearly demonstrated its vulnerability but also the success of its resilience strategy. Qatar has been able to withstand the negative harmful effects of the blockade and has been able to win measurable political and economic support from international as well as regional countries. The EU could, in fact, play a role in preventing the intra-GCC feud from escalating and helping to defuse it. The EU's own success in peaceful regional cooperation and integration is also a useful experience that the Gulf states can learn from as they seek to avoid further regional conflicts.

Qatar's economic wellbeing is largely reliant on extractive hydrocarbon resources, which enable the country to conduct an active foreign policy and keep peace at home through a social bargain whereby the ruling family enjoys the political acquiescence of a small population with one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. Falling oil prices reduced the government's ability to conduct its active foreign policy, and challenged the social contract as the government began to reduce subsidies and impose gradual indirect taxes. This shift will challenge the existing social contract, and the country is balancing this with certain economic, political and social reforms. Economic diversification including supporting the private sector, establishing a knowledge-based economy and the judicious use of sovereign wealth funds can help in mitigating the impact of adverse economic challenges on the state and the society at large. The state remains a driving force here as the private sector is very reliant on state spending and state support. The EU as an economic power can play a major role in helping the state of Qatar to diversify its economy, utilizing the existing practical cooperation and agreements between the EU and the GCC.

As Gulf states face similar issues with food security, regional cooperation and integration can help in this regard, and establishing a wider regional cooperation that links the Gulf region, the Mediterranean and the African continent with the EU can

be beneficial to all concerned. However, this will require the EU to go beyond a compartmentalization strategy when dealing with the neighbours to the south and embark on a more coherent strategy linking its different policy strands to ensure a wider cooperation between the different regions and sub-regions.

Given its small population and its desire for rapid development, Qatar will always face challenges in terms of its needs for foreign labour to serve its national interest, with resulting impact on local culture, identity and society. The state and the nascent societal groups may have divergent views of migration, but they seem to be working together to avoid harmful developments. The EU has had somewhat different experiences when it comes to dealing with migration, but there are lessons that can be learned from the EU, especially when it comes to providing welfare, observing standards and respecting human rights in the Gulf region. The EU could also support civil society groups in Qatar in many ways that do not threaten local politics and local sensitivities.



## **7 FOSTERING STATE AND SOCIETAL RESILIENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EU**

ANDREA DESSI

Seven years since popular protests erupted across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, socio-economic, security and political indicators have worsened considerably in most states of the region. A number of MENA governments are teetering on the verge of collapse due to a fraying social contract and declining state capacity to provide for their citizens. MENA societies are growing more restless and agitated, demanding socio-economic reforms and increased access to decision-making bodies.

Ethnic and sectarian conflict, terrorism and the rising tide of radicalization are compounding these challenges, further straining state capacity while negatively impacting economic outlook. Varying degrees of state collapse amidst conflict and civil war in Yemen, Libya, Iraq and Syria, the resurgent rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran and the growing isolation of Turkey and Qatar represent further drivers of regional instability, with ramifications for most states and societies in the MENA, particularly those undergoing complex transitions since the 2011 Arab uprisings, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and others.

The sheer amounts of challenges make the MENA a source of deep apprehension for the European Union. As the EU seeks to operationalize the goals and ambitions set out in its 2016 Global Strategy (EUGS), the MENA is emerging as a key testing ground for the EU's credibility and vision. To advance the

goal of fostering resilience as an ingredient for stability, good governance and prosperity, the EUGS calls for targeted action at *both* the state and societal levels.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will first unpack the underlying challenges confronting state and societal resilience in the MENA region. It will then move to examine three transversal challenges to resilience – corruption, the growth of the informal sector and demographic pressures – that hold important implications for state–society relations and the growing crisis of the traditional Arab development model. Finally, a number of policy tools and approaches with which the EU can help to mitigate these challenges while empowering “resilience-facilitating” actors in individual national contexts will be discussed.

The six country case studies considered in this chapter, which sums up the findings of joint research project between IAI and the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), reflect both the diversity of the MENA and the existence of a number of shared challenges common to most states and societies in the region. The fact that each country has been affected by the 2011 Arab uprisings in different ways adds to the importance of their selection, providing a diverse and representative sample of MENA states and societies. Comprising two countries in North Africa (Tunisia and Egypt), two in the Levant (Lebanon and Iraq) and two outlying cases (Turkey and Qatar) which stand out as holding rather diverse development models, social contracts and relations with the EU, the selection allows the research to balance region-wide trends and challenges with a more in-depth appreciation of individual specificities present at the national or sub-regional level (e.g., North Africa, the Levant or the Arabian Peninsula).

The analysis below will not simply rehash those insights outlined in the preceding chapters of the volume. Rather, it will

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1. European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/339>.

seek to pick up on elements addressed in the previous chapters and reflect on their interaction with broader dynamics – in the form of both challenges and opportunities – that are impacting all states and societies in the region. In this way, the chapter will provide a holistic, macro-level analysis of the major challenges impacting state and societal resilience in the MENA and work down from there to identify micro, or niche areas, for targeted EU action aimed at mitigating and eventually reversing these challenges to resilience in specific national contexts or grouping of states.

## **1. Resilience and breakdown: four principles for EU action in the MENA region**

Before proceeding with the analysis and policy recommendations, four principles will be highlighted as starting points for an assessment of the underlying drivers for the current breakdown in the MENA. These should serve as a general framework within which to begin refashioning EU policies and approaches.

The *first* principle has to do with the correct identification of the challenge at hand. While terrorism, conflict and sectarianism dominate the headlines, the general challenge facing most states and societies in the region is a *crisis of governance* and the consequent breakdown of state–society relations. Terrorism, radicalization and sectarianism are of course important dynamics that will necessitate policy responses, but such developments are in large part *symptoms* of deeper socio-economic and governance crises, rather than the underlying drivers of breakdown in the first place.

The above holds true for both Syria and Iraq, but also Yemen and Libya. Popular protests in these countries, as in Tunisia and Egypt, were in large part sparked by socio-economic grievances accentuated by engrained authoritarianism and lack of freedoms. Only at a later stage did the protests spiral into an armed insurrection sponsored by regional and international actors driven by competing agendas. While the local, region-

al and international dimensions will need to be addressed in order to allow for conflict resolution and stabilization, the real long-term challenge will be that of rebuilding *trust* between the institutions of the state and broader society. This can only be done via an inclusive, locally driven process of state and institutional building based on agreed legal principles governing the distribution of social goods and decision-making power.

*Second*, the crisis of governance is in large part driven by decades of ineffective policies implemented by Arab regimes and the declining capacity of traditional Arab development models to provide basic goods to citizens. Given the historical dimension of these challenges, it must be clear that no quick-fix solutions exist. Rather, what the region is facing today is nothing less than a generational or potentially bi-generational challenge in which both the state and society will need to come together to find new and agreeable modes of cooperation and governance. In essence, the central challenge facing the MENA today relates to the urgent need to renegotiate more just, inclusive and sustainable *social contracts* between the state and its citizens. Re-establishing trust in the institutions of the state and developing new national narratives to rally the nation around promises for a better future will be key to this gradual healing process between states and societies.

A *third* important principle is that of conceptualizing the region as an integral part of the international system, not as area of supposed “exceptionalism” dominated by ancient hatreds or ethnic-based violence. Many of the fundamental challenges facing states and societies in the MENA are part of broader trends impacting the international system as a whole – including the EU and its member states. Declining public trust in the state and elites, rising socio-economic pressures, youth unemployment, corruption, populism and fraying public services are challenges common to *all* states and societies.

Nonetheless, such trends are undoubtedly more pronounced in the MENA. In essence, the instruments and capabilities of states and societies in the region to respond to these chal-



enges are more limited – or “less resilient” – due to the lack of agreed modes of interaction, mediation and conflict resolution between the state and society, in itself a by-product of entrenched authoritarianism, skewed social contracts and repeated foreign and regional meddling. Thus, the contributing role of international dynamics, including the EU’s past policies, must also be considered and, to the extent possible, addressed by the EUGS.

Finally, the *fourth* principle relates to the need to acknowledge that solutions to the above challenges can only be effective if they are homegrown *not* imposed from afar or top-down in the absence of public engagement and oversight. Resilience, therefore, is likely to follow a long-term and non-linear process of development in which MENA societies explore new modalities of pressure, negotiation and confrontation with ruling elites and the formal institutions of the state in an effort to negotiate new citizenship bargains and social contracts. Shocks, setbacks and crises will no doubt impact and at times slow or even reverse progress, yet it is precisely this ability to withstand such unforeseen developments that stands at the heart of the EU’s definition(s) of a resilient state and society. EU policy can of course help (or hinder) this gradual fostering of state and societal resilience, but the timing, sequencing and ability to deliver will largely depend on local dynamics on which Europe has little influence.

Throughout history, every state and society will have developed certain examples of resilience. These can be found in embryonic form at the micro-societal level but also within the institutions of the state, albeit often in a marginalized form. The challenge therefore will be that of identifying “resilience-friendly” *interlocutors* at both the state and societal level, and developing means to build up their defences to other, less progressive forces (national, regional and international) as a means of empowering them to act as incubators of resilience in their given national contexts.

## **2. State-society relations in the MENA: a breakdown in trust**

The Arab uprisings erupted in Tunisia in late December 2010, but it would be a mistake to make this the starting point for an analysis of the profound crises gripping the region, let alone an examination of the underlying drivers that led to the current breakdown. Popular grievances in the Arab world have been brewing for many years, driven by decades of failed Arab governance policies, aggravated by entrenched regional geopolitical rivalries and repeated foreign interventions. Seven years later, socio-economic challenges remain at the forefront of citizen demands in the MENA and new bouts of citizen protests have been witnessed in numerous countries of the region, from Morocco's Rif region, to Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan. Most recently, between December 2017 and early January 2018, citizen protests have taken place in Tunisia and Iran, again demonstrating how socio-economic grievances can quickly assume political connotations as price hikes, spending cuts and declining public services retain much disruptive potential in the region.

Public opinion polls and academic research reflect the fact that major drivers for the Arab uprisings were grievances stemming from endemic corruption, declining public services, unemployment and rising prices for basic foodstuffs (see Figure 1). On top of these were growing calls for increased freedoms and access to decision-making bodies, particularly from youth, who felt excluded from important decisions concerning their future and emboldened by access to unfiltered information in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world.

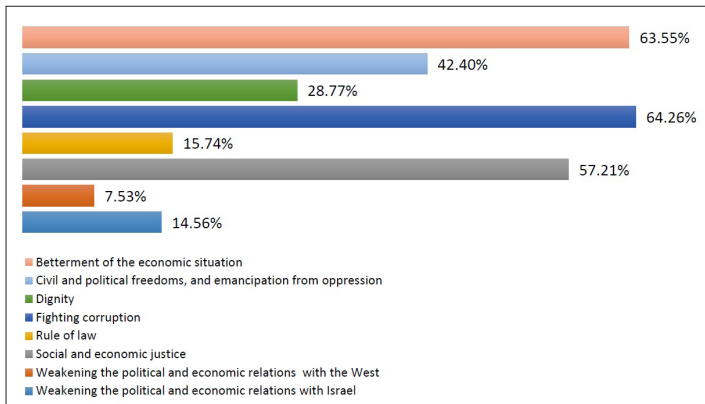
The traditional Arab social contract (or authoritarian bargain<sup>2</sup>) – based on the provision of public sector jobs, security and welfare services in exchange for acquiescence to various

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2. See for instance Raj M. Desai, Anders Olofsgård and Tarik M. Yousef, "The Logic of Authoritarian Bargains", in *Economics & Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (March 2009), p. 93-125, <http://brook.gs/2bljnL8>.

forms of political authoritarianism – was gradually no longer able to provide basic services, leading to a legitimacy crisis and ensuing breakdown of state–society relations in many countries. Citizens turned to family, clan or religious networks for sustenance and services no longer provided by the state. Such tendencies would further the vicious cycle, as a growing informal sector encroached on government finances, favouring corruption and the related expansion of non-state actors increasingly operating in the place of the formal institutions of the state.

**Figure 1 | Main drivers for Arab uprisings**



Source: Elena Ianchovichina, Lili Mottaghi and Shantayanan Devarajan, *MENA Economic Monitor, October 2015: Inequality, Uprisings, and Conflict in the Arab World*, Washington, World Bank, 2015, p. 27, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/22711>.

Declining state capacity and the multiplication of non-state actors would lead to an atomization of society, contributing to intra-ethnic or confessional tensions. Following the age-old colonial tactic of divide and rule, authoritarian regimes have at times supported such fragmentation as a short-term means to prevent a critical mass of grievances among the populace. In other settings, regimes have themselves promoted the activities of various non-state actors – such as re-

ligious charities, militias or non-governmental organizations – to step in and fill the vacuum of the retrenching state.<sup>3</sup> Such practices have only weakened state authority and legitimacy further, diminishing the contact points between state and society and thereby contributing to the gradual breakdown of trust.

Meanwhile, the prevalence of deep rivalries and geostrategic competition between states in the region (and their foreign backers) has weakened state capacity further, diverting funds from development to war making and deterrence capabilities, enhancing authoritarian trends and deepening a tendency to view citizens as potential threats to regime survival. Resulting from their lack of legitimacy, ethnic or confessional minorities have increasingly been viewed with suspicion by ruling elites, as potential “fifth columns” whose mounting grievances could be exploited by rivals. As a result, the politics of regime survival gradually emerged to trump almost any other dimension of governance in many Arab states.

The net effect of these developments has been a collapse of state–society relations in many states of the MENA. The traditional Arab social contract crumbled amidst rising Arab budget deficits, expanding demographics, declining oil revenues and the broader socio-economic pressures brought about by globalization and the related “digital revolution”.

The stage was set for the outbreak of the 2011 Arab uprisings. Rallying calls for “bread, dignity and social justice” were heard from Tunisia to Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Iraq, Yemen and Syria. Citizen protests also took place in Morocco, Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Jordan although the authorities there responded quickly with a mixture of reforms and substantial cash injections to pacify the streets.

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3. See, for instance, Andrea Dessì, “Re-Ordering the Middle East? Peoples, Borders and States in Flux”, in *Documenti IAI*, No. 16|11 (July 2016), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/6677>.

Even in Turkey, a country that cannot be placed in the same socio-economic and governance basket as most North African or Middle Eastern states, recent trends have witnessed a significant backsliding in democratic norms and freedoms, particularly pronounced since the failed July 2016 coup attempt. Protests against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government took place in March 2011, calling for the freeing of imprisoned journalists and increased press freedom.<sup>4</sup> Major protests would resume in 2013, during the so-called Gezi park demonstrations, when thousands marched in Istanbul to demand increased transparency in government policies, the protection of minorities and freedom of assembly. In 2017, Turkey's main opposition party, the Republican's People Party (CHP), organized a "Justice March" from the capital Ankara to Istanbul to protest government corruption and lack of transparency. These developments demonstrate that all is not well when it comes to state-society relations in Turkey. A deeply polarized country with an array of internal and external challenges and security threats, government finances are coming under increased strain, weakening the ability of the state to command legitimacy across large sections of the population.

## 2.1 Socio-economic challenges and declining state capacity

Given the relevance of economic growth to healthy state-society relations, a political economy approach that prioritizes good governance, growth, the rule of law and security represents a first priority for MENA states and societies. Strengthening the state's capacity to provide for its citizens is an indispensable ingredient for trust and more resilient social contracts, and it is in these dimensions that EU policy should look to produce concrete results.

All MENA states are facing the urgent need to modernize their governance models, strengthen private sector development

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4. Sebnem Arsu, "In Turkey, Thousands Protest a Crackdown on Press Freedom", in *The New York Times*, 13 March 2011, <https://nyti.ms/2FHgWoV>.

and enhance the diversification of the economy, key ingredients needed to address demographic, environmental and socio-economic challenges that are generally shared across the region. Oil-importing MENA states are most exposed to these challenges as a result of their budgetary weakness and low growth rates, but oil exporters are also facing daunting challenges as a result of volatile oil prices and an overreliance on the hydrocarbons industry.

The present turmoil and instability in the region are further straining the socio-economic outlook of states in the region, challenging economic recovery and deepening popular disillusionment with governing elites. Estimates by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) have indicated that conflict and turmoil in the region between 2011 and 2015 have led to a net loss of 613.8 billion dollars in economic activity, and an aggregate fiscal deficit of 243.1 billion dollars for MENA states.<sup>5</sup>

As the EU seeks to foster state and societal resilience in the MENA, a focus aimed at providing concrete solutions to the key socio-economic challenges of corruption, the growing informal sector and youth unemployment, as well as the resulting declining state capacity, would help strengthen state-society relations in these contexts by improving economic growth and the ability of state institutions to provide for their citizens. Identifying positive “resilience-friendly” interlocutors who enjoy popular legitimacy and have demonstrated a willingness to promote new and creative means aimed at addressing these challenges will be indispensable for successful EU action.

### *2.1.1 Corruption and citizen trust in the state*

Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index shows the abysmal performance of Arab states, 90 per-

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5. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region, 2015-2016*, Beirut, ESCWA, November 2016, p. 7, <https://www.unescwa.org/node/95978>.

cent of which received a failing score of less than 50 points (Turkey received a score of 41).<sup>6</sup> Indeed, five out of the ten most corrupt countries in the world, according to the same report, are in the MENA: Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Yemen and Syria. The World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, which also include "control of corruption", confirm the negative showing of MENA states, highlighted as the worst performing region after Sub-Saharan Africa. Corruption is widely cited among the major popular grievances across Arab states, damaging citizen trust and providing ample opportunities for criminal networks to gain further influence over society and the state.<sup>7</sup>

Combined with the expansion of the informal sector, corruption, capital flight and bribes have cost MENA economies billions in lost revenue, undermining development models and enhancing the fragmentation of society. In Egypt, for example, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi even put the country's top auditor on trial after the latter publicly admitted that corruption had cost Egypt about 67.6 billion dollars in lost revenue over four years.<sup>8</sup>

Given the widespread and adverse effects of corruption, identifying local actors that command popular legitima-

6. Transparency International ranks corruption on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). Rankings below 50 are considered a "failing grade" by the organization. See Kinda Hattar, "Middle East and North Africa: A Very Drastic Decline", in *Transparency International Surveys*, 25 January 2017, [https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/mena\\_a\\_very\\_drastic\\_decline](https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/mena_a_very_drastic_decline).
7. See Arab Center Washington DC (ACW), *2016 Arab Opinion Index: Executive Summary*, April 2017, <http://arabcenterdc.org/?p=4414>. For more on the role of corruption see, Andrea Teti and Pamela Abbott, "The Integrity of States: Corruption in the EU's Southern Neighbours", in *Arab Transformations Policy Briefs*, No. 6 (September 2017), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315713451>; Roger Sapsford et al., "Corruption, Cohesion and the Rule of Law", in *Arab Transformations Working Papers*, No. 15 (October 2017), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312935551>.
8. Transparency International, "Three Reasons Why Attacking Egypt's Top Auditor is Bad News", in *Space for Transparency*, 10 June 2016, <https://blog.transparency.org/2016/06/10/three-reasons-why-attacking-egypts-top-auditor-is-bad-news>.

cy and could take the lead in combating the phenomenon would have highly positive carry-on effects on the broader goal of fostering state and societal resilience. The publication of the so-called Panama Papers has demonstrated how global multinationals, many Western-based, are highly implicated in the siphoning off of funds and natural resources from many developing states, including in the Arab world.<sup>9</sup> An honest assessment of the complicity of Europe and the West in international corruption – both government and private sector – must therefore also be addressed. Targeted action aimed at closing international loopholes, increasing commercial oversight on major arms, infrastructure or energy deals and eradicating international tax havens should be launched.

The publication on 5 December 2017 of an EU blacklist of tax havens, which includes Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain in the MENA among 17 blacklisted countries, represents a hesitant effort to address the issue by “naming and shaming” states complicit in international tax evasion.<sup>10</sup> The hope is to increase incentives to close international loopholes and thereby increase state revenues while limiting capital flight. Tunisia was among the few MENA states to improve their standing in the 2016 Transparency International corruption index, and Europe must do more to assist the country in its delicate transition. Jumpstarting economic growth, attracting investments and restoring Tunisia’s tourism industry will be indispensable. Yet, corruption remains a challenge, at both the governmental and the public procurement level as well as in the realm of the private

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9. See, for instance, Isabel Esterman, “Report: Tax Havens Cost Egypt’s Treasury Billions”, in *MadaMasr*, 10 May 2015, <https://www.madamasr.com/en/?p=17596>; Brian Frydenborg, “Panama Papers: In the Middle East, Mossack Fonseca’s Business Is Lethal”, in *Global Risks Insights*, 11 April 2016, <https://wp.me/p4OLsl-5d6>; Lorenzo Kamel, “Havoc in the Middle East: The Other Side of the Coin”, in *Eurasia Review*, 7 September 2016, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/?p=112908>.

10. “EU Puts UAE, Bahrain and Tunisia on Tax Heaven Blacklist”, in *Al Jazeera*, 5 December 2017, <http://aje.io/3fn24>.



sector. Multinational firms and even European state-owned enterprises in the security and energy sectors have been involved in corruption with local MENA elites and more needs to be done to ensure transparency on major international trade deals and agreements. Moreover, the inclusion of Tunisia on the tax havens blacklist can lead to further strains to the country's finances, with potentially troubling repercussions on the transition and state-society relations. Rather than simply blacklisting Tunisia, the EU should provide assistance and advice on legal and tax reform to help Tunisia attract increased foreign investment and develop its employment and production capacities.

### 2.1.2 *Informal economies and tax reform*

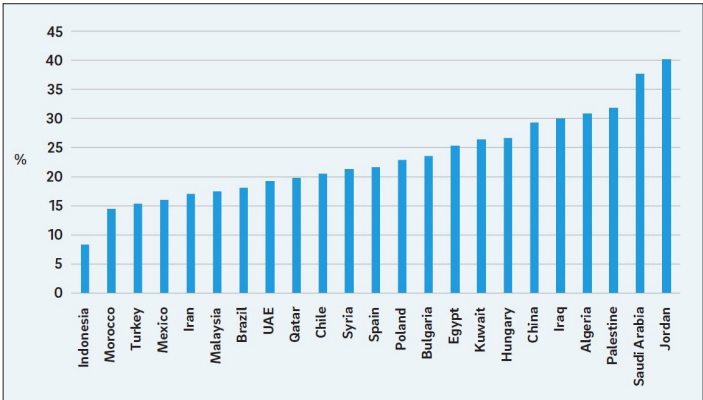
Closely linked to corruption, the important growth of the informal sector in the MENA region has also been documented as a significant challenge to state resilience. One study has estimated a 67 percent growth of informal sector employment between 2002 and 2012 (see Figures 2 and 3).<sup>11</sup> As noted by the 2016 Arab Human Development Report, between 2000 and 2005, 75 percent of new entrants into the Egyptian labour market were employed in the informal sector, while this number was roughly 20 percent in the 1970s.<sup>12</sup> Similar figures were also registered in Syria, where 69 percent of new jobs between 2001 and 2007 were in the informal sector.<sup>13</sup>

The growth of the informal sector has not only limited government finances, it has also contributed to the expansion of

11. Shanta Devarajan and Lili Mottaghi, *MENA Economic Monitor, April 2015: Towards a New Social Contract*, Washington, World Bank, 2015, p. 19, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/21718>.
12. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Arab Human Development Report 2016. Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality*, New York, UNDP, 2016, p. 78, <http://www.arab-hdr.org/Reports/2016/2016.aspx>.
13. Ibid.

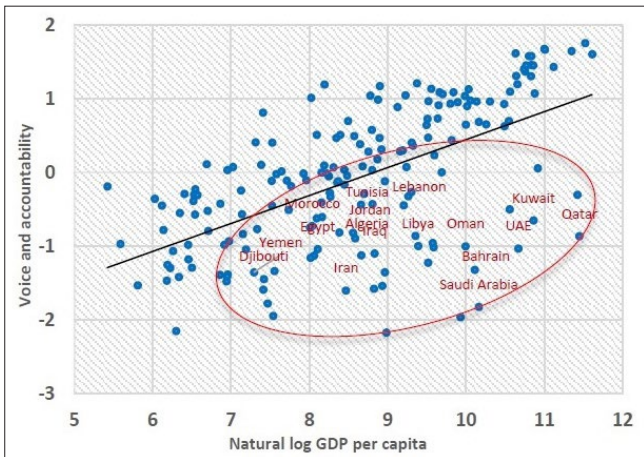
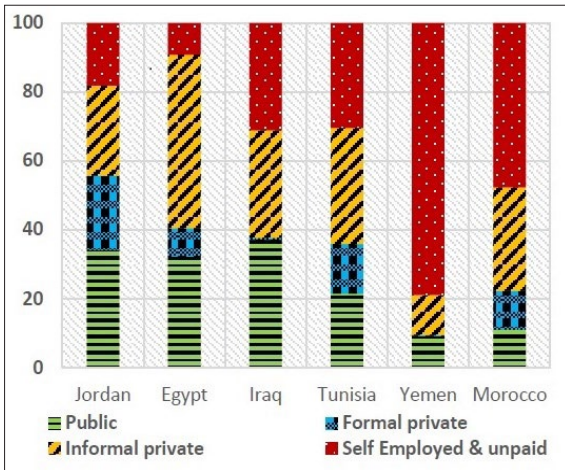
parallel networks and non-state actors operating in the rural interior and along the borders of many MENA states. The expansion of black market economies, smuggling and illicit forms of trade is a particularly complex challenge, given that large segments of the local populations are directly dependent on these economies for their livelihood. Government authorities, as well as international actors such as the EU, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Bank, will need to tread carefully when calling on MENA states to eradicate informal networks as a means to gain access to economic loans and gradually enhance tax revenues. Such actions will need to be accompanied by increased social services, employment and safety nets for the communities most directly impacted in order to offset the most damaging social and humanitarian effects of such policies.

**Figure 2 | Average employment share in public sector in selected Arab countries and comparator countries in the 2000s**



Source: UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2016*, cit., p. 29.

**Figure 3 | MENA employment status (top) and accountability index (bottom)**



Source: Shanta Devarajan and Lili Mottaghi, *MENA Economic Monitor*, April 2015, cit., p. 12.

The poor economic outlook of many states in the region and the increasingly unsustainable public sector payroll and subsidy schemes have led a number of MENA states to request major assistance and loans from international actors, such as rich oil-producing states in the Gulf as well as the IMF and World Bank. Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan are particularly exposed to the urgent need for financial liquidity. Yet even Saudi Arabia has recently embarked on major fundraising activities, receiving a 10 billion dollar loan from an international consortium of private banks as a result of the declining price of oil.<sup>14</sup>

The economic and governance reforms demanded by the IMF and World Bank in exchange for disbursing loans range from scaling back subsidies on basic foodstuffs and fuel, tax modernization in an effort to encroach on the informal sector, privatization and currency devaluation. There is a significant risk that subsidy reform and increased taxation lead to a worsening of humanitarian indicators in the region, which in turn could lead to socio-political instability and further harm economic outlook.

Such a scenario would trap MENA states in a vicious circle of debt and low growth, with little prospect of improvement in the short or medium term. While a degree of austerity and fiscal restraint will no doubt be necessary, so will investments in the economy and production capacity as a means to generate employment and offset the risk of recession. EU member states have themselves experienced the adverse effects of excessive austerity without a parallel commitment to investment, and should work to apply these lessons in their relations with MENA states and international monetary organizations.

### *2.1.3 The demographic challenge and youth “bulge”*

Finally, demographic growth and in particular youth unemployment represent pressing and widespread phenomena across

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14. Nicolas Parasie, “Saudi Arabia Set to Secure \$10 Billion Loan to Address Budget Shortfall”, in *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 April 2016, <http://on.wsj.com/1pgxb2l>.

MENA states and societies, adding significant strain to MENA economies and governance models. Youth unemployment will remain a fundamental challenge for the MENA well into the future (see Figure 4), yet if governments are able to re-direct the economy and modernize the education system to better prepare youth for the labour market, such trends could also result in a “demographic dividend”<sup>15</sup> with positive effects on growth and productivity.<sup>16</sup> Across MENA states, 60 percent of the population has not yet reached the age of 30, while youth aged 15–29 account for almost 30 percent of the population.<sup>17</sup>

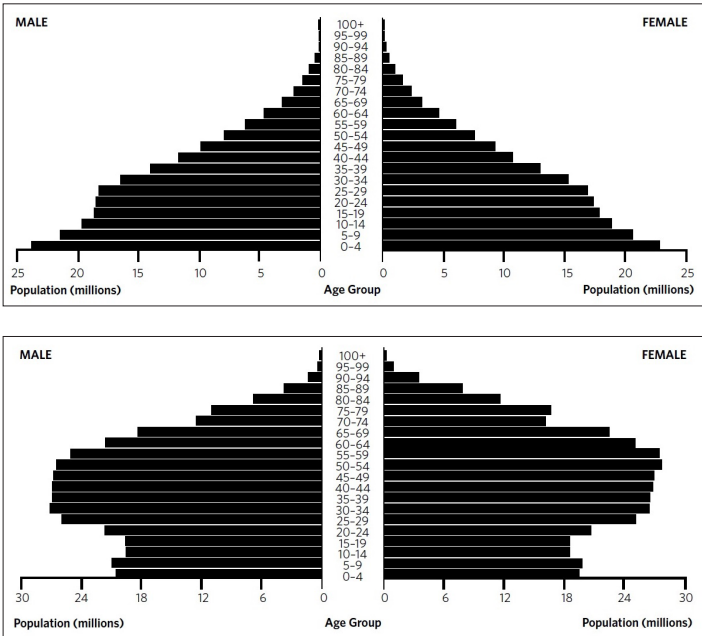
MENA economies, particularly in North Africa and the Levant, will need fundamental reform if they are to provide for their increasingly young populations, with estimates pointing to the need for states to provide as much as 60 million new jobs by 2020 to account for new entries into the job market.<sup>18</sup> Demographic pressures are not limited to employment, however. They also involve the urgent need to modernize the education system, provide targeted vocational and technical training to prepare youth for the job market, and develop means to ensure adequate access to health care, housing and other social services, including the sustainability of critical infrastructure such as waste management.

Housing and health care are two important sectors that have been starved for funding in many MENA states, leading to significant explosions of popular anger and frustration against the authorities. Affordable housing and mass urbanization are particularly dire challenges for countries like Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon. A strategy aimed at addressing the twin

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15. Musa McKee et al., “Demographic and Economic Material Factors in the MENA Region”, in *MENARA Working Papers*, No. 3 (October 2017), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/8433>.
  16. Also see Perry Cammack et al., *Arab Fractures. Citizens, States, and Social Contracts*, Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2017, p. 7-12, <http://ceip.org/2jUNCA2>; UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2016*, cit., Ch. 8.
  17. UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2016*, cit., p. 22.
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

challenges of demographic growth and youth unemployment will therefore need to be based on a holistic assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of a specific national context and developed in synergy with broader efforts aimed at redressing governance models and the distribution of power and social goods between the state and society.

**Figure 4 | Population by age in Arab League states (top) and EU member states (bottom), 2016**



Source: Perry Cammack et al., *Arab Fractures*, cit., p. 9.

Turkey is also exposed to many of these same socio-economic challenges, although it does benefit from a much larger and more functional state governance structure and economy. Economic trends in Turkey – independently from high GDP growth

registered in 2017 – represent a source of concern for the AKP government, not least given that a major source of popular support for the government stems from Turkey’s positive economic showing since the AKP party took power in 2002. Political and security trends in Turkey and its neighbourhood, combined with the growing tensions with traditional allies in the West, are harming Turkey’s domestic and foreign policies. The Turkish economy has recently witnessed a decline in foreign investments, high consumer price inflation and growing current account deficits.<sup>19</sup> Such trends are weakening Turkey’s state and societal resilience, understood in this case as the ability of Turkey’s formal state institutions to mediate with society and advance agreed and legitimate policies capable of addressing citizen demands. The AKP’s relentless drive to monopolize power is driving a wedge in society, endangering Turkey’s economic, social and political progress, and the country’s overall resilience, that is, its ability to manage its domestic and foreign prerogatives in a stable and sustainable manner.

Ultimately, long-term solutions to many of these socio-economic challenges cannot be found without addressing the regional geopolitical setting of the MENA, including repeated instances of foreign meddling and intervention. The lack of region-wide mediation and cooperation mechanisms and the prevalence of deep-seated rivalry and competition, not only between Saudi Arabia and Iran but also within the so-called “Sunni camp”, with Turkey and Qatar being increasingly isolated by the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, represent fundamental impediments to increased economic opportunities for the region. Foreign meddling and rivalry, as well as the current heightening of tensions between the US and Iran, present further worrying signals for the region and EU policy. Boosting intra-regional conflict resolution, trade and interdependence would help solve many of the most pressing economic issues

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19. See *ibid.*; Mustafa Sonmez, “Turkey’s Spectacular Growth Has Darker Side”, in *Al-Monitor*, 15 September 2017, <http://almon.co/2x87>; Zülfikar Doğan, “Foreign Investors Flee Turkey”, in *Al-Monitor*, 22 November 2017, <http://almon.co/2ygh>.

facing MENA states and societies. Plans for a future economy based on close trade links between MENA states (and the outside world) should be held out as incentives by international actors like the EU in an effort to de-escalate regional tensions and promote a more sustainable future.

### **3. Fostering state and societal resilience in the MENA**

The above sections have highlighted how socio-economic, security and political challenges are feeding off each other, creating a vicious circle of popular grievances and declining state capacity to remedy these. In light of these dynamics, how can states and societies in the MENA interrupt this cycle and provide much-needed breathing room to allow for national efforts aimed at building more sustainable and inclusive social contracts and governance models? How best can Europe use its leverage and resources to support this goal of fostering state and societal resilience in the MENA?

In seeking solutions to the current crisis and breakdown, it will be important to not lose sight of the fundamental lessons of the 2011 Arab uprisings and closely heed the concerns and priorities of MENA citizens. Recent opinion polls conducted across the Middle East and North Africa confirm that large majorities today view socio-economic issues – such as housing, jobs, welfare, social services, education, corruption – as top priorities of governance.<sup>20</sup> This is followed by demands for security and only later increased freedoms and political representation.

Providing answers to citizen concerns in the socio-economic and security domains should therefore be two key priorities of governments and international actors. Responding to such demands will be key to fostering trust between the state and

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20. See, for instance, Arab Barometer Wave III 2012-2014, *Public Opinion in the Arab World*, <http://www.arabbarometer.org/node/233>. Also see the ArabTrans project reports, <http://www.arabtrans.eu/publications-and-reports-/reports>.



its citizens, an indispensable step to the re-fashioning of more sustainable state–society relations and governance models. It will also be key to the goal of prevention and stabilization, as socio-economic grievances are quickly transformed into political demands once protests hit the streets, a dynamic most recently demonstrated by citizen protests in Iran in late December 2017 and in Tunisia in early January 2018.

In this context, the EU should not sidestep issues tied to political representation and authoritarianism, however. Rather, a focus on socio-economic and security reform should be framed as inherently linked to the opening up of the political domain and increased freedoms, as the latter objective is conducive to the former and vice versa. An effort to couch socio-economic reforms and enhanced security cooperation into broader policies aimed at strengthening civic debate and representation will be important as the EU and its member states approach MENA states and societies in an effort to foster resilience.

The EU should differentiate its contact points with both state and society in every context. This will be important not only to prevent EU policy from inadvertently strengthening “authoritarian resilience”, as has been the case in the past, but also in order to ensure that its policies are based on the largest possible pool of viewpoints and concerns and not restricted to those outlined by the ruling elites or Western-oriented organizations that enjoy the easiest access to EU officials and policymakers. Engaging local actors and groups that do not necessarily share European or Western values, yet enjoy widespread trust and legitimacy in their local contexts and have demonstrated a genuine desire to improve local and national governance, will be indispensable as the EU seeks to foster resilient states and societies across the MENA.<sup>21</sup>

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21. See, for instance, Daniela Huber and Lorenzo Kamel (eds.), *Arab Spring and Peripheries. A Decentring Research Agenda*, London and New York, Routledge, 2016.

In light of the prevalence of authoritarianism across the region, and the fact that these regimes represent fundamental obstacles to resilience at both the state and the societal level, greater resources and focus should be placed on the societal dimension. Finding means to empower local societal or “resilience-friendly” actors and assist them in promoting national dialogue on key socio-economic and political challenges would serve the long-term objective of building *both* state and societal resilience. Empowering actors that enjoy vast legitimacy and support from various sections of the population would serve the dual cause of enhancing citizen trust and participation while expanding the contact points between state and society, thereby gradually helping build more inclusive state–society relations.

The preceding chapters have highlighted examples of civic activism as sources of societal resilience. In Egypt, worker unions, student movements and women’s groups can be highlighted as having played important roles at the intersection between state and society, advocating for increased rights and freedoms long before the Arab uprisings. Lebanon and Tunisia have also recorded examples of societal activism – such as the organization of protests during Lebanon’s trash crisis in 2015 or the ability of youth groups to organize and run in Beirut’s municipal elections in 2016, challenging regime elites.<sup>22</sup> In the case of Tunisia, the activism displayed by women’s groups and citizens to push for full equality of rights<sup>23</sup> and the role of the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet made up of Tunisia’s leading unions and business associations, which won them the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize, are important examples of societal resilience.

Even in Iraq, a country still reeling from violent conflict and radicalization, civil society organizations along with religious

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22. “The Garbage Crisis in Lebanon: From Protest to Movement to Municipal Elections”, in *Tadamun*, 19 May 2016, <http://www.tadamun.co/?p=7809>.

23. See, for instance, Ramy Khouili and Daniel Levine-Spound, “Anti-Violence Law Is another Victory for Tunisian Women”, in *Middle East Eye*, 2 October 2017, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/node/66361>.

and community leaders have performed highly important and often overlooked roles in helping to mediate between state and society. Thus, local actors and communal religious agents, such as the Shia Hawza of Najaf and the leading Shia cleric Ali al-Sistani, have provided humanitarian relief, education and basic goods to many internally displaced Iraqis, independently from their ethnic or religious background. The same goes for Kurdish forces in Northern Iraq, which have provided security and aid to displaced communities fleeing the self-proclaimed Islamic State. Two leading figures in the Iraqi Shi'a community, al-Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr, have been playing important roles in preventing Iraq from sliding deeper into civil war and carnage, and both have more recently backed the anti-corruption drive launched by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.<sup>24</sup>

Certain institutions of the state and political figures do retain the ability to rally large segments of the population around civic and developmental issues. In Tunisia the ruling party has launched an important anti-corruption drive and all political parties, including the moderate Islamist Ennahda party, have embraced democracy and negotiations to resolve ideological and political differences. In Iraq, religious leaders and politicians have emerged as major voices calling for good governance and the eradication of corruption, keeping powerful elites in check as a result of their vast popular legitimacy and appeal. In Qatar, the ruling monarchy has directed significant funding and support to various cultural and educational initiatives aimed at supporting the country's transition from a rentier to a knowledge-based economy.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states' have recently embarked on ambitious top-down reform processes that include the adoption of VAT taxes on commodity goods and the gradual scaling back of public subsidies. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and Qatar's National Vision 2030 include these efforts and aim to remedy these countries' traditional overreliance on hydrocarbons to fuel

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24. "Iraq Cleric Pushes Anti-Corruption Fight as Protests Flare", in *Reuters*, 7 August 2015, <http://reut.rs/1ISmgTI>.

the economy and public spending.<sup>25</sup> As GCC states begin implementing taxation, the traditional social contract of the Arabian Peninsula based on zero taxation and ample public employment and welfare services will be exposed to significant pressure. Gulf citizens are likely to demand more from their governments in terms of political representation and accountability.

Saudi Arabia for instance has recently launched a nation-wide welfare system targeting low- and middle-income families as it prepares to implement a 5 percent VAT tax on most goods while scaling back fuel subsidies. While such a move is welcomed by international organizations, the fact that approximately half of the Saudi population is receiving these benefits – with estimates placing the cost at 261 billion dollars this coming fiscal year – raises questions about the long-term sustainability of such programmes.<sup>26</sup> While this is likely to be a long-term process, there are means by which the EU can seek to steer the pace and extent of reforms in certain GCC states, beginning with an effort to limit corruption and encourage greater public oversight of the reform process.

Saudi Arabia's recent anti-corruption drive and massively ambitious plans for a 500 billion dollar mega-city meant to provide employment and prepare for the post-oil economy are other examples of government efforts to reform the economy. Yet, the modalities in which such efforts are taking place – in the Saudi Arabian case well beyond any semblance of the rule of law and transparency – cannot be considered as effective models for the region. Rather, such efforts – like those pursued by the Egyptian president – are primarily directed at enhancing regime resilience, weakening potential opposition and reproducing new modalities of MENA authoritarian bargains while promising stability and anti-terror support to the West.

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25. See, for instance, Jane Kinninmont, "Vision 2030 and Saudi Arabia's Social Contract. Austerity and Transformation", in *Chatham House Research Papers*, July 2017, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/node/30579>.

26. Aya Batrawy, "Half the Saudi Population Receiving Welfare in New System", in *AP News*, 21 December 2017, <https://www.apnews.com/0aa0bd13056f444f8e82da76069cf883>.

### 3.1 Policy recommendations for the EU

The above sections have highlighted how socio-economic and security challenges stand at the forefront of citizen demands in the MENA region. Yet, the EU must not abandon those values and norms that have made Europe peaceful and prosperous. The EU's fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights remain the primary engine for its "soft power" and international prestige. In this context, the EU should clearly and repeatedly publicize the profound links connecting economic growth and private sector expansion to the opening up of political debate and civic freedoms, reminding MENA interlocutors at both the state and societal levels that achieving one without the other is not only unlikely but also represents a long-term threat to the stability of these states.

Most importantly, Europe should not be dragged into the MENA's many intra-regional disputes. Maintaining distance will add to the EU's credibility in the region, and also potentially provide Europe better means to influence regional dynamics.

The starting point of any new EU approach to the MENA must be based on an honest assessment of EU capabilities. Raising expectations only to then fail to deliver would be extremely harmful for the EU's credibility, already weakened by decades of failed policy approaches and close cooperation with authoritarian regimes. A degree of prioritization will therefore be necessary, focussing EU action on those sectors and national contexts where the EU's leverage and influence is more pronounced. This can either derive from long-term engagements and historical responsibilities, as in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and in Lebanon, Libya and Turkey, or as a result of an understanding that the limited successes made in one context need to be preserved and protected in order to serve as examples for others, as is the case in Tunisia's fragile transition.

At the macro-regional level, a degree of differentiation between oil-exporting and oil-importing MENA countries should

be made. Oil-exporting states share similar challenges tied to their overreliance on hydrocarbons, weak private sector and mounting fiscal deficits due to the declining price of oil. These states require enhanced technical assistance and advice in helping to restructure their economies away from the oil sector and towards increased modes of domestic production. Key to this transition will be the availability of foreign direct investment (FDI), but also reforms to the tax code and legal frameworks as a means to enhance investor confidence as well as encouraging private sector growth.

The EU and its member states should cooperate with international financial organizations, including the World Bank, the IMF and the European Investment Bank (EIB), to coordinate investments and assistance to oil-exporting states in the MENA, providing advice and best practices in the realm of tax reform, public procurement and consumer oversight and protection. Improvements in these domains would have carry-on effects on broader dimensions of state-society relations, helping to improve economic outlook and the gradual scaling back of the state-led economic model to the benefit of increased private sector growth and, it is hoped, civic freedoms and state/society resilience. Placing anti-corruption standards at the centre of EU action and assistance to oil-exporting MENA states should be a *sine qua non* for EU engagement, conditioning technical assistance and advice on the basis of enhanced transparency and interaction with non-state actors who enjoy popular following and legitimacy and have challenged regime interests and elites through anti-corruption campaigns and civic activism.

Turning to oil-importing MENA states, major challenges consist in declining state capacity to provide basic services to the populace, which in turn is a by-product of declining growth rates and a breakdown of trust between the state and its citizens. MENA states such as Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon are all facing similar socio-economic pressures stemming from high unemployment and demographic growth, widespread corruption, lack of affordable housing and en-

trenched education disparities. Budget deficits, low productivity and growth are compounding these challenges, limiting the state's ability to respond to the demands of its citizens and thereby furthering this vicious cycle of declining state capacity and weakening state-society relations.

The task of fostering state and societal resilience in these contexts is centred on restoring and reviving the social contract, refashioning modes of interaction between the state and society in an effort to enhance citizen trust and accountability of state policies. Such goals will need to be accompanied by the modernization of legal norms and legislation, a further empowerment of the legislative branch of government as well as the judiciary, and efforts aimed at expanding the private sector as a means to jumpstart economic growth. Here, civil society and legitimate local or communal actors, including certain government ministers or local municipalities, will be important interlocutors, as it is they who will take the lead within society in promoting civic activism and reform. The key challenge will be to translate what are often sectorial protest movements into broader national efforts, a goal that is often undermined by the internal fragmentation of society, divisions between rural and urban settings, regime co-optation efforts, restrictions on the freedom of assembly, speech and the press. Developing national narratives around the future and the need for reform will be key to garnering citizen support for such actions.

Moving to MENA states presently engulfed in violent conflict or civil war – Yemen, Syria, Libya and Iraq – EU policy should prioritize humanitarian aid and emergency assistance to the most vulnerable sections of the population, in particular to refugees and internally displaced people. In Iraq, where a number of European states are presently engaged in providing training and technical assistance to Iraqi authorities, the EU should prioritize the exchange of best practices in governance and security sector reform, enhance visible EU support to anti-corruption campaigns launched by state institutions as well as local societal actors, and redouble efforts to upgrade and modernize Iraq's ailing infrastructure, starting from the water, waste and

electricity sectors. Such targeted action by the EU would have positive effects on broader dynamics of state and societal resilience, helping to restore state capacity and citizen trust in the central authorities while improving stabilization efforts and reconciliation between various communities in the country.

One key setting in which the EU is called on to assume more direct responsibilities is Libya. Europe must redouble its efforts to support the UN-backed political transition process and the UN's new Libya Action Plan, the failure of which could spell disaster for the country.<sup>27</sup> Building on the action of EU member states such as Italy and France, Europe should engage with a wide array of local actors in an effort to support the UN-backed Libyan National Conference. Most importantly the EU must first reach internal consensus on the priorities and sequencing of policies in the context of Libya. Divisions among EU member states on Libya, particularly between Italy and France, are a fundamental impediment to effective EU action. Europe should therefore further internal consultations to map out the respective interests of member states to evidence areas of shared interests, if not complementarity. It should also engage with the disparate regional and international actors involved in Libya in an effort to develop an agreed road map for enhanced multilateral support to the UN-led efforts to bring stability and reconciliation to Libya.

The Syrian conflict presents the EU and Western actors with hard truths. Europe and the West more broadly have failed in the Syrian war and will consequently not enjoy the same degree of leverage and influence over the outcome of the conflict as Russia, Iran and, less so, Turkey. Given that the EU is essentially "locked out" of Syrian territory, EU efforts should focus on the regional humanitarian dimension of the conflict, in particular in Lebanon and Jordan, while seeking – to the extent

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27. Alison Pargeter, "Libya's New Action Plan: A Recipe for Success?", in *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies Reports*, 17 October 2017, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2017/10/libyas-action-plan-recipe-success-171017085801315.html>.



that it is possible – to influence the diplomatic and reconciliation processes. Repairing the damaged EU–Turkey relationship, while taking the lead in defending the Iranian nuclear deal, will be key to preserving and even enhancing the EU’s credibility and geopolitical leverage in the region. Such policies would also improve the EU’s standing with Russia, and may in turn help open the door for increased European influence over the ongoing negotiations on Syria.

Looking to the future, a major emphasis should be placed on the modalities of reconstruction of war-torn Syria, insisting on a degree of transparency and public consultation with the Syrian population. The objective should be to seek to influence post-conflict dynamics in Syria in such a way as to avoid the simple restructuring of the previous modes of authoritarian control, seeking to increase the space for local civil society to mediate between the central authorities and local communities as an important ingredient for resilient state–society relations in post-conflict Syria.<sup>28</sup> Engaging with Russia, which is leading the constitutional drafting process, as well as with Iran, will be important. Seeking to ensure that the new Syrian constitution provides room for minorities and that the expected financial returns that will flow from the reconstruction effort do not end up strengthening corrupt elites tied to the regime, are key objectives that are broadly shared among EU member states.

In light of the EU’s dwindling financial capabilities and the fact that political and security trends across the MENA are encouraging foreign investors to withdraw from the region, the EU and its member states must adopt a degree of prioritization when it comes to financial assistance to struggling economies in the MENA. Against this backdrop, the EUGS’s call for enhanced coordination and pooling of resources among EU institutions and member states represents the only realistic means to enhance EU leverage and influence in a time of limited resources.

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28. See, for instance, Faysal Itani and Tobias Schneider, “Rebuilding Syria. A Localized Revitalization Strategy”, in *Atlantic Council Reports*, December 2017, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/rebuilding-syria>.

Tailoring EU and member state policies according to agreed international goals – such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNSC Resolution 1325 on “women, peace and security” and the International Climate Change Accord – would serve to widen the legitimacy of EU policies and objectives, enhancing their effectiveness and appeal within local contexts while helping to multiply EU leverage and influence.

The launching of the European External Investment Plan (EIP) in September 2016 – which is meant to assist public and private investment in ENP and African countries in key sectors to enhance sustainable growth and development, and help to tackle the root causes of instability and migration – represents one tool for the EU’s engagement strategy with the MENA. The EIP is one part of the much broader EU Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), which aims to become an “integral financing mechanism to support investments by public financial institutions and the private sector”.<sup>29</sup> Helping to pool EU funding, while implementing strategies aimed at diminishing investment risks, represents an innovative means to enhance the effectiveness of the EU’s public and private action in these contexts.<sup>30</sup>

Regrettably, there has been a growing tendency within the EU to employ these new structures as a means to divert development funds to more short-term security-related sectors, such as migration control and border management. The EU should be mindful of an excessive securitization of its migration policy and instead complement such measures with a wider reform of the EU’s asylum and immigration systems, to allow for increased regular migration channels into Europe. Such action would prove beneficial to MENA states – particularly those in North Africa, which are severely impacted by migration flows – and could also result in more structured and inclusive coop-

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29. See the European Commission website: *External Investment Plan*, <http://europa.eu/!wY97Dq>.

30. European Commission, *EU External Investment Plan. Factsheet*, November 2017, <http://europa.eu/!fg63xn>.

eration mechanisms between MENA and EU states. Simplified visa modalities for MENA citizens seeking education and employment in the EU should also be established and extensively publicized across the region, also with a view to creating cyclical migration patterns, allowing MENA citizens easy access to fixed short-term stays in various European countries.

While the EU has signed Association Agreements with eight MENA states (only Syria and Libya are lacking), and these contain their own limited forms of free trade in goods, since the uprisings new efforts have been launched to expand access to the EU market in the form of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs), which also cover areas such as “agriculture, industrial standards, dispute settlement and services and establishment”.<sup>31</sup> DCFTAs are available to Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, yet, since 2011, official negotiations have only been launched with Morocco (March 2013) and Tunisia (October 2015). At any rate, the effective benefits of such accords would only be available in the future, if and when the parties finalize the full accord, limiting the effectiveness of DCFTAs as a means to jumpstart economic growth in these countries.<sup>32</sup>

The limited attractiveness of DCFTAs was recognized by the 2015 review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which acknowledged that “a number of partners do not currently wish to pursue” the DCFTA model. In these contexts, new initiatives such as Agreements on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance (ACAAs) are proposed as a means to boost trade in specific sectors.<sup>33</sup> Another means that may be explored to boost economic growth and production capacity is the establishment of special economic zones (SEZs) in certain regions and local-

31. European Commission, *Overview of FTA and other Trade Negotiations*, updated November 2017, p. 5-6, <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/html/118238.htm>.

32. See Richard Youngs, *Europe in the New Middle East. Opportunity or Exclusion?*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 110-114.

33. European Commission and EEAS, *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy* (JOIN/2015/50), 18 November 2015, p. 8, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52015JC0050>.

ities in the MENA. Some authors have called for the establishment of SEZs as a means to boost economic output, investment and development, particularly by targeting and providing local employment opportunities to refugees displaced across the MENA, as has been done in Jordan for instance.<sup>34</sup> While not free from controversy,<sup>35</sup> such initiatives can help local economies attract foreign investment and improve private sector competitiveness. Also in Lebanon, recent studies have demonstrated that the large numbers of refugees have actually produced some economic benefits rather than only burdens, contributing to Lebanon's fragile economic outlook notwithstanding the lack of media and policymaker focus on such dynamics and mounting anti-migrant feelings in Lebanese society.<sup>36</sup>

Boosting regional cooperation and trade would provide the greatest degree of added value to MENA states and societies. The untapped export potential of many MENA states, combined with the low levels of intra-regional trade, represent major impediments to economic growth and sustainable development across the region.<sup>37</sup> In accordance with the EUGS emphasis on fostering "cooperative regional orders"<sup>38</sup> as a means to improve prevention and the effective management of crises in Europe's near abroad, the EU should emphasize the mutual socio-economic and security benefits that flow from enhanced regional trade and cooperation, seeking to encourage MENA states and societies to set aside their geopolitical disputes and instead

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34. See Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, "Jordan's Refugee Experiment", in *Foreign Affairs Postscripts*, 28 April 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2016-04-28/jordans-refugee-experiment>.

35. Heaven Crawley, "Why Jobs in Special Economic Zones Won't Solve the Problems Facing the World's Refugees", in *The Conversation*, 6 April 2017, <http://theconversation.com/why-jobs-in-special-economic-zones-wont-solve-the-problems-facing-the-worlds-refugees-75249>.

36. See, for instance, Rosalie Berthier, "Monetising Syrian Refugees", in *Lebanese Economy Watchdog*, 11 December 2017, <http://www.synaps.network/lebanese-economy-watchdog#chapter-3177383>.

37. Bernard Hoekman, "Intra-Regional Trade. Potential Catalyst for Growth in the Middle East", in *MEI Policy Papers*, No. 206-1 (April 2016), <http://www.mei.edu/node/23007>.

38. For more on "cooperative regional orders" see EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, cit., p. 32-39.

agree on a set of standards and rules to develop peaceful conflict resolution and dispute settlement mechanisms.

Overall therefore, a European policy strategy that prioritizes socio-economic grievances as the driving force for the present regional breakdown but which acknowledges authoritarianism and the lack of freedoms as fundamental obstacles to renewed economic growth and “resilience” represents a good blueprint for EU action. Such approaches are also well suited to the Turkish case.

Turkey’s significant 10-year decline in freedom and democracy registered by the 2017 Freedom in the World report by Freedom House (-28 points between 2006 and 2016)<sup>39</sup> is the direct result of the policies pursued by the ruling AKP government and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The significant expansion in Turkey’s ongoing crackdown on civil liberties, the rule of law and the media presents a fundamental threat to state and societal resilience in that country. Turkey remains something of an outlying case compared to other MENA states, given the legacy of the failed EU accession track and the country’s long-standing NATO membership, which create a rather different institutional framework for EU–Turkey relations compared to those with MENA states. This reality is both a challenge and a potential opportunity for the EU.

Mistrust and political tensions are widespread, but institutional links<sup>40</sup> and economic and energy interdependence<sup>41</sup> are more entrenched, providing different avenues for EU policy to foster state and societal resilience in Turkey. The negotiations to up-

39. Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2017*, January 2017, p. 10, <https://freedomhouse.org/node/49188>.

40. Pol Morillas, Melike Janine Sökmen and Akin Ünver, “EU-Turkey Relations in the Midst of a Global Storm”, in *FEUTURE Online Papers*, No. 7 (November 2017), <http://www.feuture.uni-koeln.de/en/publications/feuture-online-paper-series/#c195361>.

41. See, for instance, Lorenzo Colantoni et al., “Energy and Climate Strategies, Interests and Priorities of the EU and Turkey”, in *FEUTURE Online Papers*, No. 2 (March 2017), <http://www.feuture.uni-koeln.de/en/publications/feuture-online-paper-series/#c182504>.

grade the EU-Turkey customs union could have positive effects on the broader economic and legal setting within the country, thereby strengthening institutional resilience in the country. This is one important avenue for the EU to pursue, combined with that of increasing support to Turkish civil society organizations as an important means for the EU to remain engaged with Turkish society independently from the high-level political tensions between governments and elites.<sup>42</sup>

A close examination of societal trends in Turkey and the avoidance of overreactions to political tensions and provocations will be key to EU-Turkey relations. Finding areas of mutual interest – which exist on many levels – and building up from there should be the starting point of this engagement. Emphasizing the long-term strategic nature of EU-Turkey ties and playing up the economic benefits of closer convergence and cooperation does represent a good starting point for repairing the EU-Turkey relationship, a relationship which for all intents and purposes is “too big to fail” for both parties.<sup>43</sup>

The correct identification of priority areas for action, followed by a realistic identification of benchmarks for progress and a careful assessment of interlocutors at the state and societal level will therefore be key to the EU’s efforts to operationalize the EUGS emphasis on resilience. It is this reorganization of EU reporting and periodical assessment of developments in the MENA that represents a significant novelty in the EUGS as well as the 2015 ENP.<sup>44</sup> In this respect, coherence between

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42. E. Fuat Keyman, Nathalie Tocci and Michael Werz (eds.), *Trends in Turkish Civil Society*, Washington, Center for American Progress, July 2017, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2017/07/10/435475>.

43. For more on the EU-Turkey relationship see Nathalie Tocci, “Turkey and the European Union: Scenarios for 2023”, in *FEUTURE Background Papers*, September 2016, <http://www.feuture.uni-koeln.de/en/publications/feuture-online-paper-series/#c113811>; Bilge Yabanci, “The Future of EU-Turkey Relations: Between Mutual Distrust and Interdependence”, in *FEUTURE Online Papers*, No. 1 (November 2016), <http://www.feuture.uni-koeln.de/en/publications/feuture-online-paper-series/#c126161>.

44. European Commission and EEAS, *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, cit., p. 5.

bilateral, multilateral and international policies pursued by EU institutions, member states and international organizations represents another key goal of the EU's revised external action.

The EU's ambition to reorganize periodical reporting and enhance coordination between various sectors and policy strands should represent a first priority tied to the implementation of the EUGS. Pairing an EU institution with a single member state and allowing them to take the lead in specific sectors could represent a good means to balance national and communal interests of the Union, thereby protecting interdependence and coherence in EU policy.

In order to be effective, the reorganization of EU reporting on single MENA states and societies should be accompanied by a significant expansion of the staff budget of the European External Action Service (EEAS). Reporting offices should be opened in Brussels and subdivided according to North African, Middle Eastern and Arabian Peninsula sub-regions, staffed with officials holding extensive background knowledge of the region and given sub-region. Key qualifications should include historical and language knowledge of the MENA, a political economy approach to understanding the specificities of state-society relations, governance models and socio-economic challenges in these contexts, and experience in navigating the various power nodes and institutional makeup of the EU in Brussels.

The overall objective of these offices should be to map-out different sectors of EU and member state action, and seek means to make these strands mutually reinforcing in an effort to empower local "resilience-friendly" actors in these contexts, the identification of which should also fall under the remit of the reporting. Having such reliable and up-to-date information on different sectors and countries will allow decision makers to make informed choices on the priorities, sequencing and correct interlocutors to engage, bringing EU policy a step closer to the ambition displayed by the EUGS. Such data would also serve the related EU goal of prevention and early warning,

helping to flag developments that may result in further disruptions and challenges while allowing for a rapid response to mitigate these before the next crisis erupts.

## Conclusions

The EU Global Strategy sets out its ambition to become the new road map for EU foreign and security policy in the years ahead. Pooling EU leverage and adding a degree of interdependence and coherence to EU policy sectors stand out as the most promising, and ambitious, goals of the strategy.

In the Middle East and North Africa, where challenges to state and societal resilience derive from the gradual breakdown in trust between the state and its citizens, the pervasiveness of authoritarianism, conflict and deep seated intra-regional rivalries and competition, EU policy will be hard pressed to deliver results. Governance and socio-economic challenges have been identified as laying at the heart of the current crises and breakdown. Jumpstarting economic growth and improving the provision of social goods and services stand out as urgent priorities to foster trust and gradually reform state-society relations.

Not enough time has passed since the formal unveiling of the EUGS to provide a holistic and comprehensive assessment of the strategy and its emphasis on resilience. The contents of the strategy, combined with the revision of other EU tools and approaches – chief among which stands the revised 2015 ENP – do trace a positive balance between ambition and capabilities, values and realpolitik in an effort to allow the EU to “navigate this difficult, more connected, contested and complex world”.<sup>45</sup>

While criticized by some for an excessive embrace of realpolitik, the degree of self-awareness contained in the EU's new strategic documents should be regarded as an acknowledge-

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45. EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, cit., p. 13.



ment of the global dimension of EU action and a realistic assessment of the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the EU within the international system at large. At the same time the EU is clearly conscious that its strengths lie in Europe's embodiment of the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Given the present uncertainties gripping the international system, the unpredictability and relative retrenchment of the United States under President Donald J. Trump and the rising influence of actors such as China, Russia and others whose foreign policies are not based on similar values, there is an opportunity for the EU to emerge as the new global leader in these norms and values.

In such a context the EU should seek to emerge as the new global values "gatekeeper", a position that would lead to strengthened EU cooperation with, and *leadership within*, major international organizations such as the UN, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and others, including financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. By pairing EU policy goals to those of these large international actors, EU influence and leverage is multiplied, also allowing for increased funding and external support for these policies, while enhancing the ability of EU member states and institutions to influence US policy.

Ultimately, only an integrated and more united Union can hope to preserve a degree of European influence and leverage on the world stage. To paraphrase from the title of a book by American author and policymaker Richard N. Haas, "foreign policy begins at home",<sup>46</sup> and in this respect the first indispensable priority to improve the EU's foreign action relates to internal dynamics tied to the reorganization of roles, the pooling of resources and enhanced coordination between EU institutions and member states. The fact that this is acknowledged by both the EUGS and the 2015 ENP, as well as other policy documents

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46. Richard A. Haas, *Foreign Policy Begins at Home. The Case for Putting America's House in Order*, New York, Basic Books, 2013.

and Action Plans, and that progress has already been made in such realms as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in the defence field,<sup>47</sup> represent positive steps in the EU's efforts to refashion its global role and vision.

Political courage and support on the part of individual member states will be key to the ultimate success of the EUGS's ambition. Ultimately, EU institutions and member states will need to give the EEAS and Commission the authority and tools to carry forth such a programme, commanding legitimacy and authority not only at the external level but also and perhaps more fundamentally internally, within the EU apparatus.

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47. EEAS, *Permanent Structured Cooperation - PESCO. Factsheet*, updated 13 December 2017, <http://europa.eu/!tg94Hv>.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACAA	Agreement on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Turkey)
BTI	Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (Egypt)
CAS	Central Administration for Statistics (Lebanon)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CENTCOM	US Central Command
CHP	Republican's People Party (Turkey)
CNICM	Commission to Investigate and Combat Corruption and Misconduct (Tunisia)
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority (Iraq)
CPR	Congress for the Republic (Tunisia)
DCA	Defence Cooperation Agreement
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EDAM	Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFSD	EU Fund for Sustainable Development
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIP	European External Investment Plan
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
EUGS	EU Global Strategy

FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLMM	Gulf Labour Markets and Migration
GNI	Gross National Income
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
HDI	Human Development Index
HR/VP	High Representative/Vice-President
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICI	Istanbul Cooperation Initiative
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IEP	Institute for Economics and Peace
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INS	National Institute of Statistics (Tunisia)
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LTDH	Tunisian Human Rights League
INLUCC	National Anti-Corruption Authority (Tunisia)
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NICT	New Information and Communication Technology
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe
OUP	Operation Unified Protector
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces (Iraq)

QIA	Qatar Investment Authority
QNFSP	Qatar National Food Security Programme
QNV	Qatar's National Vision
QWA	Qatari Women Association
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SWF	Sovereign Wealth Fund
TBB	Union of Turkish Bar Associations
TTB	Turkish Medical Association
TurkStat	Turkish Statistical Institute
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UGTT	Tunisian General Labour Union
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UTICA	Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts
WVS	World Values Survey



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Printed in December 2017  
with the technology print on demand  
at CentroStampa "*Nuova Cultura*"  
p.le Aldo Moro n. 5, 00185 Rome  
[www.nuovacultura.it](http://www.nuovacultura.it)  
orders: [ordini@nuovacultura.it](mailto:ordini@nuovacultura.it)

[Int\_9788868129712\_11,5x18col\_LM02]





The EU Global Strategy outlines an ambitious set of objectives to refashion the EU's foreign and security policy. Fostering state and societal resilience stands out as a major goal of the strategy, conceived both as a means to enhance prevention and early warning and as a long-term investment in good governance, stability and prosperity. This book collects the results of a research project designed and implemented by FEPS and IAI exploring different understandings of resilience on the basis of six MENA state and societal contexts, mapping out the challenges but also positive reform actors and dynamics within them as a first step towards operationalizing the concept of resilience.

**FEPS** is the progressive political foundation established at the European level. Created in 2007, it aims at establishing an intellectual crossroad between social democracy and the European project. As a platform for ideas and dialogue, FEPS works in close collaboration with social democratic organizations, and in particular national foundations and think tanks across and beyond Europe, to tackle the challenges that we are facing today. FEPS inputs fresh thinking at the core of its action and serves as an instrument for pan-European, intellectual political reflection.

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This book is edited by FEPS and IAI with the financial support of the European Parliament.

